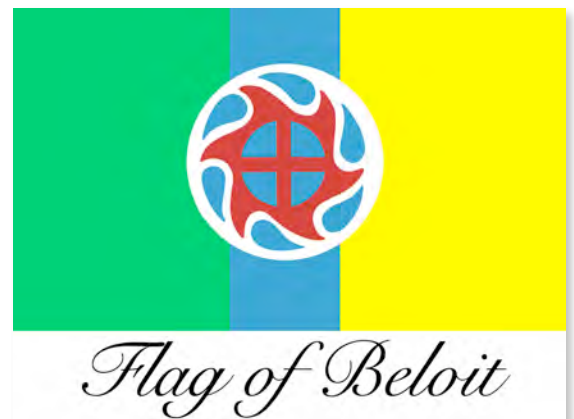


# *A Cheesehead*



# *Travels the World*

*an autobiography by Timothy Gretschmann ©2015-2016*



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\* Just a short note to my non-American friends. A person who is from the state of Wisconsin is known as a "Cheesehead" because at one time Wisconsin produced one third of all the cheese made in America and was known as the "Dairy state" or "America's Dairyland". We had dairy farms everywhere when i was a boy. Today i think California has more cows than we do (but one has to wonder what type of "grass" they are eating out there).

The Green Bay Packers are the professional football team of Wisconsin (American style, similar to rugby) and some of the fans wear a golden cheese colored, triangular shaped foam hat on their heads at the games. (I have never worn one as i think they look ridiculous!)

Milwaukee, Wisconsin's largest city, is where Harley Davidson motorcycles began their production (yes, that means that all Harleys are Cheesehead bikes! I have never ridden one.)

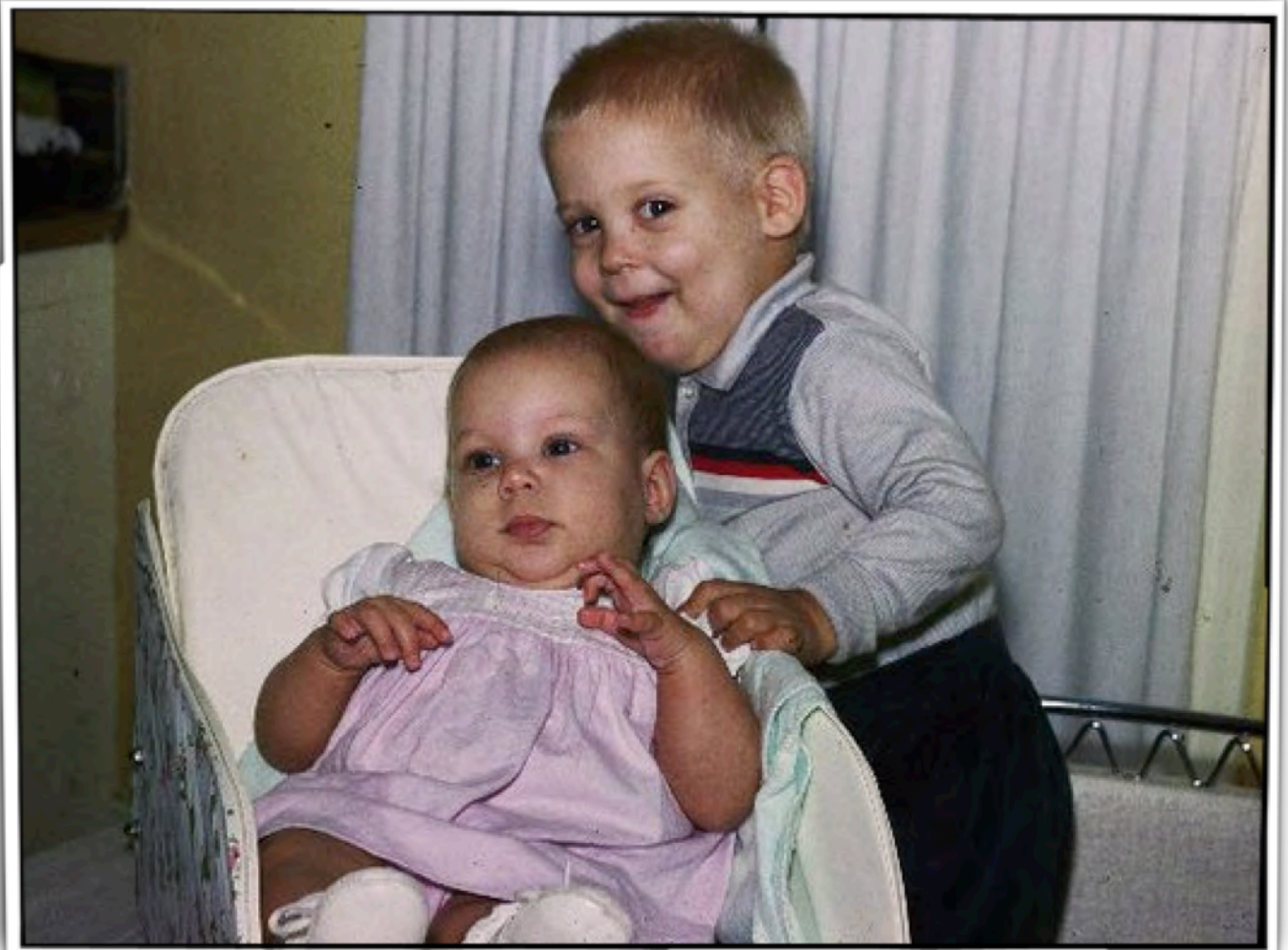
I often mention that i am a Cheesehead with an identity crisis. I grew up on a pig farm in America's Dairyland and i grew up driving Honda motorcycles. I guess that explains why i turned out the way i did.





# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 1: the Early Years*



## ❖ 1. *Welcome to the world Cheesehead.*

Hello, my name is Timothy David Gretschnann. I was born on September 7, 1960 at 2:52 a.m. in the city of Beloit in the state of Wisconsin (yes, i am a genuine Cheesehead), in the United States of America. I am the first born son of Duane and Barbara Gretschnann.



*Left: Dad & Mom on wedding day 8/8/59. Dad got his "Barbie" doll that year.  
Picture on right: Cousin Paul and me (Paul was first chair trumpet in high school)*



*Left: A four generation picture. From left my Dad, my great grandmother Barbara Gretschnann & her son, my grandpa Ernie. ~~ R.: My Dad and me.*



*Left from left to right: me, my maternal grandparents (holding sister Julie), my paternal grandparents (holding cousin Pam). The other boy is cousin Paul.  
Right: With my sisters Karen & Julie. Mom is behind us.*

My paternal grandfather Ernie was of German/Russian origin, my paternal grandmother Edith was born in the Netherlands, my maternal grandfather Ralph, born in 1899, was of German/Prussian (present day Poland) origin and my maternal grandmother was Dora of Scottish, English and Irish origin. Our ancestors lived in all of those countries. So I guess I'm a bit of a Heinz 57 (mixture).

I discovered that in my family one was a blacksmith, several were farmers, and one was a soldier in the civil war. Some were descendants of Queen Mary of the Scots (who lost her head on the chopping block) and King James of the Bible version fame. Others were horse thieves who stole horses in northern England and then fled back to Scotland. Others lived near St. Petersburg, Russia. My great grandfather William Magill was mayor of the city of Beloit from 1926-1929.

With such an international background is it any wonder that I ended up living half my life on the other side of the world? September 15, 2017 marks thirty years of living abroad. I often say I am now only 50% American (the other 50% is comprised of Uruguayan, English and a small percentage of Spanish & Finnish). I have always loved to travel to new places & get to know the people's culture and customs. I enjoy living in an international culture & look forward to living with people from every tribe & nation one day in heaven.

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Revelation 7:9 which says:  
*After this I looked & there before me was a great multitude  
that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people & language,  
standing before the throne & in front of the Lamb.*



## ❀ 2. *Am I my Brothers' Keeper?*

My sister Julie Kay was born in 1962 and was very popular in school. We both played together in band in high school. She is a dedicated and hard working mother, who recently had the pleasure of becoming a grandmother. She is married to Mike & is mother to Brittney, Allison & Zachary.



*Above: Sister Julie & me.*



*Above: Brittney with husband Jake & son Nash, Allison, Zachary, Mike & Julie.*

Karen Lyn was born in 1963 and was known for always asking, "are we there yet" as a little girl (sometimes she would ask that even before the car left the driveway). She has always been very bubbly and out going and always seems to have a smile. She is married to Todd.



*Karen with her big brother (me)*



*Karen & Todd*



Thomas Duane was born in 1968. He married Kim & is father to Ryan, Alex & Amanda. When he was born he had beautiful blond curls & everyone was admiring him. I immediately felt jealous because after being the only boy in the family & feeling like my Dad's right hand man, I now had "competition".

I remember I was working in the barn one day & didn't want my brother to be around. So I told him to leave. He wouldn't. So I thought if I just toss the pitch fork in his direction he would get scared and run away. Unfortunately I tossed it a little too hard & one of the tines caught his ankle. He began screaming & crying & just at that moment my father walked in. *"You could have killed him!"* The next moment Tom was not the only one crying. I later got over the jealousy & realized he was getting a lot of attention because he was just a baby & I was a "big" boy of nine years old.



*L: Tom & Scott ~~ C: with Karen & Grandma Busjahn ~~ R: with cousins*



*L: Tom & Kim ~~ center: Ryan, Amanda & boyfriend, Alex ~~ my "little" brothers*



Scott Alan was born in 1969. He just missed my ninth birthday by five days. He married Julie (on my birthday) and they have six children: Brad, Kyle, Emilie, Adam, Abbie & Ellie. I remember whenever we would go to uncle Chuck & Marion's house he would go to the basement and put on the exercise belt and sing "Jesus loves me" with all his heart (his voice sounded very shaky as the machine vibrated his little body). His love for the Lord runs deep.



*L.: Scott's graduation picture, center: with wife Julie, R: with sons Brad & Kyle*



*Photo at left: Kyle & Jenny with Adalynn & Brad & Tiffany with Eli.  
Photo at right: Back: Kyle, Emilie, Julie, Scott, Adam, Brad. Front: Ellie & Abbie*

I am so thankful to God for giving me such a wonderful family.

### ❖ 3. *Watch out Evel Knievel*

When i was 8 years old i was introduced to a minibike. I immediately enjoyed it until i had a wipe out on the dead end street at my cousins' house in Iowa. I discovered that flying along with the wind blowing through my hair was a lot of fun, but kissing the pavement was not! I still have a faint scar on my elbow from that little mishap. I howled and cried like a baby. This was only the first of many "wipe outs".

At age 11 my dad gave me a Honda 50 to drive around the farm yard and i loved it. Later when i was 14 i moved up to a Honda 100 and went flying through the woods and on the trails we made along the road. I used to hit 50 mph on the trails. I later learned that the top speed of that motorcycle was 55 when i drove it down the road one night at 14 years of age (don't tell Dad i did that!). It was a horrible experience as the bugs hit my eyes & teeth (of course we didn't use helmets & seat belts in those days. Those were for wimps!).

At 16 i moved up to a Honda CL125, candy apple red. I used to set up jump ramps on the farm and eventually wore it out. However, I was never as good as my cousin Paul who could do wheelies while going up the hill. One day Paul's dog Snoopy appeared out of no where & i plowed right into him. We both ended up on the ground. He immediately got up & ran off like nothing happened. I managed to bend the handlebars a bit and cut my face on pieces of broken glass from the rearview mirror. I guess i should have watched where i was going!

I enjoyed giving my brothers rides on my motorcycles & always insisted that they put their arms around my waist and lock their fingers together so they wouldn't fly off the back. My Dad worked second shift at General Motors in those days, so often we only saw him on weekends. As the older brother I felt the responsibility to take care of my little brothers.

In winter i loved driving snowmobiles. When I was twelve my Dad gave me a Rupp 340cc snowmobile to drive and later i moved up to a 440cc (those numbers sound so small by today's standards). I took my driver's test and passed with flying colors. In those days we were guaranteed three months of snow every year. Sometimes we had so much snow that the only way to get anywhere was by snowmobile. I remember one year when i was driving with my Dad, uncle Bob & aunt Von and wife Susana that we drove the trails in northern Wisconsin. At one point we came to a place where the ground was as flat as a table. Susana asked me



why the ground was so flat. I replied, "because we are driving across the surface of a frozen lake." "Hurry up and cross before we sink!" was her response.

One thing that i suffered from on many occasions was pain in the ears. At the age of eight i had to have tubes in my ears. I had to repeat that surgery twice before i was sixteen. That is why i always wear a thick wooly hat in the winter.

One thing i loved about growing up on the farm was the ability to drive through the woods and enjoy all the nature that God has created. Driving along with the wind whipping through my hair after working in the barn was always a great experience.



*My favorite "sport" is snowmobiling.*



*a replica of my Honda 50*



*a replica of my Honda 100.*



*a replica of my Honda 125*

## ❖ 4. *Hey Charlie Brown*



In 1971 i moved from Clinton elementary school to Clinton junior high. It was a bit daunting at first, having to go from one class to another, and only having three minutes to do it, but i quickly caught on. It was nice to be able to study together with classmates and to be able to talk in class as we worked together.

Very quickly i developed a good friendship with Mark. We would study together every day and enjoyed sixth grade camp. Most of the other students learned how to swim but i did not as i could not get water in my ears and hated the feeling of ear plugs. One day at school i remember very clearly God saying to me, *"tell Mark about Me and his need to give his life to Me."* I have to admit that scared me very much. I was always a very timid, shy and quiet boy. (Later in high school i would receive a D- in Speech class for being a pathetic speaker. I think the only reason i got a D- was so the teacher would not have to have me in her class again the next year).

I remember thinking that if anyone hears me talking with Mark about Jesus, then all my classmates will be laughing at me. I decided to wait until summer vacation which was only two weeks away & go share with him on his farm when we were alone, to avoid any embarrassment.

One week later Mark invited me to go with him & several other boys to the dam at Shopiere on Saturday. I informed him that i would not be able to go as i had to work all day on the farm. On Sunday we went to church as always and on the way home my mother drove past the Shopiere dam. *"Did you know Mark Wendtland?"* she asked. *"Yes, why do you ask?"* *"Because he fell in the creek yesterday here at the dam and drowned. He did not know how to swim."* I was too shocked to speak. I had lost my chance to talk with Mark about Jesus and now where was he at?



I went to the visitation with my cousin Paul & uncle Bob and saw his body in the casket. One of the boys said, *"I am sure he is in heaven. He was a good kid."* As i stood next to him i thought, yes, it looks just like Mark, but as we turned to leave, i looked back and his face looked plastic. *"What kind of sick joke is this?"* i thought. The next day i looked for Mark at school. He was not there. It took me the rest of the week to realize that he was gone forever.

This is the one experience that affected me more than any other. It is one of the reasons that i gave my life to Jesus to serve Him wherever He wants & to share Christ with everyone everywhere. I don't ever want to miss that opportunity again.

As i participated in gym class i quickly began to feel like Charlie Brown; I was a geek. (I was such a geek that i never got a detention in school for any reason. How uncool is that then!). Whenever we would chose teams to play some sport, i was *always* the last one to be picked (or should i say assigned to the team by the teacher). I discovered that when it came to sports i was useless! This was my experience all through junior and senior high. No one wanted the geek on his team. (I have often said that if shoveling manure were a sport, then i could have been an Olympic champion!)

I remember one time in gym class we were divided in teams to participate in a tug of war. Of course i was "assigned" to a team, not actually chosen. My team pulled on the rope with all our might and we dragged all of the other team mates through the mud pit. What a great victory!

*"Now,"* announced the teacher, *"today we have an uneven number of students in class, so we are going to pull again. Only before we do this, the winning team has to send someone to the losing team."* Can anyone guess who my team chose? *"Send Gretschmann over, he's useless."* As i joined my new team i felt dejected & useless but i was determined to pull with all my strength. Very quickly my new team pulled the others through the mud. That day i was the only one in class who went to the shower room with a clean uniform! That was one of the few days that i actually enjoyed gym class.

I enjoyed my German class as we had the youngest and most beautiful teacher in Clinton teaching us how to speak German. Fraulein Klinzing, fresh out of college, showed much patience as we learned how to speak properly. I took the class for three years. The first year i got an A, second year a B, third year a C. I decided to quit before I hit the bottom with an F. It was just getting too difficult for me. (Little did i realize that German is a piece of cake compared with Finnish). I always wish i would have continued with the class. My grandpa spoke fluent German & the name Gretschmann is German. Maybe in another life time.

In high school i went out for the track team, but discovered that i am not a runner. I tried taking shop classes like *Metals* but discovered that although my dad is very talented and can fix anything, i, on the other hand am useless at fixing anything. (I could change oil in the tractors, but that was about it).

