

LATIN AMERICA ODYSSEY



**Beginning Treks
Into All The World**

DICKSON

Latin America Odyssey

Roger E. Dickson

1973 – 1989

CONTENTS

Preface – 3

- 1 – *Growing Up And Going Up* – 5
- 2 – *Heading God's Way* – 11
- 3 – *The Coffee Land* – 21
- 4 – *The Historical People* – 40
- 5 – *The Flight Of Faith* – 46
- 6 – *Initial Operations* – 54
- 7 – *First Extension Expedition* – 62
- 8 – *Doing God's Business* – 68
- 9 – *Learning The Territory* – 79
- 10 – *For Pilots Only* – 90
- 11 – *The West Indian Dilemma* – 95
- 12 – *Anything Can Happen* – 108
- 13 – *Restarting Our Engines* – 122
- 14 – *The Enchanting West Indies* – 131
- 15 – *Times For Faith* – 144
- 16 – *Going West In The West Indies* – 153
- 17 – *Settling Into Puerto Rico* – 160
- 18 – *A Good Word For A Good Land* – 165
- 19 – *Waiting On God* – 172
- 20 – *The Roving Evangelist* – 178
- 21 – *Changing Course Toward Africa* – 187
- The Photo Gallery – 196
- Biblical Research Library – 201

Dedicated to our mothers: Wanda J. Dickson & Julene F. Hill
The fruit of whom was greatly multiplied through the son & daughter
to whom they gave birth.

To a son, Roger, on September 1, 1947,
and to a daughter, Martha, on December 17, 1946

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Cover theme: AS A FAMILY (Dickson family in front of our Beech airplane, N5670K, 1981)
(Back left to right: Angella, Martha, Roger; Front left to right: Lisa, Matthew, Cindy)

Preface

Wherever Martha and I have lived in the world, people have not known who we are because they have not known from where we have come. They simply believe that we are from where we first originated, that is America. But almost all have no idea of the life we have lived simply because we have not dwelt on our past experiences with those to whom we ministered at any given time in our lives. This book is written, therefore, by two world citizens who have lived and traveled to many places of the world. It is our prayer that this book will in some way encourage you by what God has done in our lives. If our lives prove anything, they prove that God truly works in the life of those who give themselves to the call of world evangelism. Our lives are a testimony to this fact. And because God has worked so marvelously in our lives, we have been encouraged every day to continue in the direction He has chosen for us.

As I take you through this life journey as the author of this book, keep in mind that Martha, my wife, is always there. Though I use the first person pronoun, please understand that there is a faithful wife with me who also has given her life to the Lord.

Since I am an evangelist, you know that I must have some opinions about a few things. You will have to forgive me for expressing my opinions in a book that is a journey of the meanderings of Martha and myself throughout the world. But what can I say. I am a teacher, an amateur philosopher, and a crossbreed of culture. If you are offended because I express some negative things about your opinions or culture, I beg for your forgiveness.

I know who I am. I am a man of God. And early in my years I discovered my God-given destiny. Many questions were thus answered early in my life as to what I should do, though at times where I was to do my calling was sometimes questionable. Because I have sought to carry out my destiny would be a commendation of Martha who joined herself to my destiny and made it hers. Not many men marry such women in these days where women are encouraged to do their own thing. But God blessed me with a good wife, and thus both of us were blessed as God took us both into all the world. Neither one of us will lay our heads down in death and wish that we had done something with our lives. We have lived several lifetimes in the years that God has given us. With this contentment, we will push forward until we breathe our last.

So I write these things in order that you know something about our lives and adventures in fulfilling the great commission of our Lord. I will expose

myself in these writings in order that readers discover who I am. I do not seek to be anyone's special leader simply because when people seek this from others, they often take their focus off Jesus. He only must be given total allegiance and glory and honor.

To our children, Martha and I say thank you for going with us to the ends of the earth. They have been good and faithful children who have faced adventure and struggle that is not common among those who have the privilege of growing up in familiar settings throughout their youth. Our children have endured through our life of world citizenship that has many challenges, and thus they are the better for it. We have great pride in our children in their adult years simply because they have used their past experiences to be better people.