I did enjoy my *Light Building Construction* class with Mr. Windhorst. Every day we would go out and spend two hours building a house in Clinton. (The house is still standing, so i guess we built it right). I remember putting shingles on the roof as the snow was flying around. One of my classmates offered me twenty dollars for my wooly hat. "*With my ears being the way they are, you could offer me three hundred dollars and i wouldn't take it.*"

I very quickly discovered that my joy in school was in band class. At age eleven i joined the percussion section under the leadership of Kay Schultz. I have to admit that at first i was thoroughly bored as we were taught to play on a rubber pad. Later when we began playing the drums and the cymbals, etc. i began to like it more. I loved playing percussion so much that i spent hours and hours practicing. I practiced so much that by the time i was in high school, band was the class i excelled at more than any other. I always got A's in that class. The enthusiasm of Mrs. Harsevoort made me want to always play the best i could.

One day one of the students in the percussion section, Robin cried out, "*Praise the Lord!*" Of course the others mocked him. I remember thinking yes i agree but again was too timid to say anything. Forgive me Lord for my cowardice!

In the band we were able to play in several venues. In the autumn we would be out on the football field playing in the marching band, and other times we would be in the school gymnasium playing concerts for our parents and friends.

My favorite was always playing at basketball games, where we were able to play contemporary songs like, *Hey Jude* from the Beatles and others. It was fun to go to state competitions and win medals which we were able to pin on our uniforms.



*Mrs. Harsevoort who is now with Jesus!*



As time went on the Lord spoke to me again about sharing my faith with others. So i attempted to do so the best way i knew how. "Are you a Christian?" i asked my friend. "H\*#!@ yes." was the reply. I didn't know how to respond. (Later in life i met him & he told me that at that time he was definitely not a christian.) *Will anyone ever teach me how to share my faith in Christ?* (Little did i realize that God would answer that prayer in the summer of 1978 after i graduated from high school.)

Another class that i enjoyed was Spanish. I had two years of it with Mrs. Kavanaugh. First year i got an A, second year a B and then quit because i could see the pattern from German class repeating itself. *Oh well, i'll never have to actually speak a foreign language anyway, right?*



*Go Clinton Cougars!*

## ❖ 5. *Green acres is the place to be, farm livin' is the life for me.*

As a boy I loved growing up on the farm. It was there that I learned the value of hard work. At the age of nine my Dad introduced me to a pitchfork & I shoveled so much manure that one day I asked my Dad, "what are these hard spots on my hands?" He explained that they were callous from holding a pitchfork. I never remember having a blister on my hands as a boy.

My Dad and his brother Bob had one of the biggest pig operations in the county. I remember that at one point we had a thousand pigs. I used to love giving shots to the baby pigs after they were born and playing "dentist" as I clipped their teeth with a finger nail clipper. I learned at an early age that you need to be careful with the mother sow. She can weigh up to 400 pounds and be more dangerous than a Rottweiler. By the time I was seventeen I was grinding feed almost every day and taking care of all of the pigs by myself. I loved it!

Each year we participated in 4H, a program that was designed for young people to learn new skills, teaching them how to live in harmony with others and to find their place in life. I enjoyed my woodworking class & loved taking pigs to the County Fair every year and seeing how much money I would get for them.

One year, after I was too old to be in 4H, my sister Karen took a pig to the fair. I was helping her & watching the pig. At one point I turned and looked away and the pig jumped over the panel like it was not even there! At that point the judge said, "There's your grand champion right there." My sister's pig was the grand champion of Rock County! Later she sold the pig & got a trophy for it.

I have to admit that I was furious! Who went out to the barn every day to feed the pigs & shovel the manure? Not my sister! The trophy should be given to me!

God showed me that my attitude was just like the older son in the prodigal son story. "Look at all the work I've done. Where is my trophy?" God replied, "Yes, you worked hard. But, to whom does the pig belong? Your Dad. And if he wants to give it to his daughter, who are you to object?"

I very quickly realized that all I have is a gift from God & that I have earned nothing. Hard work is valuable but hard work can never replace God's grace which He pours out on us every day.

On the farm I developed a love for driving tractors. I started off on a Bolens riding lawn mower when I was eight and very quickly moved up from there. I have had the opportunity to drive all kinds of tractors over the years from small garden tractors to the big four wheel drive ones and I was also the owner of three different tractors. I have to admit that I don't like automatics because they are too boring! My favorite tractor was the Massey Harris 44. Dad & Bob put a 289 c.i. Ford car engine in it & it would go seventy miles per hour on the road. It had straight pipes (very loud) and would shoot fire out the pipes at night! I loved driving that one.

I believe that driving all these tractors has helped me to be a responsible driver (I have never had an accident in over 40 years. I have had driver's licenses from

England (where they drive on the other side of the road), Uruguay & Spain. Thanks Dad for teaching me!

I truly miss the life on the farm and often wish i had fifty or sixty animals to take care of and a tractor to drive. "You can take the boy out of the farm but you can't take the farm out of the boy."



*"Babe" & me at 17 ~~ first beard at 19 ~~ replica: Dad's Steiger Cougar ~~ pigs*



*i started "driving" tractors when i was very young ~ ~ my 730 John Deere (1979)*



*My 930 Case (1980) ~~ Dad & Bob's 876 Ford ~~ the Case IH Quadtrac 500*



# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 2:*

### *the Years of Preparation*



## ❖ 6. *Amazing grace ... that saved a wretch like me.*

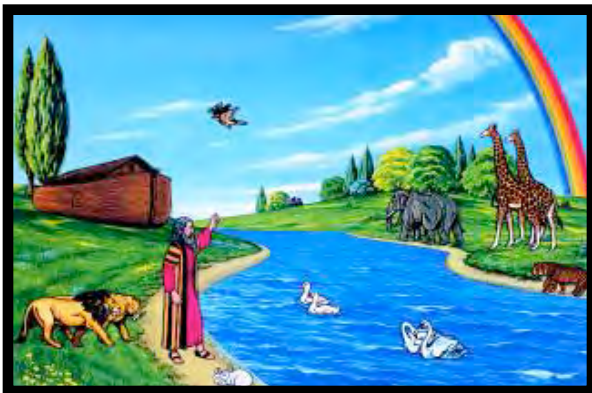
I grew up attending Peoples Church in Beloit Wisconsin. As a baby i used to sit on Mrs. Boyer's lap as she played the piano for the choir. (Why didn't i pay attention?) My mother would go to church every Sunday a.m. to sing for the radio program which aired at 8:00 a.m. We lived seventeen miles from the church, out in the country. She would drive in to church in all kinds of weather. She has been singing solos since she was sixteen years old. She has a voice like Sandy Patty (I know that sounds like a biased opinion but just ask anyone else who has listened to her sing).

Our pastor was Wendell Boyer. What a godly man he was! Every Sunday he would preach with such passion. I couldn't wait to hear his next sermon. Going to church on Sunday was as regular as breathing for our family. We hardly ever missed a Sunday.

As a boy of eight years old I remember my mother used to pray with me every night as I went to bed. (Dad was working second shift at General Motors). I remember the prayer as if it were yesterday. *"Now i lay me down to sleep, i pray the Lord my soul to keep. If i should die, before i wake, i pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen."* I remember that i meant every word. Thanks Mom for praying with me.

One of my favorite classes was children's church which took place during the sermon time. I remember Eleanor DeRoos teaching us stories from the Bible every Sunday and always teaching us stories with the Betty Lukens' flannel graph set. I always loved the bright, colorful backgrounds and looked forward to the day when i could tell stories like that (which is exactly what i was able to do later in England, Uruguay & Spain, using an identical set).

When i was in fourth grade (nine years old) i was the proudest student in the class because i had a special connection with the teacher. He was my Dad! All the other boys wanted to sit next to him during class, so i had to take my turn just like anyone else.



*Betty's flannel graph set ~~ Rev. Boyer ~~ the Gretschmann family goes to church*

One of the most important experiences in my life took place in the summer of 1975. At the time i was fourteen years old and i couldn't wait for the missions conference to get started. Each year missionaries from all around the world would come and share about their ministry on foreign soil. Many of them dressed in local costumes & told their snake & special food stories and about how people all over the world needed to hear about Jesus.

Our church had been instrumental in starting the United World Mission back in 1946 with a number of other churches in the Midwest. Our church had been one of the first to send out missionaries with Milt & Betty Dresselhaus going to Cuba and later to Venezuela when Cuba was closed. My church has sent out numerous missionaries over the years. Rev. Boyer's passion stirred many hearts to go.

I remember on the last evening of the conference in 1975 that a man named Bill Arn was preaching on Matthew 28:19-20: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Bill Arn gave a challenge to all of us to stand up and fulfill that commission. He then gave an invitation to all to listen to God's voice and make a commitment to serve Him. He then asked all who were hearing the Lord speak to them, to come to the front and give their lives to serve the Lord on foreign soil.

I remember feeling like my heart was going to explode out of my chest and i felt as though my knees would buckle under me. But this was it! I was going forward and giving my life to the Lord. As i went to the front i said in my heart to the Lord, *"Here i am Lord. You know i got a D- in speech class and i don't know what i could ever do for you. But here i am, willing to go wherever You want me to go and to do whatever You want. Take my life and use it."* That was a turning point in my life. My life would never be the same again.

From then on I sat in the second row every Sunday. I was so absorbed with the passion of my pastor & his wife that i just couldn't get enough! As i got older i wanted more & more to participate in the Bible studies & youth meetings & learn as much as i could. Many times either my Mom or Dad would have to drive me to youth



*Missions: Bill Arn on left ~ ~ it's all about reaching people with the Gospel!*



group on a Sunday evening. Normally we went to my grandpa's house on Sunday afternoon which was about twenty miles in the opposite direction & one of my parents would have to leave the family & drive me all the way back to church for the evening service. Thanks Mom & Dad for your sacrifice.

In 1976 at the age of sixteen i got my drivers license & was able to drive myself to church. Dad gave me a 1968 Chevrolet Caprice to drive. Rob & Rene were the youth pastors in those days & I loved studying the Bible and participating in the youth activities each week. In fact i began to get involved in all the activities i could find. When Rob & Rene left, i felt depressed & thought, now what am i going to do? Youth group was the highlight of my week. Life went on & Ron & Beth & Al & Pat took over the youth group, so all was not lost. It was about that time that David Kipp & i became best friends. We used to "hang out" together whenever we had youth meeting.

In 1978 at the age of seventeen, i graduated from high school. In my last attempt to share my faith, i decided to put a verse from the Bible under my picture in the year book. Later i discovered that many of my class mates were Christians, but i was the only one who put a Bible verse under my picture. The verse from Nahum 1:7. says, *The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And He knows all who trust in Him.*

That summer we had a youth intern come to our church to be our youth pastor. His name was Bob Clifford & he was from California. He was only at our church for three months, but he was the youth pastor who made the biggest impact on my life. Bob took me aside and began to disciple me. We studied the Bible together, prayed together, had fellowship together & just "hung out" together. Later he introduced me to the tract called "*The Four Spiritual Laws*" and together we went out to the streets sharing the Gospel with people in the park. I was terrified! Thankfully Bob knew what he was doing and little by little i learned how to share my faith with others.

We met a couple of guys who both had the same name: Gary. We spent a lot of time sharing the Gospel with them and several times we did it in a small guard shack where they were working. It was difficult for me because they were constantly smoking. At one point i invited them to church and they came. But afterwards they said they felt very out of place and never came back again.



*Peoples Church ~ ~ the old sanctuary where Rev. Boyer preached*

During the summer we were able to go to youth camp with a number of other churches associated with United World Mission and i was elected to be part of the quiz team. We studied Proverbs chapters 3, 5 and 6 together and memorized as much as we could. To my surprise, we won! That was my first contact with other churches who later became my supporters in helping me get to the mission field.

At the end of the summer Bob left & later met his wife. They have been missionaries for a number of years and they are presently serving in France. Bob's wife is from France. So he and i have something in common; we are both missionaries and we both married "foreign" wives. Bob was the first one to give me my nickname "Gretsch". Thanks Bob for the impact you made on me!

After Bob left i continued sharing my faith with some of the other young people helping and sometimes on my own. One day as i was driving to church on a Wednesday i noticed that a young man was walking along the road and the Holy Spirit said to me to stop and pick him up. So i did. His name was Mike and he was on his way to work, so i drove him there. We arrived early and had time to talk. I shared the Gospel with him & he accepted Christ as his Savior! I was over the moon! Immediately i went to church and shared with the Boyers and others what had happened. They rejoiced with me. In the following months i met with Mike once per week and we studied the Bible together. When i went to the mission field i lost contact with him, but one year when i was home i saw him in Beloit. He said that he had gotten married & that he was still walking with the Lord.

At one point i took Scott (not my brother) with me and we approached a woman in the park who was sitting on a bench by herself. As we approached i had my hand in my back pocket, ready to pull out the Four Spiritual Laws. I said to her, "We have something we would like to share with you." Her face immediately went white. The next moment i pulled out the tract and she started laughing. She told us that she had just read about a woman in a park being stabbed by two men. That day i learned the importance of using the right approach when sharing the Gospel & that it is probably best for a woman to share the Gospel with a woman.

As i grew in my faith i began to attend the "hour of power". Every Sunday evening, one hour before the service, Rev. & Mrs. Boyer and a number of other adults came together to spend the hour on our knees praying for God to move. As a young man of seventeen i was highly impressed with this & wanted to attend as often as possible. It was such a blessing to kneel before the throne of God in prayer.



*My class picture*



*Bob & his wife Veronique*

## ❖ 7. *Who, me teach? You've got to be kidding!*

At the age of seventeen Betty Dresselhaus, who was the head of the fourth & fifth grade department, approached me and asked if i would serve as a teacher for fourth grade boys. "Who, me teach?" I could never imagine myself doing that. I was so glad that she encouraged me to get involved. It was through that action that i discovered that God has given me the gift of teaching & that i love teaching the Bible more than any other thing in this world. I taught fourth grade boys class for two years. Thanks Betty for pushing me into the teaching ministry!

Shortly after beginning to teach fourth grade, another lady from my church Barb Christopherson, invited me to help out in the Bus program as a bus pastor. Our church had grown to six hundred people over the years and we had some old school buses that used to go out every Sunday to different parts of the city and bring in a hundred children for Sunday school. Many of these children came from homes where their parents had no interest in God. It was a great challenge to help these children know about Christ's love.

After serving as a bus pastor for two years, i was "promoted" to being a driver. I recruited a friend of mine, Philip Kipp to help me and we served another two years in that ministry. We saw God raise up some young people through that ministry, praise God! One Sunday i had to use the bathroom before going to the bus and went back into the church where i saw a group of men sitting in a circle, praying. They were praying for us! I realized that all our efforts and work was useless unless God was pouring out His power on us to be effective. Thank you men for your prayers!



*L.: a school bus from the 1970's very much like the one i used to drive.  
center & R.: Being "wrestled" into ministry in Crandon Wisconsin.*

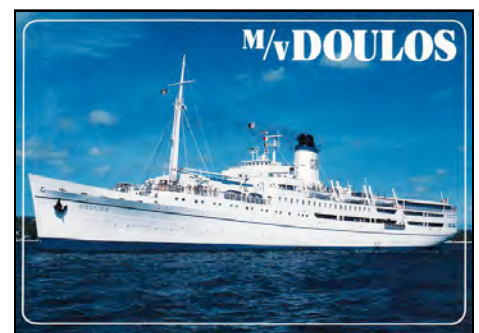


In September of 1978 a man named Gary Beeman from our church challenged me to get involved in missions and invited me to go with him & Scott to Mexico to work with Operation Mobilization for two weeks over the Christmas holidays. We spent a lot of time reading books by George Verwer and others in preparation for our trip. I was nervous as i had never left the country before and i had heard a lot of bad rumors about Mexico. But i was determined to go & so Gary, Scott & i drove from Wisconsin all the way down to Tampico, Mexico to serve the Lord in missions. OM had a big ship in the harbor called the *Doulos* and we were scheduled to have meetings on the ship. If Rev. Boyer had passion to reach the nations, then George Verwer was a fire ball of passion! What a godly man he is.

Together on the ship we had all night prayer meetings and sermons on missions. We also learned a number of phrases in Spanish. I noticed that already i was losing what little Spanish i had learned in high school. It was sad to see how poor some of the families were & it made me realize how wealthy we Americans really are. The ship never left the harbor, so i never felt sea sick like my wife did when she later served on the boat for three years.

At one point a number of children came up to us and sang and then one of them said, *dinero* and i pulled out my wallet. Immediately ten other kids drew close to me. "Put your wallet away!" Gary said. At that point i realized how naive i was about being in another country & culture.

That trip changed my life and now i was ready to head to the mission field as soon as i could. But that dream would not come to pass for another nine years.



*Welcome to Tampico, Mexico; the Ship MV Doulos*

After Bob Clifford had left, i began to pray and ask God to send us a youth pastor who would stay a long time. It seemed as if we had a different youth pastor every year and it was always so hard to say good-bye and get to know a new one. In October a couple came to candidate & Pastor Boyer said they had accepted. Somehow i felt they were not the right couple. Sure enough a few weeks later Pastor Boyer announced that they had decided not to come to Peoples Church.

Then in February of 1979 Pastor Boyer announced that a new couple were considering the position. He had the couple stand up. All i could see were their backs. *"This is Jim & Vicki Smith. They will be our new youth pastors."* The Lord immediately told me that this was the couple and they stayed at Peoples Church for more than seven years.

Jim & Vicki were very kind to me and encouraged me a lot. I began to notice that a number of the youth that i graduated with, one by one, went off to college and i began to feel lost at church. I went to the College & Career group, but felt out of place. In those days Jim asked me to help out with the youth and so i became one of the youth sponsors.

Over the next four years i was very active in all the youth activities and enjoyed going to a number of places and being involved in "home" missions in Crandon, Wisconsin working with the Indians there.

In 1980 I began to teach 14 year old boys Sunday school class & taught for 2 years. In that class i was able to teach a boy named Todd. I sensed that God was doing something special in his life. He later went on to be a missionary in India.

In 1981 i went to see the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I loved seeing all the countries & cultures that Indy was able to visit in his travels & i thought that that would be nice to be able to see all those places. For some reason one line in that movie stood out in mind for years until i finally discovered why. In the film a friend of Indiana Jones says he looks so old, to which he replies, *"It's not the years, it's the mileage."* I could never understand why i remembered that line until i began to review my life thirty years later. Now i understand exactly why that phrase stood out!



~~ Which one is the real Indy? ~~

~~ Jim & Vicki ~~ David Kipp ~~

I joined the Peoples Church softball team in 1978. Knowing how useless i was at sports, that was surprising. I very quickly learned that when we were just playing for fun, i could hit a home run as easily as anything but when we were in an actual game, i tensed up and couldn't hit the ball past second base. What's the matter with me any way!

We decided to buy team shirts. They were navy blue with white lettering. On the front of all the shirts it said *Peoples Church*. The shirt would cost three dollars and fifty cents. Then you could put whatever name you wanted on the back for ten cents a letter. So i decided to put *Gretschmann* on the back of my shirt. The first day with the new uniforms, my friend Ron Koopman says, "*Hey look everyone. Here comes Tim Gretschmann with his twenty dollar shirt.*" I guess that's one of the hazards of having a long German name.



*L: with Debbie, a good friend, center: wrestling with David Kipp & Scott  
R: Hanging out with the youth in my "\$20" baseball shirt.*



*L: the cool dude with the white belt (can you believe the style of clothes!)  
R: On a youth canoe trip with Joan who is now in heaven with Jesus.*



## ❖ 8. Welcome to "Generous" Motors.

As i grew older i began to think about what i wanted to do with the rest of my life. I have to admit that the missions vision had gone to the back of my mind and i was really beginning to enjoy farm life. At eighteen years old i was taking care of all the pigs and driving tractors every day and thought that the desire to be a missionary was just an emotional response of a child to a passionate message.

I talked it over with my dad and he told me that if i wanted to go into farming i would need to save up a lot of money so it would be good for me to find a good paying job. He suggested General Motors in Janesville on the assembly line where he was working. In November of 1979 i applied and was accepted. Now i had two jobs! I continued working on the farm & forty hours a week at GM. I was on second shift which meant starting work at 4:30 in the afternoon and working until one in the a.m. I rather liked the hours because i have never been an early riser!

My Dad was now working first shift so i only saw him on weekends. As the money began to come in, i began to think about getting a flashy car. I bought a 1976 Chevrolet Monte Carlo. After a while i got tired of that and bought a 1978 Oldsmobile Starfire. When i discovered that that car was useless on snow i bought a 1977 Firebird & later a 1972 Thunderbird. I enjoyed driving fast and would fly down Creek Road at 80 miles per hour. (Creek Road follows Turtle Creek and winds and bends and goes up & down hills all over the place. Boy, was i crazy!). Of course i had to test out each one of my cars & so would fly past my uncle's house at 1:30 in the a.m. at 100 miles per hour. Thank you God for protecting me in spite of my stupidity! (I discovered that the Firebird had the best steering & braking.)

As my bank account grew, i thought about buying a tractor. First i started off with a Farmall M. When that was too small i moved up to a John Deere 730. Then when i wanted something big enough to grind feed, i traded the 730 for a 930 Case. I remember talking with Gary Beeman about my tractor. He could not understand my logic for buying a tractor. He said, *"I have a piece of bubble gum. That does not mean I'm going to buy a bubble gum factory."* I figured he didn't know what he was talking about because he was not a farmer.

As i began to work at GM i could often hear Gary singing praises to Jesus in the body shop. I know a lot of the guys thought he was a nut case, but i was proud of him. Being shy, i did not have the ability to speak out like he did. But i did read my Bible every day on the line and others could see me doing it. In fact one day one of the men at work began to ridicule me. He would come by every day & shout out the same phrase in a loud voice, *"So have you saved the world yet? Of course not, they don't want to be saved."* It was hard going but i had many opportunities to talk with him about the Lord. I never saw him give his life to Christ.

One day my foreman told me that i was being moved to a different part of the plant (something that was quite usual for new employees). As i got up to leave, a lady who worked near me came by and said, *"Thank you for your testimony. I too am a Christian and your testimony has encouraged me to speak up more about my faith."*

As i continued working at GM, i also continued working in the youth group at church. I became very involved with camps, retreats, Bible studies, prayer meetings and social events. For three years in a row i helped train the quiz team for camp. One year we had five young people on our team & the book for study was 1 John (five chapters). I told each one of them to memorize a chapter & i would quiz them. I thought if i am going to ask them to memorize an entire chapter, then i should do the same. But which chapter? In order to be fair to them, i memorized the whole book. The next year i memorized Ephesians & then 1 Timothy (oh if i could only remember all those verses now. Of course memorization is useless if the Word doesn't change your life).

As time went along i felt God calling me to disciple some of the youth as i had been discipled. I noticed that a young man named Dave was not coming to youth group very often so i prayed and decided to invite him to the park. I remember after walking for a while we sat together in the car and the Holy Spirit was prompting me to talk about spiritual things with him. I remember feeling an incredible tiredness come over me (i realize now it was the enemy trying to discourage me).

After wrestling with the idea of just ignoring the spiritual part, i encouraged Dave to open up the Bible to Matthew 13 to the parable of the sower (one of my favorites). As we read the parable and i explained it to him, i could see his eyes light up and he was a different person from that point on. (i noticed that i was not tired any more). As i watched Dave over the next few years, i noticed that he was at church every time the doors were open and he began to write songs of praise and sing them on his guitar. As i watched the transformation in his life, i thought to myself , this is exactly what i want to do with the rest of my life.

I also began to give Philip Kipp a ride home from the meetings. (I ended up giving a lot of rides to a lot of youth because i had my own car and we lived so far out from the church). I had been best friends with Philip's brother David who had gone off to Texas to go to college. Philip & i would go have a pizza every Sunday & Wednesday evening after the youth meeting at Sicilian's. We went to Sicilian's so often that whenever we walked in, the waitress would say, *"I already know what you guys want."* We never had to place an order. Afterwards we would go back to Philip's house and sit in the driveway for hours talking and praying. It was a great time of fellowship with God.

One day Jim Smith decided to take a group of juniors & seniors (& me as well) & go visit a number of Christian colleges to help us decide where we would like to go. On one of the visits i felt a strong desire to enroll at Moody Bible Institute. It was close to home, was tuition free and offered a good Bible education. This was my new calling in life; to be a youth pastor in the United States of America (we'll see how long that calling lasts for).

In 1982 i talked with my foreman at GM about wanting to go to Moody. He said that i could enroll for an educational leave of absence & return to my job the next summer. So in 1982 i packed up my bags, threw them in the Firebird and headed for the big town of Chicago. Boy was i in for a big culture shock!



*replicas of my 1976 Monte Carlo ~~ 1977 Firebird ~~ 1972 Thunderbird*



*General Motors, Janesville, WI*



*the Gretschmann family*



# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 3: London's Calling*



## ❖ 9. *Moody Bible (Bridal) Institute*

In 1982 I enrolled at Moody Bible Institute with a Bible Theology major. The school was jokingly referred to as Moody "Bridal" Institute as many single young people supposedly went there to get their "Mrs." degree. Some referred to it as the shoe factory; single ones go in, and later come out in pairs. I have to admit that i was hoping that that would happen to me. But first and foremost i wanted a good Christian education to prepare me for being a youth pastor in the U.S.A.

As i mentioned before Moody had no tuition in those days. One only had to pay for room and board. I sold my 930 Case tractor to my Dad and that paid for half of my education.

When i arrived at Moody i discovered that my room had already been assigned to me. The men's dorm was 19 stories high & i thought it would be great to be in one of the upper floors and enjoy the view. To my disappointment i discovered i was on the third floor, the lowest floor for residency. I later discovered it was nice to be so close to the ground because i didn't have to wait for the elevator & could leave for class two minutes before it started. I discovered that each floor had a theme and ours was *the Third Herd*. As you can see by the picture we were quite a herd indeed! (I'm the one in the red muscle shirt, third from the right, in back.)

My first semester i joined the Moody Concert Band but, very quickly became so overwhelmed with the amount of studies and homework that i dropped out after a few months. I was so worried about failing that i became a virtual bookworm. I never engaged in any social activities or sports or any other extra curricular activities.



*The Third Herd*



*Crowell Hall*



*the city of Chicago*

I also had a difficult time getting used to the culture of Chicago. Why were there so many lights on at night? How am i supposed to sleep with all this noise and light? Why were there so many cars driving by on the road? Why couldn't my room mates keep the noise down? Why was there so much cement everywhere? Where is all the grass & fields? I never imagined having culture shock in my own country just two hours away from home! Going from a farm of 1000 pigs in the middle of nowhere to a city of over 3 million people was so overwhelming.

Then i received my report card. My grade point average for the first semester was 3.9 (4.0 is perfect). I realized it was time for balance. Study hard but also enjoy fellowship and be practical & learn all that God wants me to. Getting a good education is more than just getting good grades.

As i looked at my list of classes and the other possible electives, i decided that i wanted to change my major from Bible Theology to Christian Education. I began to get involved in ministry teaching Sunday school in an Armenian Church in Bryn Mawr, Chicago. Moody required that every student participate in a PCM (practical Christian ministry). I enjoyed getting to know the people from a different culture. I also began working in the area known as Cabrini Green.

In those days Cabrini Green was America's second most dangerous neighborhood. However, it was said that as long as you were wearing a shirt that said "Moody" on it you were safe. The youth club i was working with was made up entirely of African American boys. Growing up as a pig farmer from Wisconsin i had no contact with African Americans & very quickly discovered that i enjoyed their culture and their personality. Every week we would sing songs like *Soon and very soon we are going to see the King*, and i enjoyed teaching some of the boys how to read.

One of the projects i had as a Christian education major, was to begin a ministry, map out where it was going, what would be taught and why, & how to encourage the students to apply the Bible to their lives. I began working with youth and children at Moody Church which was just one mile north of Moody Bible Institute. I had a group of youth who were a mix of white & black. We had leaders who were trained to help the young people in the study of the Bible, have prayer groups and organize their teams for games.

I loved putting the program together and learned through the process that one of my favorite classes at Moody was Curriculum Development. In that class each one was responsible to write their own curriculum, not just buy something from David C. Cook or some other publisher, & teach it. Our teacher would grade us on how creative & practical the material was. I will never forget what one of my teachers at



Moody once said. "Our God is the Creator of the universe & He has created us in His image. When you teach & preach be creative. Don't just copy someone else's idea or style. Be the person God intended you to be and communicate His word with your own unique style.

As i continued in that ministry, i was told that we needed to visit some of the young people in their home surroundings. So i decided to ask Woodie if i could visit his family on Saturday. He said yes & so i took the bus to his neighborhood. Woodie met me at the bus stop and we proceeded to walk a number of blocks to his house. As we walked through the neighborhood i noticed that everyone kept looking at us. A group of boys who were playing basketball even stopped their game to stare as we walked by. Then it dawned on me. I am the only white guy in this whole neighborhood! Well, i survived & thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Woodie's family. His family was so glad for the effort i had made, that they immediately picked up support for me when i went to the mission field & thirty years later they are still supporting us! I was told after that incident that many of the kids in the neighborhood were asking who that white guy was.

Well, i was in for another culture shock. One day Woodie and some of the kids wanted to go to the Lincoln Park Zoo which is very near Moody Church & free. So we set out across the park, arrived at the zoo and went inside. What was the first animal i saw in the zoo? A Holstein cow! What's a cow doing in the zoo? How ridiculous! It should be out in the field or in the barn giving milk. The youth informed me that milk doesn't come from cows. It comes from the grocery store.

Very quickly i was learning that i was in a clash of cultures. The next experience was in the Museum of Science & Industry. When i walked in, what was the first thing i saw? An International 1586 tractor identical to the one i used to drive in the field on my dad's farm. *What's this thing doing here? It should be out in the field.* (Of course Chicago was the home of International Harvester tractors in those days, so all the city people had to have a good look at what International was producing). I began to learn the importance of seeing the world through someone else's eyes and the need to adapt to different cultures. That would be a big help to me later as i struggled with living in foreign lands.

In the summer of 1983 General Motors said that i could no longer enroll for an educational leave of absence. Also i was informed that all the workers who had my seniority level were being moved to a city i had never heard of; Fort Wayne, Indiana. (That city will be mentioned again later in my life's story). I was told if i wanted to continue working at GM that i would have to move to Indiana. I didn't like that idea, so i quit my job to return to Moody.

## ❖ 10. *Have you forgotten your promise to Me?*

In 1983 i returned to Moody and continued my studies and ministries. At one point we had a missions conference. As one of the speakers shared, i heard a voice inside me say, "*Have you forgotten your promise to Me? You said you would go anywhere for Me.*" I began to realize that i was looking at life according to my own perspective. Being a youth pastor in the U.S.A. would certainly be a good thing, but was it the best? Was it truly what God wanted me to do with my life? As i listened to the speaker, he mentioned that 80% of all full time youth leaders in the world live and work in the U.S.A. But only 3% of all the youth in the world lived in the U.S.A. What were we prepared to do about that?

I quickly realized that i was making my own decisions, and then asking God to bless me in what i was doing. I repented and asked God to lead me. At that point several mission agencies were present & looking for recruits for the summer of 1984. So i decided to sign up. I was always interested in Europe, so i signed up with Greater Europe Mission & they told me that i would be assigned to go to Portugal on a builders team. I had mixed feelings. Yes, i wanted to go to the mission field, but to go to a place where i didn't speak the language, just to swing a hammer for a few weeks? Somehow it didn't feel right.

At about that time Betty Sadler from United World Mission who i had known for a few years came to Moody looking for missionary recruits. She was putting together a team of sixteen youth to go to England for six weeks to work with youth & children. Would i be interested? As i prayed about it, i sensed God was leading me that direction, so i signed up. But i have to admit i thought it a bit strange to take the Gospel to England when they were the ones who brought it to us. I figured it would be a good experience but didn't think of it as a mission trip.

So in the summer of 1984 I got on the 747 at O'Hare airport in Chicago & flew to New York where i met the rest of the team. We then flew the five hours across the "pond" to England. *How can anyone sit on a plane for five hours*, i thought. Little did i realize that five hours is a short flight.

As the plane was landing, i felt an incredible pressure on my ear drums and began inhaling through my nose as hard as i could (i didn't know i was supposed to exhale to make my ears pop.) By the time i landed i had an ear ache in both ears and later had to go to the doctor.

After we arrived we were picked up by Colin and Jenny and Sue who were working in association with United World Mission in those days. For the next six weeks we were involved in numerous youth & children ministries & evangelism with six different churches. We started off at Salem Baptist Church in Romford, east London. It was a great time & we learned the importance of working together as a team with people we had never met before. Half the team came from the south of America and at times i had more difficulty understanding what they were saying than i did with the Brits.

As we talked with the youth i realized that even though they had religious education in school, they had no idea what it means to know Christ personally. I began to realize that yes, England is a mission field and the number of youth workers was very small.