This is one of those books that is never finished since God is never finished with us until we pass from this life. The word "retirement" does not exist in the dictionary of any faithful servant of God. I suppose I will add chapters until the day I die. Not only am I an obsessive writer, I seek to encourage others by writing about what God can do in your life if you will let go and let Him take you where He will. I have sought to give to God the totality of who I am and what I have to offer for the purpose of world evangelism. I have tried to live the mission, and thus allow God to have His way with me, though at times I have wrestled with His direction. But as I look back on my life, I can truly say that He won out when it was the right thing to do and the right place to go. My life is a testimony to the fact that God is alive and working today in the lives of His people.

Cape Town, South Africa, 2007

Chapter 1

GROWING UP AND GOING UP

“I’m sure we can do it,” I confidently affirmed to my brother.

My brother James fully agreed to this preposterous suggestion. This began our Kitty-Hawk adventure to test fly a genuine bedsheet parachute. I was ten years of age at the time and my brother James was eleven. Both of us had this glorious plan of climbing up a ladder, spreading our configured bedsheet, and then ever so gently floating to the ground in a moment of exhilarating flight. At least, that was what we had fantasied.

“Ready?” he signalled.

“Yip,” I eagerly replied.

Into the air we jumped. Tragedy ensued. The ladder slipped. Catastrophe followed when I knocked my delicate head against the ground. However, my brother James was not so lucky. He broke both bones in both arms and was rushed to the hospital. That ended the great parachute adventure of the Dickson brothers and we learned that bedsheets don’t fly.

That unfortunate adventure, however, did not deter my flight dreams. Somehow, in growing up on a farm in central Kansas, I sprouted a wing in my heart and an adventure for height and flight that intrigued my conscious and subconscious mind. I climbed every high hill I could see, every stack of hay on the farm and every windmill. I dreamed of expanding wings into a blast of air that would gently lift my earthbound body to the freedom of heaven-soaring birds. I never realized until years later that God was evidently preparing me for a specific work, a work He had planned and a destiny for my life. All He had to do was to grow the boy to fulfill the destiny. But looking back to those years, I believe I made the task as hard for Him as I possibly could. Nevertheless, He won out and and the rest is history.

That First Flight

In my youth I always dreamed of getting into a real airplane,

something that had real wings and wouldn't collapse in midair like a bedsheet. My dreams were unexpectedly fulfilled one windy Kansas day when my father made a visit to the local airport of Stafford, Kansas to visit a crop duster. My father had wanted a field of alfalfa sprayed, so he sought the services of the local crop duster. Unfortunately, this good gentleman had made some previous farmer somewhat angry the week before by spraying the wrong field. It was now his established policy to go see by air the actual field to be sprayed before he did any spraying.

To my jubilation we were going on a real flight to see the actual field my father wanted sprayed. So into his Cessna 172 we went. When we skipped from the grass runway of the Stafford Airport into the clear blue, excitement attached itself to every nerve of my body. The sensation was exhilarating! I just couldn't believe it was so great. I was a goner for flight, and some day, I thought, I will be piloting one of these planes.

Nevertheless, all went well until we started turning those corners in the sky on that hot Kansas summer day. And then, the ecstasy of my central nervous system had not communicated to my stomach to keep cool. I became miserably sick in the back seat. I was just able to contain my stomach until we landed. Regardless of the abdominal misery, however, I thoroughly enjoyed the flight. I was hooked.

Farm Boy Capers

Youth was a daring adventure for me. There wasn't much entertainment on a central Kansas farm in those days, so my brother James and I built and executed every daredevil stunt we could dream up. Living on a farm presented the ideal test arena for every concoction and contraption we could imagine. And we had great imaginations.

One of the hottest stunts we executed was the bicycle-fire trick. This was performed by throwing about five gallons of gasoline on the ground, and then striking a match to produce a burning inferno. We would then execute a daring drive through the fire on our bicycles. We copied the idea from a county fair where we saw it done with cars. Admittedly, it was a little hotter on bicycles than cars, but it worked all the same.