As we worked in different communities east of London, i began to feel a stirring in my heart. Was God calling me to move to England? Then one day our team was split in two. One group would work at the Harold Hill Evangelical Free Church (HHEFC) in Romford and another team would work at the Great Wakering Evangelical Church (GWECC) near Southend on Sea in Essex. I was chosen to go to GWECC. When we arrived we were greeted by our host family Malcolm & Doreen Hammond. Little did i know at the time that this precious couple would become my second mum and dad.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the little country village of Great Wakering and was glad to be away from all the hustle and bustle of Chicago. As we spent time working in this little church, more and more i felt God saying *this is the exact place where i want you to serve Me*. One day i had a talk with Colin about the thoughts and feelings i was having & he said the church was looking for a youth leader. As i prayed about this, God confirmed that this was the place where He wanted me to be.



*Salem Baptist Church, Romford, east London*



As the six weeks came to an end, i went to the doctor to check on my ears. The doctor told me that i had better not fly home or my ear drums would burst when landing. *What do i do now? Am i stuck here in England?* I was told that i would have to sail home by ship. I had one of two choices: i could take the Queen Elizabeth 2 cruise liner from Southampton and sail to New York & then take a train to Chicago. That would be five days on the Ocean, then seventeen hours on train. Or i could take a Norwegian trawler that would enter the Saint Lawrence seaway & travel through all of the Great Lakes and arrive in Chicago nine days later.

Well i was in a bit of a hurry. Sailing on the QE 2 would mean arriving one week late for classes at Moody. The trawler would be too slow. (Looking back i wish i would have gone on the trawler). So after the team left, i stayed home alone at Colin & Jenny's house (they went to Holland on vacation) and later took the train from London to Southampton. The ship was huge and the voyage was very boring (i got seasick on the second day). I landed in New York, and spent the day walking up and down Fifth Avenue and Central Park. In the evening i got on the train at Grand Central station & the next day i was back in Chicago again.

I immediately got back into my studies and shortly after that i went to a conference at Willowbrook Church where Bill Hybells was the pastor. Josh McDowell was speaking. At one point Josh gave his testimony and said that he was thirty-one years old when he got married. I immediately heard a voice inside my head say, *"Tim, you'll be married when you are thirty-one."* I dismissed the voice thinking that this is how cults are started. Someone "hears" a voice speaking to them. I was planning to find a nice young lady at Moody "Bridal" Institute. Little did i realize that it was God speaking to me.



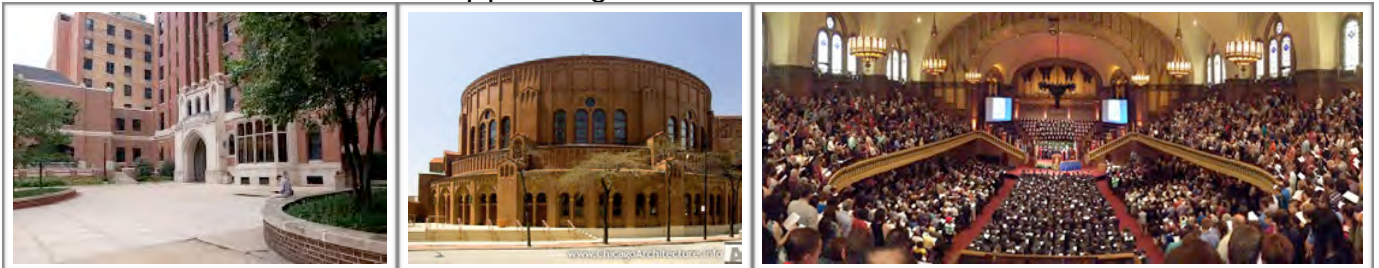
*the HMS Queen Elizabeth 2*

One day i heard that there was a shortage of percussion players in the band & that they were looking for someone to join. So i decided that it was time to begin playing drums again. Being in band was very demanding as we practiced three times per week and then went on the road during winter & spring breaks. I would not be able to go home like i had before. I really enjoyed playing and very soon found myself playing the snare drum once again.

During the Christmas candlelight service in Torrey Grey Auditorium at Moody i had to play a solo to begin the song and then the rest of the band came in later. I was so nervous standing in front of 2000 people being the only one playing, but i managed to get through it.

Later, when we went on tour we traveled out to places as far away as Colorado, Kansas and other states. It was then i realized how easy it is to just pick up a flute or french horn and carry it with you. We in the percussion section needed our own van to carry all the instruments in our section. We became know as the "truck crew". At each concert someone would get up and give their testimony. When it was my turn i mentioned that i was from Clinton, Wisconsin. My friend Deb said, "you're not from Clinton. You're from Beloit." I pointed out to her that although i was born in Beloit, i actually grew up in Clinton.

As we traveled on tour we stayed in people's homes. Each of us had a room mate that we stayed with. My room mate turned out to be Dan who was from Iowa & who had grown up with my dad's cousin. The first house we went to, the lady of the house showed us the bedroom. It was a double bed. I remember sleeping as close to the edge as i possibly could. Dan & i became friends & later he too helped me get to the mission field by supporting me. He was one of my first supporters & thirty years later he & his wife are still supporting us. Thanks Dan!



Left to right: Moody Bible Institute ~~ Moody Church (outside) ~~ (inside)



From left to right: My graduation picture from Moody 1985 ~~ the Moody Concert Band (i am behind the cymbal) ~~ Woodie's parents, Woodie Sr. & Annette

## ❖ 11. *The long & winding road that leads to the mission field.*

In 1985 i graduated from Moody and immediately threw my razor away. In those days students were not permitted to have beards. That was the last time i ever shaved my beard! Little did i realize that i would marry a woman who said to me, "*If you ever shave it off, don't come home.*"

The next step was to join a Mission and raise funds to go to England. I applied at United World Mission & drove from Wisconsin all the way to St. Petersburg, Florida where i participated in candidate orientation. Six weeks in Florida in July & August was TOO HOT! The director was Don C. who had been a pastor in Wisconsin just up the road from where i lived. I was accepted & told that i needed to raise 50% of my support before i could go on the road with other missionaries to visit churches and share about our needs. These meeting were called the "crusades".

During this time i had the privilege of going through candidate school with some other Cheeseheads: Don & Betsy who were also preparing to go to England.

I very quickly discovered that one doesn't say, "*I want to be a missionary*", and then head to the field two weeks later. Raising support was hard going. I talked to a lot of my friends, send out prayer letters, contacted local churches and did everything i could think of. During that time i worked at Peoples Church as a part time janitor, snow remover, window washer, etc. Not a very glamorous job after just receiving my diploma in Christian education. I guess i needed to learn a little more humility before being ready to go to the field.

I continued serving the Lord in youth ministries & became an "assistant" AWANA director in the junior high department under Mark. My friends Lowell & Kathy & Jim & Deb were also leaders.

As i began to help the children memorize their verses, i noticed that some were in a hurry to recite them and then go memorize more so they could get more points. I began to ask the kids questions about the verses they were learning. Some did not like this because they wanted to go recite more. However, i noticed that one boy Mike was always full of enthusiasm and always talking about the Lord. In high school Mike became a very dynamic witness for Christ until one day he had an accident and died. A number of his friends became Christians as a result of his testimony. Praise the Lord!

As i continued in ministry at Peoples Church, one summer i was invited by Kay, who was in charge of the Backyard Bible clubs, to become one of the teachers. I had a great time teaching the Bible to children, singing songs about Jesus, making crafts and playing games. We later took a group of children to the Sky Lodge Christian Camp in Montello, Wisconsin where i served as game leader. I did this for three summers. In the summer of 2015 we had the privilege of visiting the camp where my brother Scott & his wife were leaders and it was good to be able to reminisce about what took place thirty years earlier and to see that the ministry continues on.



In 1986 i was able to raise enough support to be at 50% & was invited to tour with the "crusade team" of missionaries. We traveled through Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts speaking in churches about the ministries to which God had called us. It was good getting to know better some of the missionaries who had made an impact on me when i was a teenager. I have to admit i felt a bit "green" as i was the only one who had not actually served on the mission field as a long term missionary. I did not have any field experiences to share. But the Lord put on my heart Psalm 37:23 which states: *"the steps of a man are ordered by the Lord and He delights in his way."* So i was able to share all about the experiences God had led me through to get me to this point. It was truly amazing to see how each event in my life was a "step ordered by the Lord".

In 1987 i was getting a bit frustrated. It had been two years of support raising and i was still at 62% of my support. I began to say *"Lord, did you really call me? Maybe i got it wrong."* One day i received a phone call from a lady who had been at my church all my life. Her name was Hazel and she had grown up in England. She told me that she felt very strongly that her dear England needed the Gospel & that God was sending me there. She also mentioned how the Lord had blessed her over the years & that He had told her to give me the rest of the support i needed. In one moment of joy i went from 62% to 100%! Pack your bags Cheesehead, you're on your way to England!



*From left to right: serving as an AWANA leader; on the road with the "crusade" team; relaxing after a missions conference.*



# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 4: The Peculiar People*



## ❖ 12. *Can i really go without a wife?*

Well i was truly over the moon. Now that i had 100% i was ready to go. So, just to be on the safe side, let me get my ears examined to see if they are o.k. Bad news! My doctor informed me that the lower portion of the incus bone in my left ear was deteriorated and that i needed surgery. "What now Lord? How am i ever going to get to England?" The doctor informed that i would be in the hospital for one day & that one week later i would be able to fly to England. I found that hard to believe. No way did i want to experience the same kind of pain i had in 1984. I guess it was time to trust in the Lord once again.

In the meantime, our youth group was headed to North Dakota with our new youth leader Rod & wife Nancy. We spent a few weeks working with American Indians near the International Peace Gardens. It was another chance for a cross cultural ministry experience. It was great fun to work with some of the other youth and to see God working in their lives.

As time drew nearer i struggled with one thing. Could i really go without a wife? I began to wrestle with my feelings. Do i say to my mission that i want to wait until i find someone before i go or do i trust that God is with me & be willing to go alone?

My friends used to joke with me about how long i would be in language school. I would later discover that British English is very different to American English. Another challenge would be learning to drive on the other side of the road.



*A genuine teepee in North Dakota. I'm standing in the back between the "horses"*



The surgery went well & i had some pain afterwards but the doctor said i was "good to go." So i began packing my bags & saying my good-byes. On August 31 my first niece Brittney was born to my sister Julie. So small & tiny, i enjoyed holding her and realized that i would not see her again for a number of years. (She is now taller than me!) On September 7 i celebrated my twenty-seventh birthday and on the 14th i headed for England. Look out Brits, here i come!

### ❖ 13. *The Yankee is coming, the Yankee is coming!*

When i landed in London, i noticed that there was a clicking in my ear, but no pain. I went to the doctor and he informed that everything was just fine. My leader Rick had come to England to visit with Colin & talk about ministry. He & I stayed with Ted in Romford for two weeks. After Rick left, i continued to live with Ted. Ted & his wife are the ones who had taken me to the train station in London in 1984 so i could catch the train to Southampton to board the ship. Ted's wife had since died. We two bachelors lived together for four months.

During those months i was involved in youth ministry at Salem Baptist Church and also worked in the Havering Christian Bookshop where Colin still serves as Director. In those days i was seconded to Europe For Christ, a small mission organization headed up by Colin, who had its headquarters in the Bookshop. The church in Great Wakering was not quite ready for me yet as Malcolm & Doreen were fixing up the house that i would live in (it did not have a bathroom as the lady who had lived in it took her baths in a tub in the kitchen & it had an outdoor toilet).



*Havering Christian Bookshop ~~ Director Colin ~~ Colin & wife Jenny*

I spent a lot of time walking the streets of Romford and eventually found Chris who i had met at the YMCA back in 1984. He had told me then that he was a homosexual & still was. I shared the Gospel with him a number of times but eventually lost contact. Some of the other kids i worked with were street kids and so quite rough around the edges. We enjoyed our youth meetings together and i shared the Gospel a number of times, but it would seem that they just were not interested in knowing Jesus. One night i found the window on my car smashed after a youth meeting. It was such a rough neighborhood that the walls around the church had pieces of glass on the top to discourage people from climbing over.

In January 1988 i was able to move out to North Shoebury, Essex which was just down the road from Great Wakering, located at the very end of the River Thames on the north bank just where it hits the North Sea. I loved living near the sea and often enjoyed walking along the Southend seafront. Southend-on-Sea population: 163,000, Great Wakering: 5000.

For the first three months i lived with Malcolm & Doreen. They are the same age as my parents and took good care of me. I was all alone and they made me feel very much a part of their family. Their daughter is older than me & their son younger, so i got to experience the feeling of being the middle child. Both their children had their own families, so i was the only "son" still living at home.

In March the house was ready, so i moved into the two bedroom place right next to "Dad & Mum's" house. The houses in the country often have names. The name of my new house was "Sunnycroft." I discovered that Mum was born in the house & it still had a second world war air raid shelter in the yard.



*Dad & Mum ~~ "Sunnycroft" is the left half of this duplex ~~ Southend on Sea*

As i attended the church i observed what was going on and how i could serve. I discovered that the Great Wakering Evangelical Church (GWEC) was part of a denomination known as the Union of Evangelical Churches (UEC). The original name of this group was the "Peculiar People" based on 1 Peter 2:9 of the King James version which reads: *Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, ...* They had changed their name to the UEC as people began to associate the word "peculiar" with "weird".

The church had asked me to help with the boys clubs, youth group & school assemblies. As i observed what was going on i met an elderly lady named Joan who was in charge of the small boys club. Every Tuesday evening she would lead the boys in singing, praying, games and Bible story. She was glad i had come because she wanted to see a man teach the boys. Later the same evening the older boys had their club. Steve & Janet led this club along with Cynthia. On Saturday evenings the youth got together with the pastor's wife leading. The church wanted me to lead the youth & younger boys and help out with the older boys. They also wanted me to do school assemblies in the two local elementary schools.

As i spent time getting to know the youth i discovered that they were connected with six other UEC churches. Once per month these churches would get together and have a special activity. The first one i attended was a fancy dress night. I put on my three piece suit with my best tie thinking that we were going to have a formal dinner or something. This was my first English lesson. Everyone was dressed up in costumes. It was a costume party! When asked what i was dressed up as, i said i was a gangster from Chicago. I couldn't think of anything else!



*The Great Wakering Evangelical Church, outside and inside*



I later discovered that the kids drank squash (cool-aid) & ate biscuits (cookies). The motor of the car is under the bonnet (not the hood) & you throw things in the boot (trunk). And when the Brits advertise a boot sale, it means you throw things in the boot & meet in a place where you can sell them (similar to our rummage sale). Boy was i confused! I would later put together a list of 180 words and ask Americans if they knew what they meant in Britain. They were amazed at the differences. One time as we were getting ready for bed, Mum said to me that she would *knock me up* in the morning, which means knock on your door to wake you up. I had to explain to her not to say that to Americans because in some places it has a vulgar meaning. Hearing one "bloke" say to another on the train "*Give us a fag then*" made me blink until i saw a cigarette pass between them.

One year i had to laugh as an American was sharing an experience of seeing a bum in the elevator in Chicago with no pants on. Your "bum" in England is your rear end & "pants" are underwear. The Brits had the idea that someone was "mooning" him as he got into the elevator (called a lift in England. What Americans call a bum is a tramp, and pants are called trousers. Try not to get confused).

Well of course living in England meant learning to drive on the "wrong" side of the road. Of course the steering wheel is on the right side of the car. Having driven so many different types of vehicles over the years it didn't take long for me to get used to it. But of course i had to pass a drivers test and before i could do that i had to learn how to drive properly (don't cross your arms when turning the wheel, slide it between your hands & always remember to use the hand brake. 95% of the cars were stick shift - forget about automatic!)

Well i passed with flying colours (note British spelling) & my instructor was quite "chuffed" (excited) that he had taught his first American how to drive (actually my dad did that when i was twelve). I discovered that my license is valid until 2030 when i turn seventy years old.



*Replicas of first British car a Morris Marina ~ Bedford van ~ Vauxhall Cavalier*

The church also wanted me to take school assemblies in the local schools. This was foreign to me as in America we have separation of church and state and can not share Bible stories in a school assembly. I watched the pastor of GWEC do an assembly & learned the style for teaching. The kids would march in single file and sit on the floor in organized rows. I was impressed at how well behaved they were! Later i began to take in my Betty Lukens flannel graph set to teach Bible stories and my puppet stage and puppets. I tried to make the assembly as lively as possible and share the Bible stories in such a way that the children would remember them. I discovered that they liked acting out the stories & volunteering to move the puppets as songs played on my cassette player.