We eventually graduated from bicycles and went on to an old motorcycle we had salvaged from some junkyard. This resulted in more anxiety for our parents, but more excitement for us. I remember racing down the road at about 50 to 60^{MPH} (that was as fast as this particular bike would go). It was my stunt to proceed toward the ditch at about 50^{MPH}. Now keep in mind that every ditch in Stafford County had embankments of dirt at various intervals to prevent erosion. These embankments made excellent ramps for jumping. Thus, I devised this lunatic idea of building up speed on the road, racing into the ditch, hitting the embankment, and then sailing through the air with the greatest of ease. After all, it got me into the air for a few moments of flight. And, it all went pretty well ... for a while.

One day when I eagerly acquired the normal 50^{MPH} speed, things did not go so well. I raced off the road into the ditch and proceeded toward an unknown embankment. The lift-off was great. The flight was even greater. Unfortunately, in midair I saw to my horror the end of a culvert sticking out at the threshold of my intended point of touchdown. To this day I can still vividly see that motorcycle tumbling through the air going one direction while I was on another course, in the same tumbling configuration, sailing at the same velocity through the air in another direction. I landed without any broken bones, only bruises and grass burns. I am sure there was some providence in all this. Unfortunately, the motorcycle suffered major abrasions and fractures. And thus, this ended the motorcycle capers. That poor motorcycle had seen its day.

Early Education

Well, my early schooling should probably not be called “education.” I have always found it difficult to explain to Third World brethren that they often had a better education in elementary school than I did for the first six years of my schooling. My brother and I went to one of the common one-room, wooden school houses that were scattered throughout rural America until about the early 1960’s. There was only one teacher for these schools and she taught all the grades from first grade to the eighth grade. All of us sat in one room, facing the teacher.

She would bring the students of each particular class to the front and teach them, while the rest of the classes were supposed to busy themselves in silence with their assignments.

Now there were two students in my grade. My brother was the only one in his grade. There were from six to eight children in the whole school from the first to the eighth grade. We were basically a large family of school children who were tutored by a teacher who always had her hands full with restless farm children. Teachers usually lasted only a year or two before moving on to something better.

When we moved on to the “town” school, neither I nor my brother could read well. We had about a third grade level in reading ability when we moved to the school in Preston, Kansas.

Now I mention this to prove a point. Keep in mind that Preston was a town (village) of only 265 residents. There were eighty-five students in this school from the seventh to twelfth grades. Preston was not much of a town, and thus the school was made up of farmer children throughout the county. In study, my brother and I were far behind everyone else when we first entered the school. So for the first six months, we had to really put ourselves into study. Our parents really went to work with us to bring us up to the level of the other students. It was hard, but we made it. The point is that one’s early years of school, even if it is inferior, does not have to handicap one for the rest of his or her life. Just determine to get your act together and study. Nothing takes the place of hard study if you want to accomplish something. My advice to anyone who wants to accomplish a dream in life is never to allow your past educational disadvantages to be an excuse for not accomplishing your dreams.

Patient Parents

My mother and father have to go down in history as two patient parents. Somehow they survived my youth as I did. I will always be grateful to my mother for her faithful struggles as a Christian mother trying alone to rear her four children to be faithful to the Lord. Throughout all of the mischievous adventures of us children, she somehow managed to put us on a road that would lead us closer to

Jesus. From struggling up the stairs late at night to read us the Bible after a hard day of work on the farm, to dragging us off to an old church building in Stafford, she has gained her prize. Would that every child had such a mother. I will never be able to repay her for the faith of Jesus which she instilled in my heart. I pray that I can only pass it on to thousands of others through my work in our Lord's vineyard. If you are reading this book, and others that I have written, you can thank Wanda J. Dickson, a woman of genuine faith who passed the same on to her son.

Kansas Farm Boys

My brother James and I were a challenge for both parents and community. We were always full of ideas and things to do. Our father was an amateur inventor and machinery reconstructionist. If one of his old pieces of machinery had to be modified or fixed, he took a welder and did it. My brother James and I did the same. We always wanted to "take it apart and see how it worked." We always wanted to make something, or make it go better or faster.