One day the Principal said to me that the children enjoyed the assemblies that i did & that they were different because of my American personality and that they enjoyed the way i told the Bible stories but that i should tone down the teaching on sin & giving your life to Jesus. I began to realize that the assemblies were known as religious education and that although the Bible could be taught in schools, so could the Koran, the Hindu Vedic teachings and any other religion. Americans complain that Christianity is kicked out of the schools. In England it is mixed with all kinds of other religions, leading to confusion as to what truth really is.

As i continued working with the boys, my goal was to see the youth actively involved in teaching and leading. I had a four step goal in mind: first year they serve as helpers watching how i lead. I would plan everything. The second year they would be responsible for leading their team in games and group times of prayer, recording points, etc. The third year they would begin teaching the Bible stories, leading the games, etc. with me helping them to decide what they would teach & how they would lead. The fourth year i would be an observer. Christopher, Simon & Daniel were chosen to help and they did an excellent job.



*Left: Andre; ~~ center top: boys from the club, center bottom: Kelly, Daniel & Christopher leading the vacation Bible school, ~~ Simon & Kim & family.*

I also got to be a bus driver again on Sunday mornings. This time instead of a sixty passenger bus, i was driving a twelve passenger minibus. I was able to see where many of the youth lived. I discovered that Kim & Simon were born on the same day at the same hospital. They ended up getting married and have two girls.

As i looked at the youth group, only one young person had Christian parents. Unfortunately, his father was having an affair & his parents ended up in divorce. I talked with our new pastor Simon & suggested that we have a social meeting for adults and invite all the parents to come to the meeting to get to know them and share the Gospel with them. We did this on a number of occasions & through these meetings we saw Kelly's parents and Tracey's parents give their lives to Christ. They are still very active in serving the Lord.

As the youth group grew, i felt that my Morris was too small & decided to get a van to help in ministry. Now the church had two minibuses. The youth group was growing! As we participated with the UEC youth groups i suggested we have a quiz competition. Each youth group would have a couple of months to study First John & then we would get together to have a friendly competition. I discovered that i had the youngest of the six groups. The youngest, Nicholas, was only twelve. Our team came in second! The winning team had youth in their early twenties, so i was quite proud of them! Just last year i heard the tragic news that at the age of thirty-seven Nicholas dropped dead of a heart attack after running a half marathon.

I wish i could say that all the youth are walking with the Lord. But even though you share the Gospel and challenge the youth to give God all their hearts, lives and souls to Him, it doesn't always happen that way. I will say that i am very proud of Joanne who shows a deep love for the Lord & is presently serving in GWECC as a youth leader. Her passion & desire to serve the Lord shine brightly. Keep up the good work Joanne!



The Gt. Waking quiz team ~~ Nicholas & son George ~~ Joanne



It was fun comparing cultures. At one time one of the youth asked me why our dollar bills are all the same size & color. *"Why is a twenty dollar bill the same size as a one dollar bill? Doesn't it get confusing?"* "No, i replied. *"We know how to read."* For some reason they didn't think that was very funny. I also tried to explain that we drive on the right side of the road & they drive on the wrong side. I explained that when you are right, then you are right, so when you are left then you are wrong. They didn't accept that explanation either.

When i first considered moving to North Shoebury Colin asked if i would like to be a camp director. He explained that Malcolm & Doreen had a piece of land they wanted to set up as a youth camp. So i said yes without asking for any details. I discovered that the land was one acre and that there wasn't any money in the budget at all.

I would have to attempt to raise funds to buy cabins, get permission from the local council and basically start from the ground up, literally! Being a foreigner in a country where i had no contacts was a bit daunting. But God was faithful & helped me get things done. This was another cultural experience for me. With my American mindset i had imagined a big thirty acre field with cabins already set up. But i discovered that the British often refer to their postage stamp size lawns. They are used to small fields & crowded neighborhoods.

The first order of business was to decide a name for the camp. I immediately suggested Sky Lodge Christian Camp, thinking about the one i had worked at in Wisconsin. With the bright blue sky over head, i felt it was an appropriate name. (I discovered that Great Wakering is in the Guinness Book of Records as being the driest place in Great Britain. In spite of that, it still rains a lot!)



*Left: the "camp" in 1987 ~~ center: the three cabins ~~ right: the bunk beds*

I began to write to a number of trusts in England & for all my effort we received a little over \$1000 from two trusts, one of them being the Prince's Trust (as in Prince Charles. He never showed up to inaugurate the camp).

We eventually started seeing money come in and it was my job to look for portable cabins to purchase & put on the site. One day as i was driving to Kent to look at some cabins, i drove under a bridge on the motorway (Interstate). As i drove under the bridge i felt a strong pressure on the front of the van. The next moment my windshield exploded all over the place and i had to abandon my trip. However, we finally bought the cabins and Steve from the church helped construct the bathrooms in each cabin. We had room for about forty campers.

The next project was to put in a driveway from the street to go all the way to the back (the camp was behind Malcolm & Doreen's house). My former youth pastors Jim & Vicki brought a team of youth from the Detroit area and in the space of two weeks we had our driveway. Thanks guys! I was told one day by someone on the town council that one of the neighbors had put in a petition against the camp & had a number of others sign it. The councilman told me that our camp was on green belt land which meant we were not allowed to put up any permanent buildings. He assured me that the council wanted to see this project go forward to help the local youth and that we had nothing to worry about concerning the petitions. Thanks Lord!

Later i discovered that we had to buy a pump in order to move the waste uphill so that it would flow to the sewer system at the street. We had to dig a long trench & put in tubing which took a lot of time and effort as i had to do most of the work myself. The camp was finally operational in 1991 just as i was leaving to go back to America on home ministry. That summer Jim & Vicki returned again with a team to go on a concert tour across the southeast of England & Wales.



*Sky Lodge Christian Camp's driveway in 1989 & in 2009; "Dad & Mum"*

# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 5: Finding a Wife*



*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD. Proverbs 18:22*



## ❖ 14. *I need a wife.*

In January 1991 i was feeling lonely. *"I'm thirty years old. When am i going to find a wife?"* Perhaps God doesn't want me to get married. What do i do? I finally came to the point where i said to the Lord, *"I want to get married. Please give me a wife. Or if you want me to be single for the rest of my life, o.k. Please help me to be content with that."* At that moment the Lord reminded me of what He said to me when i listened to Josh McDowell. *"Tim, you'll be thirty-one when you get married."* I thought, *"How is that going to happen? I am thirty years old and i don't know anyone. I'll be thirty-one in nine months."* The whole idea seemed impossible to me. So, i decided to get my supporters involved. I sent a letter to all five hundred prayer supporters, asking them to pray that i would find a wife or be content being single.

In February my friend Don, who had served in England with me & was now head of Operation Mobilization (OM) Lit in Waynesboro, Georgia, came to England to attend a conference. (My British friend referred to it as OMelette). Don made it a point to look me up. He said that there was a young lady named Susana from Uruguay, South America who was working in his office. He suggested i write to her and get to know her. I thought, *"This is interesting coming from Don. He always told me not to be in a hurry to get married. He said often marriage ends up like flies on a screen door. The ones on the inside want to get out and the ones on the outside want to get in."* Maybe i should write to this woman Susana and see what happens.

I took his advice & sent a letter. This was in the days before computers so i had to wait a few weeks for a response. Sure enough Susana wrote back to me. I asked her about her experiences with Operation Mobilization on the Doulos and about her family in Uruguay and how she came to know the Lord, etc.

In April, Dwight the leader of our mission, suggested that i fly to Vienna to go with David, another missionary, to Romania. David had been with Child Evangelism Fellowship & had taught training sessions for those working with children over the years and Dwight knew i was quite interested in working with children. I would spend a month in Romania. During that time i would have no contact with the outside world and not receive any mail. My correspondence with Susana would have to be put on hold.

Susana informed me that her visa in America was expiring in April and that she was going to try to renew it. But there was no guarantee of that. So, would i return to England to find out that this was another dead end relationship? I had gone out with other women in the past but it never seemed right. I was looking for a woman with a

call to serve the Lord in full time missions. Some of my friends accused me of being too picky.

In April i flew to Vienna, then we drove all day, crossing Hungary on our way to Romania. I could not believe how beautiful Budapest was. I wanted to stay here and enjoy the city but we had to move on and stayed in a hotel in Hungary on the edge of Romania. The next day we drove across the border & then on to Cluj Napoca, Romania's second largest city.

Here i learned how to speak through an interpreter. I had never done it before, so i was very nervous. Eventually i caught on & the interpreter was very good (she had translated for Billy Graham when he preached). I fell in love with Romania. It was a very poor country but the people were very kind and everyone had a big family! I discovered that the average size of a family was ten children. Ceausescu had wanted to have the largest army in eastern Europe, so he demanded that the people have many children. If you were single after age twenty-five your taxes went up more and more each year until you married. If you had more than four children, you received tax exemptions.

I enjoyed my trip across Romania & we entered the country in the west and drove across Transylvania all the way to Bucharest in the east, (no i did not see Dracula, but i did see the castle of Vlad Dracula) then headed north almost to the border with Moldova to the city of Iasi, then back across the country to Hungary. We spoke in six different locations and stayed in homes all across the nation.



### *Sights and people of Romania*

I was impressed with the people's commitment. Churches were packed with standing room only. Services were at least three hours long with three different men preaching. Quite a big difference to England where we had to entice them to come. I heard a lot of amazing stories of God's goodness & His miracles in helping His people during the Communist years. Wow, we had it soft in America!

As we traveled across Hungary a truck pulled out in front of us. All of a sudden a steel cable snapped across our windshield, shattering it and caving in the door frame on the driver's side. The truck had been towing another truck! The car was totaled & so we rode back to Austria in the cab of a tow truck. If we had been going any faster we could have been decapitated!

At this point i had been praying and saying, *"Lord if you want me in Romania, I'm willing to go."* But i never felt God leading me in that direction. I discovered when i returned to England that Susana's visa had been renewed and i was able to talk with her on the phone. I looked forward to meeting her soon.

In August i returned to Wisconsin to see my family & then drove to Waynesboro, Georgia to meet Susana. It is interesting to note that the first time i saw Susana face to face was on my thirty-first birthday!



*First meeting in Susana's house ~~ the King George Restaurant*



## ❖ 15. *Will you hunt me?*

After meeting Susana i waited a long time before deciding that she was the one for me. Eighteen days after meeting her for the first time i decided to propose. I invited her to go for a meal with me to the King George Pub in Augusta, Georgia so we could have a good English meal. Afterwards we took a walk along the river that divides Georgia from South Carolina.

I had checked earlier with my pastor Ron to see if i had my phrase correct. "*¿Quieres casarme?*" I was prepared to ask her in Spanish. "*Is that correct, Ron?*" "*Yes i think so,*" he replied. Why did he say *i think so*? Any way he had been a missionary in Spain & Bolivia so i guess it must be right. She would be well impressed that i had proposed to her in Spanish.

As we walked along we found a place to sit down and i got down on one knee and asked her my question. She had her head bowed down & was swatting the mosquitos. She did not reply at first, so i asked again. "*¿Quieres casarme?*" "Yes, she replied. I immediately explained that in March i had to go on crusades again & then go to school in North Carolina for four months before returning to England as a missionary. When would she be able to get married? We decided on December 28 in Wisconsin. (If she left the country to get married it would be difficult to get back in again).

I found out later that i had conjugated my Spanish verb incorrectly. Instead of asking, *Will you marry me?*" i had asked her, "*Will you hunt me?*"



*the river walk in Augusta*



*"¿Quieres casarme?"*

What was i going to do? First i messed up British English and now i was messing up Spanish. I guess one needs to be able to laugh at one's self. At the bridal shower the cake had written on it, "*The Hunt is On!*"

Susana wrote to her friends to tell her about our wedding. Unfortunately she had never mentioned anything about me to any of her friends thinking that it would be easier if things did not work out. When she informed her friend Shirley that she was getting married on December 28, her friend laughed. "*Ha, ha Susana that's funny.*" Susana had forgotten that December 28 is like April 1 (April fool's day) in America. Her friend did not believe her until she sent her a program for the wedding.

Earlier that year Susana had met Ron & Shirley Anderson who were working with OM in Atlanta, Georgia. Ron had performed a wedding there & Susana, who referred to Ron as Tío (uncle), said to him that if she ever got married in the USA that she would like for him to do the wedding. Unbeknown to Susana, Ron had served at my home church, Peoples Church, as the assistant pastor when i was growing up. His wife & my mom had been friends since before they were married.

As it turned out, Ron did marry us and i said my vows in Spanish while Susana said hers in English. Rev. Boyer also officiated at the wedding. He had married my parents & dedicated me as a baby, so it was special to have both pastors participating. None of Susana's family was able to come to the wedding, but we made plans to see them next summer.



*~~ The bride getting ready ~~ Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Gretschmann ~~*





*Susana, me & niece Brittney ~~ Brittney, Ryan & Allison ~~ my family*

We were married the end of December 1991 and then lived in Georgia in January & February 1992. We moved to Union Mills NC where we participated in the School of Intercultural Studies for four months. Dorm life was a bit difficult for newlyweds. We had to share the bathroom, the kitchen, laundry & everything else, (except the bedroom) with all the other families who were going through training with us.

In August 1992 we flew to Uruguay so i could meet my in-laws. i immediately noticed that now half my family spoke English & the other half spoke Spanish and i could not communicate with my in-laws without having my wife translate for me.



*Susana's family in Uruguay*





## ❖ 16. *London is calling again*



In February 1993 we moved to Romford, east London and lived in my friend Sue's house. Four times per week we would drive to Harold Hill to participate in the meetings and teach in the church and in school assemblies. We were now working with the Harold Hill Evangelical Free Church (HHEFC - remember this name from 1984?).

In 1991 i had helped start a youth group at HHEFC with six young people. The group had grown to about twelve in my absence. Now i had come back with a wife and we were determined to work with youth & children in the east London area. Gary, who had served as a short term missionary in 1982, was now the pastor. He and his wife Barb had moved to HHEFC with their two children in 1986. When i left for the USA in 1991 i said good-bye to Barb. She died from a brain tumor shortly after that. I believe she was only thirty-four at the time.

When we arrived in 1993 we discovered that Gary was seeing a young lady named Penny. HHEFC was a small church that was growing. We immediately began to help out in the kids ministry known as Pitstop with Andrew & Julie, Phil & Lynn. The group grew so big that we could no longer fit in the small hall & had to move into the sanctuary (some of the elderly people did not like that at first, but eventually saw the practicality of the idea).



Harold Hill, east London, England 1993-1994



*In front of our house in Romford ~~ HHEFC ~~ main street of Harold Hill*

On Wednesdays we continued the youth club. We were reaching out to a lot of street kids in those days. We began to play basketball in the parking lot, snooker (a British game similar to pool), darts, table games, etc. The group eventually grew to about fifty kids and it was quite a challenge to keep them under control. I had said to them from the beginning that we could only listen to Christian music.

They immediately groaned until i put on my *Petra* tapes. *"This is Christian music? I love it!"* was their reply. Before long a number of the youth were singing along with *"I love the Lord!"* and some even went out and bought their own copy of the music.

We did not want the club to just be a social event, so we also mentioned that we would have a Bible study for thirty-five minutes every time. More groaning. We went through the gospel of John together & i wrote all my own material trying to make the lessons more relevant to the youth & giving them much opportunity for discussion & participation. We had a lot of interesting conversations & discovered that some had developed a lot of wrong concepts about God & Christ. One evening Ross declared, *"The reason that there is so much suffering in the world is because not even God Himself is perfect."*

We were able to have a lot of one on one discussions with the youth as well. Susana was in charge of the "tuck shop" a place where they could buy candy bars, potato chips, etc. She had to keep a close eye on the money & food. Some of the young people would try to distract her while others tried to sneak a "free" Mars bar or other item.

One always had to keep one's eyes open when working with street kids. One night when the kids were playing basketball in the parking lot, some other kids came by & threw some firecrackers by the gate. I decided i would go stand by the gate & talk to the youth if they came by again. I was distracted for a few moments & the group returned.

The next moment i saw the pastor & two youth leaders chase the group down the street. A few minutes later they returned with one of the "lads" & took him into the office to talk with him. I heard one of the youth leaders say, *"I hurt my knee when i knocked him off his bike."* I thought oh, oh, this doesn't sound good. They talked with the youth, then sent him on his way.



*Harold Hill Evangelical Free Church, east London*

It was during October, close to Halloween. As we were having our devotions, the pastor & other youth leaders rushed into the church and locked the doors. *"Call the police! There's a whole gang of youth outside and they are angry!"* The police came and dispersed the group and then suggested that we not have club for a few weeks until everything had cooled down again. As time went on the youth grew up and unfortunately they did not continue on with the church or the Lord.