Our catlike curiosity led us down a number of questionable paths. We were farm boys and enjoyed every minute of it. One of the greatest blessings of my life was growing up on a farm in the era that we did. We did not have all the fancy blessings that modern-day youth have. We had no 4X4 to get out of the mud. We had to figure out how not to get stuck, and when we did, how to get out. If something broke, we had no money to buy a new part. We had to repair what we had. We had no fancy vehicles. We made our own. The first bicycle I had was put together from parts and pieces from a junkyard. If you lifted it off the ground, the wheels would fall off for the bolts of the axles were stripped, and thus just set in the slots of the forks. But we were happy, never knowing we were poor or disadvantaged or underprivileged and all those words that are thrown around today to make people think something should be given to them. We did not grow up with a complex that we deserved some sort of handout. If we ever put our hand out, it was slapped, and we were told to get to work. And we did. During the working season, our dad stirred us out of bed at 6:00^{AM} and we worked

in the field in those days to 9:00 or 9:30 in the evening. If the humidity was low we would harvest to 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. Our father was not against child labor. And we are the better for it. That generation who prepared us to be who we are today no longer exists in America. America has been blessed too much.

The way we grew up developed creativity in our thinking. There were no computer games to clone our thinking. We had no TV in our formative years to divert our thinking to the nonsense of others. We had to invent fun for ourselves and activities that would keep us busy on a farm that was eight miles from the large metropolitan city of Stafford, Kansas, then a city (village) of 2,700 in population.

We loved the farm and we thought work was fun. I remember begging my father to let me drive the tractor when I was ten. My brother James, who was a year and a half older than me, and I could drive the pickup truck around the farm at that age, so why could we not drive the tractor in the field? But when I was eleven, my father relinquished and I was granted the privilege of driving the tractor ten hours a day in the field. There were three of us brothers who grew up on the farm. Never did any of us complain about working. We love working on the farm. We always felt sorry for city kids. We always wondered what they did to keep themselves busy.

Somewhere along the way in my farm life I had picked up a sensitive conscience and it plagued me on every wayward step I made contrary to what my Christian teaching dictated to me. I made every effort to be a tough guy and to manifest the macho image that was so demanding of youth in those days. My own lack of confidence and low self-esteem led me into doing those rebellious things for which age makes one ashamed. Would that every young man could realize early in life the foolishness of worldly pride and come to experience the security of humbling oneself in the eyes of God. If Christian principles are placed early in the mind of young people, and by chance they stray from the right way, they will return to their spiritual roots when they grow up.

During my early college years in Hutchinson, Kansas, I decided to start attending regularly the Sunday assemblies of the Eastwood church of Christ in Hutchinson. It was either the second or third time that I attended

that I saw this young girl walking around who looked to be no more than fifteen years old. With my macho college arrogance, I decided to take this young girl home. But to my surprise, I discovered that night that she was nine months old than me. I couldn't believe it. I even had her show me her driver's license to prove the claim. So macho college man became macho humbled.

The name of this youthful looking charm was Martha Jane Hill. I was on my way to a continuing romance with the only girl I ever officially dated. She became Martha Jane Dickson after a few months of serious courtship, and a helpmeet for life.

The first Sunday after our marriage, Martha and I went before the Eastwood church family. We made a commitment to serve God with all our hearts. Since that moment, our lives have never been the same. We have never looked back. At that time, God began preparing us together for a special work. Neither of us knew what the future held. We only knew that the Father had sent us to one another for His work that was yet in the future. We were excited about having one another. And we were excited about our rededication to serve our God. We both needed one another at that time in life, and thus spent endless hours in talking about what we would do together for the Lord. It was December 1966 when we were married.

Chapter 2

HEADING GOD'S WAY

I have always believed that God would watch over me. If worse came to worst, I always felt that He could be relied on for getting me out of any situation. I do not know where this sense was developed in me. I just knew that God worked strongly in my life.