However, one day one of the young people Joanne asked to talk with us and so we invited her to our home. She explained how she felt the Lord calling her into missions. We had a great time of fellowship with her and encouraged her to seek God's will. She later married a man named Steve & they have two girls. They have served in youth ministry in Zambia for a number of years now.

During our time at HHEFC we were able to participate in a number of school assemblies and hosted American summer teams from the USA. One year we had fifty-six youth come to do gymnastic routines & we had a good turn out in the schools and local parks. A number of youth showed interest in the Lord. After the team had left we encouraged them to join our youth club. Some came along for a while, but then asked, *"So where's the gymnastic team?"* When we informed them that they had left & that we did not have the skills to reproduce that type of ministry, their interest in the Lord disappeared & they left. One thing i have learned over 25+ years of youth ministry is that Jesus called us to make disciples, not entertain the youth. Evangelistic outreaches may be good, but discipleship is the bottom line. Are the youth prepared to give up all and follow the Lord? Joanne was. *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

While we were working at HHEFC we were invited to help begin a children's ministry in a village in Essex known as Canewdon which had a bad reputation for being a center for witchcraft, dating back centuries. We were able to begin a children's club, but we have to admit that we could feel the sinister atmosphere. One year on Halloween Susana suggested we get a number of Christians together and pray in the streets. We had heard that a satanist group would come every year to the local Anglican church around midnight and do their rituals in the graveyard.



*Witchcraft in Canewdon ~~ local Anglican church ~~ Susana & some of the kids*



We prayed up and down all the streets & prayed in front of the church. We later went home. The next day the police informed us that it was the quietest night on record for years. Not one dog barked & no one complained of having bad nightmares as they had experienced in years past. God had taken control of Canewdon! *Rise up Christians and pray against the evil one so the Lord may defeat him!*

We were able to help another church, St. Paul's Anglican Church, begin a youth ministry in another area of Harold Hill. The group grew & grew but because the church was made up of an elderly congregation, only one lady was willing to help us. We began to run the club with the same format as the other club at HHEFC. Things were going well until one day our leader in the USA decided that they did not want all of their missionaries working in the same city, so informed us that we would be moving up to Coventry in the West Midlands to help out with a church planting project. We explained to the church our situation but no one came forward to keep the ministry going. I can still see the look on the youth's faces when we announced we were leaving. *"Doesn't anyone want to lead our club? We want to keep coming."* Unfortunately no one came forward and the group died. (It's interesting to note that this was one of the six churches i had worked with in the summer of 1984).



*St. Paul's Anglican Church, Harold Hill*



*our 1988 Citroen BX*

## ❖ 17. *Sent up to Coventry.*

In May of 1995 we moved up to the city of Coventry in the West Midlands. Coventry was famous for Lady Godiva who rode naked on her horse through the streets in the 900's. We were invited to join a church planting team that had been working together for eighteen months to reach people in a housing estate known as Stoke Aldermoor. (We later discovered that they had been working together for three years, with little success). They were meeting together in a local school and were trying to develop an "alternative style" church. When I gave a fifteen minute message one Sunday, they decided that the message was too long. They wanted a more informal church.

As we met with the leadership of the group it became increasingly clear that they had no idea where they were going. We would constantly ask what the vision & direction of the church was and we kept getting the same reply. *"We are working on it & we'll let you know when we decide"* (They never did decide).

We noticed that the ideas changed often. At one point they were thinking of buying an old used toilet block and fixing it up (the smell?). Next they suggested that the group buy an old unused pub and that Susana & I move into it. (Stoke Aldermoor was a very rough place in which to live. Two months before we moved to Coventry, there had been riots and the police had had to close the streets. We discovered that most of the people were living on welfare, some for three & four generations. One of the ladies who came to church had four children, each from a different father. She was living in a nice apartment & had a lot of fringe benefits that the normal people with jobs did not have).



*the city of Coventry in the West Midlands*

When we moved to Coventry, we had said to the group that we were willing to work with them in the ministry, but not willing to just do the ministry for them. We expected that they would help us in any ministry that took place. We very quickly discovered that we were alone as we went to school assemblies & youth ministry. The leadership was basically looking for handouts from the USA. After nine months we came to the conclusion that the group was going no where because they had no idea of what they were doing. The mother church, that had been supporting this project, decided to scrap the program due to the lack of vision. At this point we began to ask ourselves what God wanted us to do next.

At this time our mission was going through some financial difficulties and a number of leaders resigned and left (including the president of the mission). We began to pray about finding ministry somewhere else in Coventry or England. But it seemed as if all the doors were closed. It appeared that things were going badly with the ministry on the field and also at the home office back in the USA. What was God calling us to do? What was the next step that needed to be taken?

At this time Siegfried, who was with OM & whom Susana knew from Uruguay, stayed with us & challenged us to move to Uruguay to help him with the ministry there. Was God calling us to make a major change like that? I had lost all my Spanish & would have to relearn everything. Was i ready to learn a new language & a new culture at the age of thirty-six? We prayed about this new step & talked it over with our leaders. They suggested we come back to the USA to talk about it more. Initially they were not open to the idea as United World Mission did not have any missionaries in Uruguay. We would need to discuss it more to see if it were possible.



*our house in Coventry ~ ~ council estate apartments ~ ~ enjoying fish & chips*



# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 6:*

### *She's from the Deep South*



## ❖ 18. *Gauchos & Gringos. It's time to go to Uruguay.*

At times people have asked me where my wife comes from. They can not seem to place her accent. I always reply, "She comes from the deep South." "Where, Georgia, Mississippi?" "No much further south than that." If you look at the map you will see the equator running through the northern part of South America. That is about the half way point from Wisconsin to Uruguay. It takes a long twelve hour flight to get there (not a short 5 hour "hop" across the "pond").

After convincing our leaders that God was indeed calling us to Uruguay & that i would make learning the Spanish language a priority in my life, we headed to Montevideo in June 1996 to work along side Siegfried & Operation Mobilization. It was a bit hard for me to adjust to Uruguay at first. It was June and it was freezing cold (it is the beginning of winter in the southern hemisphere. I remembered now how cold i felt when visiting my in-laws in August 1992). All of our supporters agreed with our change of field as they kept on supporting us. Thanks! We even had two new ones join: Great Waking Evangelical Church & Harold Hill Evangelical Free Church (they are both supporting us to this day).

Working at OM meant prayer meetings, working in their bookstore and sharing about missions in churches. We visited many churches in different parts of the country during the two years we worked with OM and this helped me to get to know my wife's culture a bit more.

## ❖ 19. *How do you say, "Jesus died for you" in Spanish?*

Learning a new language at thirty-six years of age was no easy task. Yes, i had studied Spanish in high school but that was twenty years ago & i had forgotten all of it. So we were able to find a teacher named Teresa who had a degree from Cambridge to teach English. She had a small class of ten students who were learning to speak the Spanish. Week after week i would get on a local city bus three times a week and ride for almost two hours to get back and forth to school. We had no car and spent the first year in Uruguay using local transportation. This was a new experience for me having grown up driving my own vehicle all my life. Now i was dependent on waiting for a bus like anyone else.

I can't really remember making any embarrassing mistakes. Only one sticks out in my mind. When a lady was asking where the grocery store was located i said it was one "cuadro" (block) down the street. I should have said "cuadra". Cuadro means a painting. "Yes, it's one painting down the street." She smiled and kept walking. Obviously she understood that she was speaking to a "Gringo".

I later noticed that some English speaking person made a similar mistake. Ask most people what the name of the river is that separates Uruguay from Buenos Aires and they will mistakingly say *The Plate River*. That is incorrect. It is called *The Silver River*. "Plato" in Spanish is "plate" but "*Plata*" means silver. It is called the "*Río del la Plata*", not the "*Río del Plato*". Be careful of who teaches you to speak in Spanish. Make sure they know what they are talking about.

As i was learning Spanish we began to look for a church where i could understand the pastor. The first church we went to was a good church, but the pastor was of Russian background & i found it very difficult to understand what he was saying. We later visited the church where Susana had worked at & discovered that Welvi & Ana from Perú were the pastors. They both spoke very good Spanish in such a way that i could understand most of what they were saying. We began attending church there & we made a lot friends during our two years in Montevideo. Some of the young adults had been children in Susana's Sunday school class years ago when she had served there. We got involved in the Sunday school program, the youth group, camps and other ministries.

I was also introduced to the "national drink "of Uruguay. The "*mate*" (*mah tay*). The Uruguayans pour loose green tea known as "*yerba*" into a gourd. They then pour boiling water from a thermos into the gourd & then stick a metal straw called a "*bombilla*" into the gourd & drink the tea through the straw. They will then pass it to the next person in the circle, who will drink off of the same straw. I discovered that there are several different brands of yerba.



*Welvi & Ana ~ ~ Alej (was in Susana's SS class) & Marta ~ ~ Yerba Canarias*



Some have a very strong flavor & others are more bland. I did not like any of them. I thought, *"How can they drink this stuff? It tastes awful!"* But then the Lord reminded me that when i first drank English tea, i did not like that either & understood why the Americans had thrown it into the Boston harbor in 1773. But after drinking many cups of it over the years, i got used to it and actually liked it.

Now it was time to learn how to drink mate. I started off with a mellow brand & added a lot of sugar (real men don't use sugar i was told). I had used sugar in my British tea as well when i first began. Over the years i managed to get rid of the sugar and started drinking the "strong stuff" known as "Canarias". I am now addicted to it & i drink it more often than my Uruguayan wife does (i drink it every day). I jokingly say that now my blood is green (it now matches my Packer shirt. As you can see the packet of Canarias yerba uses the same colors as the Packers). Years later some Uruguayans were surprised to see a gringo drinking mate. I said, why not? They said that i was the only missionary they had ever seen drinking mate. (Of course that was not true).

As i continued studying Spanish, i began to ask God why i was here. I did not just want to join a church & do ministry. I wanted to do something that would help the churches expand their ministries and effectively make disciples. I began to realize that many of the pastors had no formal training and that the people in the churches were attending church services but not actually being trained to make disciples. As i looked at Uruguay i realized that half of the population lived in Montevideo the capital city & the rest lived in what was known as the "Interior". How would the people who lived so far away from Montevideo receive the training they needed to make disciples? As we continued working at OM, i began to put my "curriculum making" skills to work again. I began writing courses that we could teach in various churches. The first course was called "Personal Preparation". The course was focused on the disciple getting to know God personally, to learn to walk well with Jesus, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to learn what their spiritual gifts were and to put them into practice and how to relate with other people (the course was focused on one's vertical relationship with God & horizontal relationships with others).

Working at the bookstore gave me access to a lot of study materials (which helped me in learning Spanish) & i was able to put together manuals that could be photocopied at a low cost and provide teaching for those who were interested. Later we were able to put together five other courses (Evangelism, Discipleship, Developing a Healthy church, children's ministry & youth ministry).

## ❖ 20. *Hand me another brick Nehemiah.*

In 1997 Don Bove from our mission contacted us to inform us that they were taking builders teams to different countries and asked if we would be willing to have one. In those days we had connections with the pastor of the Baptist Church in the city of Florida (not to be confused with the state of Florida in the USA). Yes they were interested & so a team of Americans came to help us build. When they got off the plane Susana was concerned about their age as we discovered some of them were getting close to eighty years old. But all went well and the church is still meeting in their hall.

In 1998 we were able to build another chapel in the village of Capitán Artigas & in 2000 in the city of Atlántida. Thanks guys (& ladies too) for your great help.



*Builders team in Florida ~~~~ inspecting the walls ~~~~ church in Atlántida*

## ❖ 21. *Training School of the East*

In May 1998 we moved to the city of Florida & began working with the Baptist Church. It was that year that we decided to give our training course a name. The name was *Escuela de Entrenamiento del Este (EEE)* or *Training School of the East* and the theme for our school was *edificar, entrenar, enviar* (also *EEE*) or *build up, train, send*.

During our time in Florida we were able to write more courses & eventually came up with a total of nineteen courses with a thousand pages of materials. We began to teach the courses in Florida & motivate the students to pray for their neighborhoods & to go out & do evangelism. Florida is a city of 35,000 the same size as the city of Beloit where i was born. It was here where the thirty-three Orientales (heroes) made the decision to make Uruguay a country.

While in Florida we found a cute little German Shepherd puppy and took him home. "What are we going to call him?" I discovered that not all of my German was gone. "Let's call him Schwarzie." (Schwarz means black. You can see by the picture of him why i was motivated to call him that). He was smaller than my first German Shepherd Babe but was super hyper when compared to her. He turned out to be a good watch dog.

The group began to grow & we began to do evangelism on the streets & in the villages nearby. I made a personal commitment to ride down every single street in the city on my bicycle and pray for the people on each street. I was able to accomplish that goal and just about wore out my bike. Florida was the place where we held our first "graduation ceremony". It was our goal to give out diplomas to the students who had proved faithful to study God's Word & to put it into practice. One of our students went to Chile as a missionary, another couple went to Argentina and Doris, who was a news reporter for the local TV station, went to Spain (she will come into our story later).

It was quite an experience for me getting used to the culture. I would tell our students we were starting class at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday. Some would show up five minutes late and others would be half an hour late. One day i waited forty-five minutes and nobody showed up, so i went home. At church in the evening one of the young men asked where i was in the morning. They had come to class & i never showed up. "What time did you get there?" I asked. "At 10:50." I guess i shouldn't be so impatient! The one day when i was TWO minutes late, i walked in and saw the whole class was sitting there. Why they were all there, i never found out. Everyone burst out laughing & they never let me live that one down.



Gaucha



*Gringo becomes a Gaucha ~ Susana's map hangs in Florida ~ Schwarzie*



*Bible study in Cardal*



*Bible study in Florida*



*the first "graduates"*



In 1999 we went back to the USA on home ministry and then in 2000 we moved out to the east of Uruguay to a place known as Punta del Este (East Point). Punta del Este is a very interesting city. It is the place where all the wealthy go to play in Casinos, go to the beach, ride on their yachts, etc. The city of Maldonado, which is connected to it on the north, is where the middle class live. Maldonado Nuevo is where all the poor people live who serve the wealthy as maids, gardeners, etc. Our goal was to take the training to the east side of the country and touch as many churches and classes of people as possible with the message of evangelism & discipleship.

In those days God provided us with a 2000 Renault Kangoo minivan that served us well for the next four years. We began with a Bible study group in the Maldonado Baptist Church & later added a home Bible study group from another church that met in our home known as "Kalyba". A third group was begun in Maldonado Nuevo. Later we made contacts with other churches in other departments in the east. We began going to the city of Minas, in the department of Lavalleja one hour north of Maldonado every two weeks on Fridays. On alternate weeks, we would drive one hour east to the city of Castillos in the department of Rocha. Once per month we would drive two and a half hours north to the city of Treinta y Tres on a Saturday, teach for 4 hours, then drive back home again. Roads were bad & it *always* rained. Thanks God for being with us.

We felt challenged to take the Gospel to villages where it had never been preached before. Raquel & Themis, some of our students, showed us a village located in the middle of no where. We had to drive half an hour down winding roads and about six miles on gravel roads where large trucks met us going the other way. The village was know as Bulldog and it turned out to be a lime pit. The people actually lived in houses on the outer edges where the husbands of the families worked. A very dusty & unhealthy atmosphere in which to live. But here were people who needed to hear the Gospel.



*Baptist church in Maldonado ~ our home: Punta del Este ~ Maldonado Nuevo*

We took a group of students and went to talk with the foreman of the pit & inquired about having Bible studies and games for the children. We discovered there were around 100 people living there & we had seventy-five attend our first meeting! In the weeks to come whenever we would arrive we would have to be careful not to run over any children as they would dance around the car, singing as we entered. The students had been trained to teach the Bible using flannel graph and other methods & we had games, puppets, refreshments, singing, etc.

Ana Maria told us she didn't know how to work with children, but after some training and encouragement, she was thrilled! Other students began to get more involved and eventually started children's clubs and Bible studies in other neighborhoods in Maldonado. Some gave their lives to Jesus. It was exciting for all of us to be able to put into practice what we were learning in class and not just participate in some academic exercise. Later when we had to leave, one of the ladies who had grown up in Bulldog said that her church could continue the ministry. We discovered that her church was only ten minutes down the road.

We also saw a small village on the map called Pueblo Edén, which was on the way to Minas. (No Adam & Eve did not live there). We took some students with us (it was always interesting piling seven people in a five passenger van) and had an outreach. Unfortunately this one did not go as well as Bulldog. The local catholic Priest did not like having us around and in the end we only had meetings with one woman & her children outside of the village. She later lost interest and we stopped.

Another time Sonia, a Christian woman who was living in José Ignacio, a fishing village forty-five minutes east of Maldonado, called the pastor and asked if someone could go and have a Bible study with her. We began going weekly and eventually met a couple named Gustavo & Daniela. They eventually gave their lives to Christ and we had the privilege of baptizing them.



*Outreaches in Cerro Pelado, Maldonado ~~ Bulldog ~~ Pueblo Edén, Lavalleja*



Blanca an elderly woman was also baptized. She had a fear of water as she had fallen into a well as a young girl. This was my first baptism & i was super nervous. When i went to baptize her, her hair went into the water but her face did not. I thought, what do i do now? I pulled her out of the water & hoped that no one had noticed that her face was not wet (her hair was drenched). Pray for Sonia as she later got involved with a cult & Gustavo & Daniela ended up getting a divorce. (Christianity is a marathon, not just a sprint). (We are glad to report that Sonia is now walking with the Lord again. Praise God!)

In 2003 we moved to the city of Atlántida (Atlantis) and continued teaching courses there in the Baptist Church, at the Baptist Seminary in Montevideo and renewed contacts with the church in Florida where we taught more courses. In 2004 we returned to the U.S.A. It was once again time for home ministry. We also believed that God was moving us in a different direction. After nine years of serving in Uruguay we believed that now God was calling us to go to Spain. Just as the apostle Paul had felt the desire to preach the Gospel there, now we too felt God tugging our hearts in a new direction. But who would we work with? Where would we live? What ministry was God calling us to this time?



*New Bible study group in José Ignacio ~~ baptisms ~~ Ondas de Amor y Paz*



*Baptist Churches in cities of Minas ~~ Treinta y Tres (33) ~~ Castillos, Rocha*





*Baptist church, Atlántida ~ some of 59 students who received diplomas, 2001*

Following is a list of the courses we taught over nine years, in fifteen different churches, in seven different departments.

### Training Courses:

#### 1. PERSONAL PREPARATION

- Our Relationship with God
- Our Daily Walk
- Our Relationships with Others

#### 1a. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

#### 2. DISCIPLESHIP

#### 3. EVANGELISM

#### 4. DEVELOPING A HEALTHY CHURCH

#### 5. LEADERSHIP

#### 6. STEWARDSHIP

#### 7. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

#### 8. CHURCH PLANTING

#### 9. MISSIONS

#### 10. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

#### 11. YOUTH MINISTRY

#### 12. THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### 13. THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### 14. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

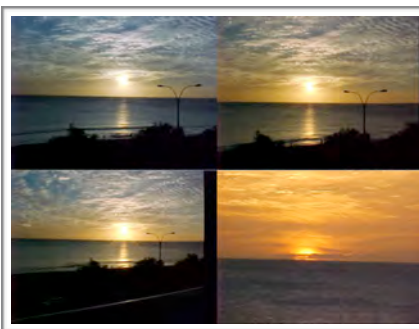
#### 15. SUPERMARKET of RELIGIONS

#### 16. SELF ESTEEM

#### 17. SUFFERING

#### 18. ANTHROPOLOGY

#### 19. THE FAMILY



*Kalyba, our first house in Punta ~ Some of the sunsets we were able to enjoy from our house in Punta del Este*

# *A Cheesehead Travels the World -*

## *Part 7: The Rain in Spain*





## ❖ 22. *Back to school Cheesehead.*

In 2002 while still in Uruguay, we felt the Lord asking us to move again. (It is interesting to note that when i was 20 i remember reading about the life of Paul in the Bible & thinking that he didn't stay very long in one place. His goal was to spread the Gospel & make disciples in as many places as possible. i was beginning to feel like him.)

We took a "spying the land" trip to Spain. (Up to that point i could sing along with Elvis, *"Well I've never been to Spain."*) When we arrived in Madrid i was none impressed. For the first few days i had to admit that i did not like the country and thought i would never live there. Then when the bus entered the southern region of Spain, known as Andalucía, i immediately felt God saying, *"This is the place for you."* After visiting some friends in Granada, we returned to Uruguay & finished there in May of 2004. We returned to Beloit and rented an apartment there. I had told the leaders of our mission that i wanted to finish my degree. I had just taught in the Baptist Seminary in Montevideo and some of the graduating students now had BA degrees in Theology while i still only had a diploma in Christian Education from Moody Bible Institute. I only needed one semester to finish the courses so i could have a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Christian Education.

I immediately enrolled in the University of Wisconsin in Janesville & Whitewater. I was taking the basic courses such as Introduction to Sociology, Biology, Ancient History, the Modern History of Europe, Intro to Philosophy, Spanish literature (for students with fourth year level Spanish - the course was all in Spanish). My wife informed that i had to come home with straight A's on my report card or i would be in trouble. (Would you believe i got all A's except in Ancient History where I got an A-?). When i enrolled i said, "Lord i want to be a witness to the teachers & students. Give me an opportunity to shine Your light."



*Gateway Apartments, Beloit, WI ~ Grand Am ~ University of Wisconsin Whitewater*



The theme for our first paper in Philosophy was "*Do you believe that God exists? Why or why not?*" I prayed & wrote the paper & then submitted it. The teacher announced in class that several students were having problems writing their papers so he would put the five best papers on the internet so they could see what he was looking for. My paper was one of them. As i read the other four papers, i realized that mine was the only one that argued for the existence of God.

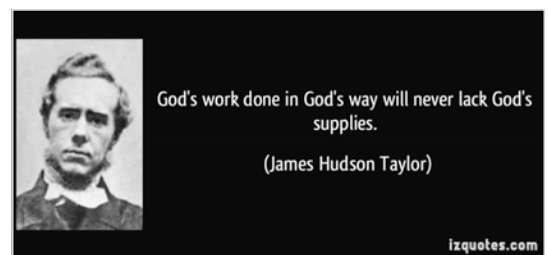
Later in my Biology class we had to divide up in groups of three and give presentations on all the different sexually transmitted diseases (i never realized how many different kinds there are). During the presentation i was able to give my testimony.

It was so interesting for me to be in school. The average student was about 19 & i was 44. I noticed how hairstyles from the late '70's had returned. I felt like i was in high school again & yet felt like the old man in the class (some of my teachers were younger than me).

As i finished my studies we began to look at the future & we believed that it was time for us to look for a new mission. United World Mission had changed a lot since 1985 & they only had one missionary couple left in Spain & that couple was in the process of leaving.

Jon & Judy Sevall, from my home church in Beloit who had served in Ecuador for many years, asked us to consider joining World Partners (WP). In January 2005 we drove to Fort Wayne Indiana (remember that city from 1983?) to meet with Jeff & find out if there was a place for us with them. We immediately felt very much at home.

Back in Beloit, one day when there was snow on the ground & it was freezing cold, Susana told me she felt hot. We went to the doctor & found out she had problems with her thyroid and that they would have to kill it with a radioactive tablet. I was told i could not be around her for three days. "*Will she glow in the dark?*" i asked jokingly.



*World Partners located in Fort Wayne Indiana*

After going through that process we went to Uruguay to take care of some paperwork needed for our transfer to Spain. We were gone two weeks. Susana's voice sounded deep & she felt like she was getting the flu. When we got back to Beloit she went to the doctor & discovered that she had no reflexes. The doctor recognized her & asked if she was taking her medication. *"What medication?"* she asked. The nurse had tried calling us the week before but could not get ahold of us as we were in Uruguay. The doctor immediately got her set up on her medication which she must take every day for the rest of her life. *"You are very lucky. If you would have waited three more days, you would have died."* We did not realize that she needed the medication.

In April 2005 our leader Jeff wanted us to go to Spain so he could meet our contact in Granada & so we could see the work of WP in Valencia. We were told that we needed to pay almost a \$1000 for the flights. But we had no money for the trip. The mission bought the tickets and then sent us the bill. *"How are we going to pay for this Lord?"* My mother called and said there was some mail for us at their house. When we opened the mail, there was a check for the exact amount that we needed. I immediately remembered the time in 1992 when i needed to fly from Charlotte to Providence to speak at two churches. I had to spend \$174 which i did not have. The first church gave me an offering of \$100 & the second gave me an offering of \$74. *"God's work, done God's way will not lack God's supply."* J. Hudson Taylor.

We arrived in Granada on Susana's birthday & met with our contact in Granada to see the ministry they were doing there. The missionaries there were working in the cities of Granada, Loja & Nerja. We then traveled to the east to Valencia to see the ministry of WP there. Once back in the USA both we and our leaders determined that God was leading us to work in Granada.



*Granada, Loja and Nerja (balcony of Europe) in Spain*

In May 2005 we returned to Fort Wayne for orientation & were accepted as missionaries to Spain & then in August we moved to Grabill, IN to be able to work in the WP office. Jeff wanted us to get to know the staff & for them to get to know us. It was a joy to be able to go and serve in the office & see all that God was doing through WP. We began to call as many churches as possible on the list of Missionary Churches and began to set up speaking engagements. The Missionary Church in Grabill gave us a three bedroom house to live in rent free as we sought to raise the extra support needed for living in Europe again. We began visiting Missionary Churches and summer camps all over the Midwest. We traveled to Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas & Arkansas to raise support. God graciously gave us new support from each one of these states (except Kansas).

In March we flew to Rapid City South Dakota to participate in the Keystone Discipleship Training Course. We managed to arrive just in time for the blizzard. I loved it! (Yes i know, i'm crazy. What do you expect, i'm a Cheesehead). We spent two weeks talking about Jesus' style of ministry & how we were called to focus our lives on making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). This is exactly what the Lord had put on my heart back in 1975!

In July 2006 we were informed that our visas for Spain were ready & that we were now at 100% support. Praise the Lord!



*Mount Rushmore, near Keystone, South Dakota*



### ❖ 23. *The rain in Spain falls mainly in Granada*

On September 7, my birthday, we flew to Granada and after looking at a number of houses we finally found the one that was just right for us. It was a 3 bedroom house with full garage underneath in the village of La Zubia just south of the city of Granada.

As we began to look for a vehicle, God led us to a two year old Kangoo identical to the one we had in Uruguay. It only had 15,000 miles on it & was like brand new. The license plate number was 9731 CZS. 9 (September) 7 is my birthday, 31 is how old i was when i met Susana & CZS stands for "cazadores" (hunters - Will you hunt me?). When i saw the numbers i immediately knew that God had reserved this vehicle just for us. We drove it for eight years and the only problem we ever had was with the alternator when it was nine years old.

As we inquired about my drivers license we discovered that i could exchange my Uruguayan one for a Spanish one. Unfortunately i was told that because i was an American i needed to prove that i had lived in Uruguay. We asked friends to send us documents to prove this from the Uruguayan government. No, the Spanish government wanted documents from the American Embassy. When we called them, they said that once an American leaves all information is destroyed & that they had no records of my living there. I showed the Spanish my license from Wisconsin. No that would not do. I showed them my license from England. No that would not do either. So, what was the solution? Go to classes to study the rules of the road & then take driving lessons! *(Hey, how many of you Spaniards know how to drive a car on the opposite side of the road? How many of you can say you have never had an accident in thirty years? How many of you have three valid drivers licenses from three different countries? How many of you know how to drive a truck, a tractor, a motorcycle & a snowmobile? Why do i have to go through all this for? Boy was i frustrated! I guess it was time for another lesson in humility.)*



*Our prayer card 2005 ~ La Alhambra in Granada ~ sightseeing in Granada*

Well, needless to say, i passed it all the first time. (i later found out that another American missionary had failed seven times in a row!) My driving instructor could not understand why i was taking lessons. *"It is obvious to me that you know how to drive."*

As time went on we began to be involved in teaching courses & making disciples. We taught one course in our home, another course in the city of Granada, another in Loja, 45 minutes to the west & in Nerja one and a half hours to the south. Once again we were itinerant teachers. We also had disciples that we worked with. One was from Ecuador, another from Ireland, a couple from Spain, a gypsy & his Spanish wife, a couple from Argentina, and another Spanish couple.

Discipleship with these people was very interesting. One had such a quiet humble spirit and appeared to absorb everything he was taught. He was studying to become a dentist and his parents, who were not Christians, were paying for his education. At one point someone told him he should drop out of school and serve in the youth ministry full time. What about his parents? How would he support himself? Susana pointed out to him that he had contacts that we would never have even though we were in full time service. He prayed and decided to stay in school. He later told us of how he had opportunity to witness to different patients. He was glad he had stayed in school. He later married and is now serving as a dentist in Manchester, England.

Another had become a homosexual at a young age and after coming to Christ was still struggling with feelings that were not glorifying to God. Other people had tried to disciple him, but had run out of patience. I was asked to work with him. He had a lot of baggage to sort through.

One day he came to us & told us that he felt God was calling him to return to his home country & to go to a seminary. But he said that someone had told him that it was God's will for him to stay in Spain & work with the youth. I said to him that he needed to hear what the Lord was saying to him and obey the Lord's voice. After praying about the issue, he came to me & said he was returning to his home country. The next day he called me on the phone, a bit distraught & told me that the person had told him he was disappointed with him. What should he do now? I told him i was not going to tell him what to do, but that God had to speak to him. After praying again he decided to go back to his home country & this time he left. A number of months later he came back to Spain for a visit with his fiancé (a woman from his own country). They were later married and continue to live in their home country.

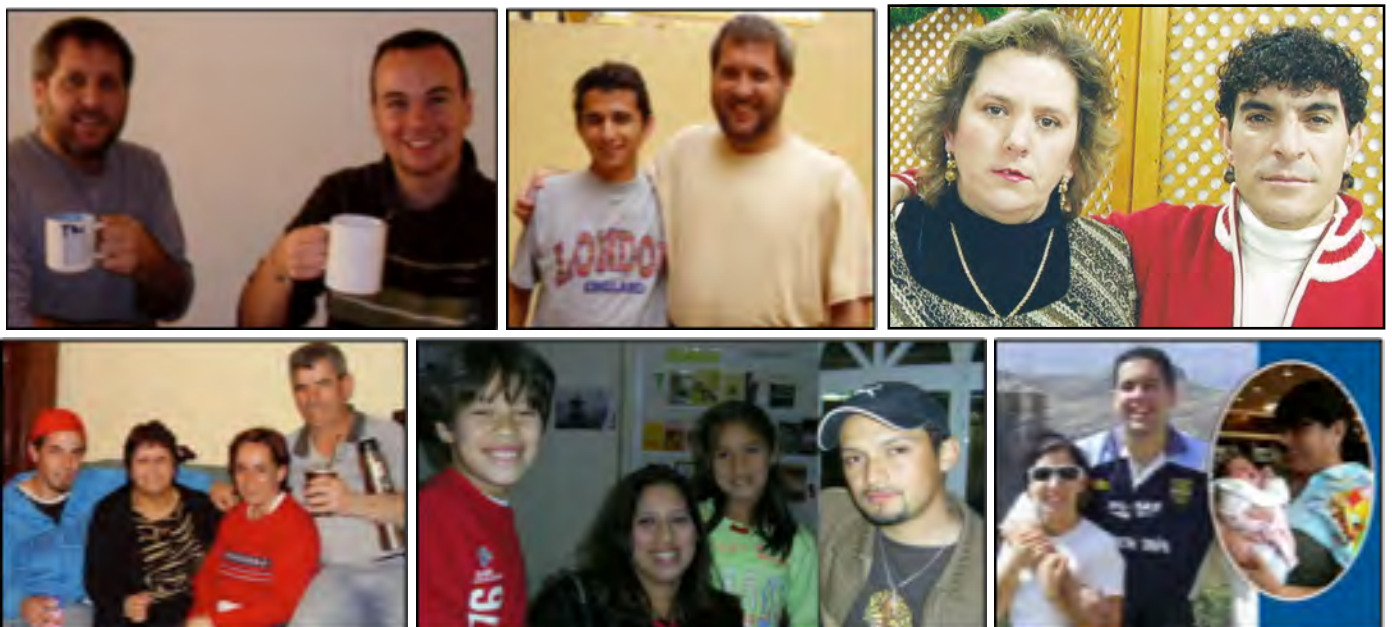
Another man that we worked with was a gypsy. This was my first experience working in the gypsy culture. He was a man with a strong desire to serve the Lord, but was going up & down constantly. Many times he & his wife were having marital

problems. He had problems with the bones in his back & was on disability. We spent a lot of time praying & talking until finally one day he really connected with the Lord. He began to get up at four in the a.m. and spend hours in prayer. His life was transformed, his marriage was strengthened, his oldest son was baptized and God began to work through him to help other gypsies in Loja.

We also had classes in the city of Nerja which is known as the balcony of Europe. It is located on the southern coast of Spain on the Mediterranean Sea and is a beautiful vacation spot with its beaches and caves. Here we were able to disciple a number of other "internationals".

We made disciples here as well and discovered that one couple was from Uruguay from Maldonado Nuevo where we served four years teaching classes. When they were living in Uruguay they were not Christians and avoided the church like the plague! How interesting it was to see how God put us together.

Another man was from Columbia and was dating a woman from Bolivia who had two children. We encouraged them to get right with the Lord and a few years later that got married on by birthday. We also had the joy of discipling a couple from Argentina. She later gave birth to their daughter who was born on Susana's birthday.



*Some of the people that we had the privilege of working with in Spain*





## ♣ 24. *Let's go to Fingerola.*

In 2008 we moved to Fuengirola, Málaga & worked there for seven years. When we arrived, we discovered that once again we were living in an international community. We discovered that there were thousands of British living along the coast. Many of them could never learn how to say Fuengirola correctly and so referred to the town as Finger-ola.

Another neighborhood, called Los Pacos was referred to as Little Helsinki as there were 17,000 people from Finland living there. They even had a school that taught everything in Finnish. We enjoyed living in this neighborhood. The Finnish are some of the nicest people in the world!

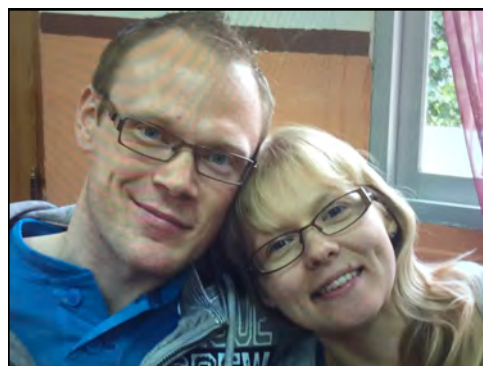
In 2008 we began working with a Spanish church called "Renacer". We began teaching adults & children, preaching, helping with evangelism, & coffee morning outreach. It was here that we met a Finnish couple, Jaakko & Kirsi, who became very good friends. We discovered that they were working with an organization called "Manos Abiertas" (Open Hands). They were focused on reaching Muslims with the Gospel and over the years we had many opportunities to help them. Kirsi had cancer when we first arrived and they were trying to learn the Spanish language. Jaakko asked me to play drums in the church & to teach their youngest son lessons on how to play. We were very impressed with their passion to serve the Lord.

In 2008 we met another young Finnish couple Tuomas & Suvi who were considering full time missionary service. The first year they struggled so much that we thought they would not make it. Later they moved to the north of Spain where they live today, reaching out & ministering to the Spanish.

One day we received a call from Doris who had been a disciple with us in Uruguay in 1998. She had married a Spanish pastor Tomás and they were living in Madrid. They explained that they were discipling a Spanish gypsy Mateo who had recently given his life to Christ. When Mateo confessed to his wife that he had been having an affair before giving his life to Christ, she divorced him & he lost everything. He was in the process of moving back to his mother's house, which just happened to be in Fuengirola. Doris asked if we could disciple him.

It was through Mateo that we began to get to know his cousins & all of his relatives. We discovered that the gypsies are a very close knit community & that many are very religious but not all are following the Lord. We began studying the Bible in their homes & spent over five years working with them. We also had the privilege of having Kyösti & Natasja, gypsies from Finland, help us for one year.

As time went on we began to teach English and later began helping with an English church, Los Boliches Evan. Church, that had their services in a church building located right on the seafront of the Mediterranean Sea. The building actually belonged to the Swedish church but a Dutch church, a Finnish church and the English one all took turns using the building. We helped in outreach as we shared the Gospel along the seafront. We discovered that Fuengirola was home to people from 127 different nations. In the course of one year we had shared the Gospel with people from over 50 nations.



*~~Jaakko & Kirsi~~ with family~~ Tuomas & Suvi~~*

We also had the privilege of having some Cheeseheads from one of our supporting churches in Wisconsin come & minister. This was the youngest team of missionaries that we ever hosted & they were the best! Thanks East Troy for sending your team.

Through the course of working with the church in Los Boliches we developed a good friendship with the pastor & his wife. I discovered that David was from Southend on Sea in Essex, England where I had worked from 1987-1991. He is ten years older than me and just like me got married when he was 31. Ullie, his wife, was born in the Yukon to German parents.

During our time here we met a Norwegian man named Odd. We encouraged him to put his counseling skills into practice and today he is meeting with a group of disciples who are growing in the Lord & reaching out to people along the coast.

Sami, a Finnish man, introduced us to the Camino de Santiago. Many people all around the world make a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain, the place where supposedly James the apostle, brother of John, is buried. Many are seeking spiritual enlightenment & direction from this saint as they travel. We had a great opportunity sharing the Gospel with people along the way.





~~ Mateo & Estrella ~~ Gypsy ladies ~~ Kyösti & Natasja ~~



*the Gypsies*

Later we had the opportunity of working with a godly couple from Nigeria, David & Antonette who have a fiery passion to share the Gospel with everyone. They have churches in four different cities. One is made up of Nigerians, another Spanish, another Latin American immigrants, etc. It was always a challenge and a joy working with them as sometimes we would minister in Spanish & other times in English. Their church is known as Heaven's Gate.

Well to be honest with you the experiences we have shared in Fuengirola were so many that we could fill volumes with the experiences we have enjoyed. Suffice it to say, you may have to wait until you get to heaven to hear all of the stories.

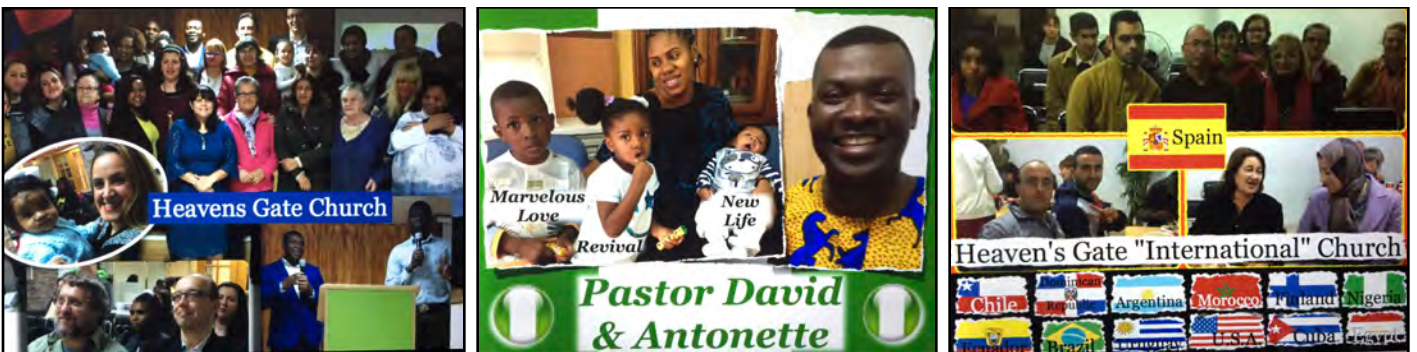




David & Ullie ~ Odd, Gypsies ~ youth group from East Troy WI



Camino de Santiago ~~ giving out tracts ~~ Kairos missions course



~~ Heaven's Gate Church, Pastor David & Antonette & family ~~



## ~ Part 8: ¿Gauchos Again? ~

### ❖ 25. *Si, Gauchos Otra Vez*

In January of 2015 we went back to Wisconsin on home ministry. Our goal was to share with all of our supporters about the wonderful things God was doing in Spain. We had tickets to return to Málaga for October 29. Our supporters are scattered about between South Dakota & Boston, from Wisconsin to Florida. Being on home ministry can sometimes be more tiring than being on the field. As we looked at the ministry, we sensed that another change was coming, but had no idea what that change would be. Perhaps God would call us to a different part of Spain? Who knows. When you walk with the Lord you don't always know where you will be tomorrow but at least you know Who will be there (God)!

In April 2015 we went to World Partners headquarters in Fort Wayne, IN for debriefing. As we talked about Spain, Dave Mann the head of WP explained to us that the couple in Uruguay were having to leave & would we be willing to change fields & move back to Uruguay. I was immediately excited! I love Uruguay & have to admit that i had just lived ten years in a country that i did not really like. Spain is nice for a vacation but living there is a different story. Susana on the other hand loved it. (Of course i am always willing to live wherever God wants.)

Well of course we said that we would need to pray about that. We said that we would give them our answer at the retreat in July. As we prayed we sensed that God was indeed calling us back. In July we said yes & then had the big prospect of raising over \$30,000 to make this transition. During this time, a church who had been giving \$400 per month informed us that their focus had changed & that they would no longer be supporting us. What now Lord? We trust in You as You have never let us down & always provided everything we have ever needed.



*The last visit with my family in 2015. My parents are now 83 & are great grandparents.*

We were amazed how quickly the money came in. We have never raised that amount in such a short time. To God be the glory! Then we received a phone call from a church in Indiana who said they were wanting to support a couple in South America at \$500 per month. Wow, the Lord is good!

We visited a number of our supporters, but were not able to visit all as we had hoped. August through November we lived with my parents once again as we visited our supporters in Wisconsin. The Cheeseheads are our biggest supporters. Thanks guys!

In November we had a family gathering before returning to the field. It is amazing to see how the family has grown. When i first went to the field i had one niece Brittney who was two weeks old. Now she is mother to little Nash. I now have twelve nieces and nephews and their spouses and children. It was such a wonderful time to visit. I now have to look up to some of them as they are over six feet tall. Tío (uncle) Tim has gotten old.

One of the joys i had at home just before leaving was to be able to drive a number of tractors again. I could very easily return to a life on the farm as i still love it! But, as i often mention, the Lord has called us to a different style of planting & harvesting. Maybe Jesus will let me drive a tractor on the new earth. I hope so!

In November 2015 we returned to Spain to pack up the few belongings we had left there & to say good bye to everyone. We will truly miss them, but again as i often say those of us who know the Lord will be together forever so this short time of separation is nothing when compared to eternity. I told the Gypsies that we would meet them at cloud seven in Heaven. You are welcome to join us if you wish.

These are just a FEW of the experiences that God has given us to share. If we were to write everything the book would be too long to read!

### 2015 Harvest



*The first missions "crusade" team i went on (1986) had the theme: Partners in His Harvest.*



*Postscript: "It's not the years, it's the mileage."*

As I look back on my life I see that I have visited forty-eight states in the USA (Susana has only seen thirty-five) & twenty-four countries (Susana over thirty). So far I have visited: Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, England, Scotland, Wales, Netherlands, France, Germany, Finland, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Andorra, Gibraltar, Austria, Hungary, Romania, & Slovakia. I have also landed in airports in Panamá, Chile, & Switzerland. I have lived six years in the eastern hemisphere (the prime meridian runs through London & we lived east of it) & ten years in the southern hemisphere, south of the equator where winter arrives in June & summer in December.

Having grown up in a little town like Clinton WI, being a quiet, shy farm boy, who would have ever guessed that God would take me to so many places & meet so many people. I can not even begin to count how many different countries my friends come from. Who am I, oh Lord, to serve such a wonderful God as You!

If I would have continued working at General Motors I would have retired in 2009 (oh that would be nice!) and I would probably be living in a nice house, either in Wisconsin or Fort Wayne. (Until February 2017 we were still renting an apartment in Montevideo). I am sure that I would probably be much better off financially and be living the good life in America.

But I don't regret for one moment the pathway I have chosen in life. There is no greater joy known to man than to be in the center of the will of God, to be walking in His presence every day and to be enjoying His fellowship moment by moment. After all that is said & done, what does this world have to offer me in comparison to what God has waiting for me in Heaven? As Pastor Boyer once said, *"If God calls you to be a missionary, don't stoop to become a King."*

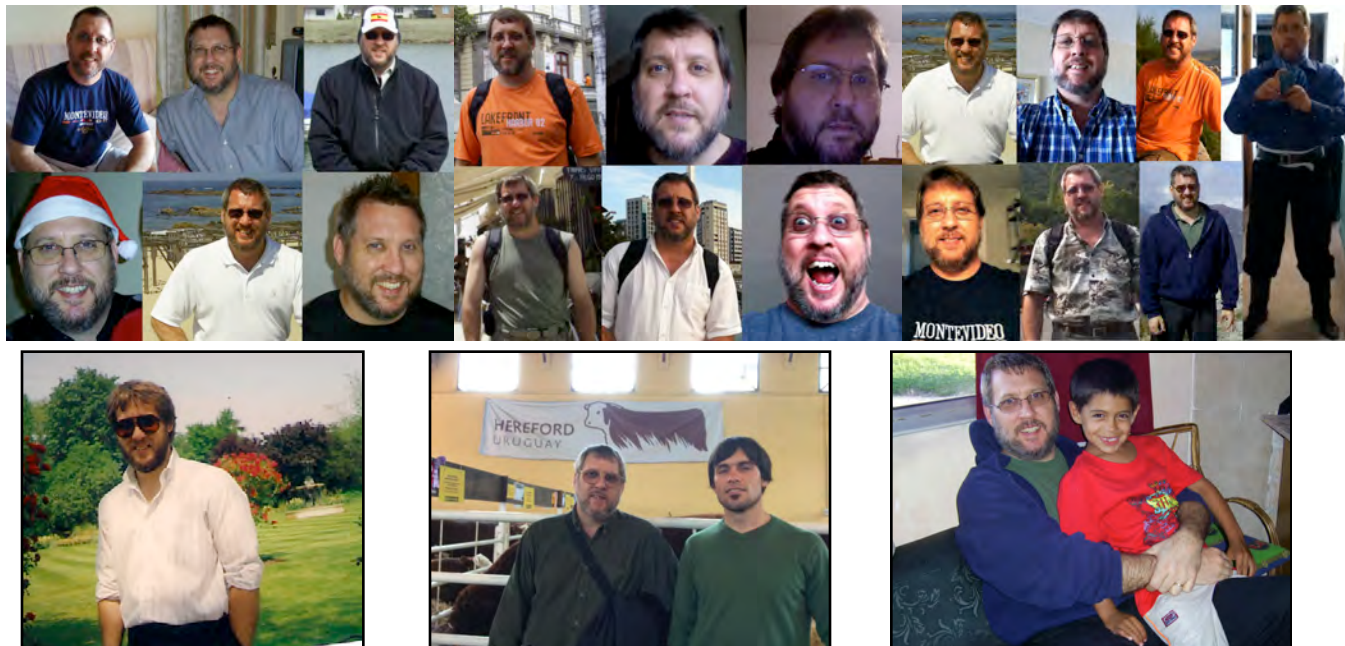
My wife & I have served the Lord in full time service for over thirty years now. She has been the biggest blessing in my life! (See how God even gave me an international marriage as well). We have always lived by faith, every month depending on God to remind people to give their offerings so we can do His will. He has never once let us down & although at times it has been a bit of challenge, we have never lacked what we have needed. We are grateful to God for His abundance to us & to our friends for their generosity.

In March of 2016 we moved to Montevideo, Uruguay, and by the end of July God had given us the joy of leading our niece's boy friend Jesús to Christ (on my Mother's birthday). We are praying that a number of others will also give their lives to the Lord. We are presently living & working in Florencio Sánchez in the southwestern part of Uruguay making disciples and evangelizing the people. Pray for a fruitful harvest. We know the Lord is coming soon!

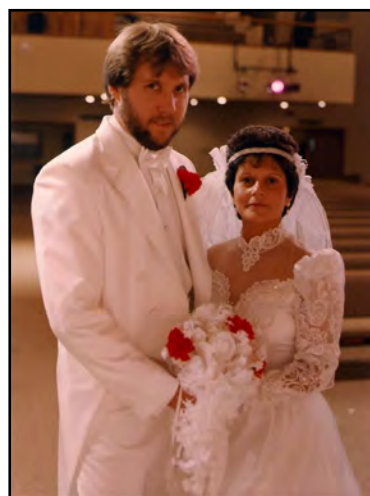
The next chapter of our lives is still to be written and as some say, we are now living in Acts chapter 29. May the Lord richly bless each of you as you serve Him.

I want to challenge you to give your life completely to the Lord. Too many people today are satisfied with living a mediocre style of Christianity. Jesus wants to do something special with your life. But He is waiting for you to respond and say, "Here am I Lord. Send me."

If you have never given your life to Jesus Christ, then do it today. Don't wait until tomorrow, lest you find out as my friend Mark did, that you have no tomorrow. Jesus gave His life for you on the cross to save you from your sin so that you could live with Him forever in Heaven. To reject Him, is to spend forever in the lake of fire. Giving your life to Jesus Christ is the most important thing you can do with your life. Do it now!



*"To God be the glory, great things He has done" was always my favorite hymn.  
I can't wait to stand next to the Boyers in heaven & sing it with them again*



*My "favorite ministry partner" & me in 1991 & twenty-five years later in 2016*