There were times I really put Him to the test in this matter when I walked in the foolishness of my own ways. And, there were times He really put me to the test by humbling me in His sight. My infant faith in His working in my life as a youth has grown to a trust that He is busy working in my environment to bring fruit to my labors for His glory. I have always believed that the best is yet to be because He always wants

the best for us. The older I get, the more I can see His infinite work in my life.

I remember that when Martha was pregnant with our first child that we decided to be missionaries. While still pregnant with our firstborn, Angella, we started some serious dreaming. We lived in Hutchinson, Kansas where I had attended a junior college. Our first desire was to go to a Christian college in order to prepare for world evangelism. So we decided to make a trip to Oklahoma City to visit Oklahoma Christian College.

We had seven dollars to our name at that time and a lot of faith to make the five-hour trip to Oklahoma City and back. Therefore, we just headed out, knowing that somehow we would make it there and back. (Oh, the innocence of youthful idealism.) On the way, we avoided the toll highway in order to save money.

We arrived in Oklahoma City in good shape, no problems, just a little more in company with the poverty stricken. We still had to figure out where we were going to spread our tents for the night. Eating would be a luxury. God did take care of us, however. The college had an extra vacant room to spare where we could sleep.

We thought we would eat a hamburger for one meal on the trip. This would still allow us enough money to buy gasoline in order to return home. My aunt Enid happened to be in Oklahoma, and as family, and to our surprise, picked up the tab. (It was one of those times when one does not make a hassle over who is going to take the check. We were just thankful.)

Martha and I knew we did not have enough money to pay tuition for a Christian college. A good preacher friend of mine, Jimmy Keas, suggested that I go to a school of preaching. At the time, I had no idea what a school of preaching was. But he explained that no tuition was paid by the student in order to attend these schools. The local churches that conducted these schools paid for the cost of operating the school. All that was needed from the student was living and book expenses. We thought this was a grand idea. And after looking at our banking account—we had two hundred dollars to our name—I was sure that God wanted us to attend such a school.

In the fall of 1967, I went alone to Dallas, Texas to visit the Preston Road School of Preaching. This was my first visit to the “big city.” Remember, I was a farm boy who grew up going to a school in Preston, Kansas, a village of 250 people. Stafford, at the time, was about 2,700. Hutchinson was about 50,000. Hutchinson was a “big town” to me. So let me assure you that it was awesome for this farm boy from Kansas to be in Dallas, Texas.

Upon arriving in Dallas, I had a long visit with Eldred Stevens, the director of the school. He was one man for whom I later developed great admiration. It was his work in life to train preachers. And, he was a pilot. Therefore, there had to be something extra special about him. That fall, our first child was born. We were now a family of three.

Dallas Bound

Our only problem in going to school was money. All we needed was board and room to attend. We had managed in the late fall of 1968 to save five hundred dollars. We figured that this amount would get us through a few months of school. I could then quit school in order to get a job to save to reenter the school. Therefore, we informed the church in Stafford, Kansas, where I grew up, that we were going to Dallas, Texas to the Preston Road School of Preaching. (In later years one of the elders there told me that at the time they did not think I would ever make a preacher.) I asked the Stafford church, as well as other churches and individuals, if they could help us financially. Considering my past life, I guess I was really asking them for a leap of faith in me.

At the time, the Stafford church was financially strapped and could not help. In fact, we received no promises of support from anyone. Nevertheless, I had enrolled in the school and somehow we were going. I was that determined farm boy who was going to school, regardless of obstacles such as the lack of money. Maybe it was just hardheadedness. Martha thinks that is what it was. I am sure she was right.

About two weeks before school started, Martha and I decided that we had better get our things together to make the move to Dallas. Angella was three months old and still in diapers. We didn't have any monthly support promised, so we trusted in our five hundred dollars

that would get us through for a few months of study.

I remember going to my last day of work at the Carey Salt Company in Hutchinson. It was my last day on the job and I gave everyone my good-bye's. I had told them that I was going to a preaching school in order to become a preacher. Well, none of them ever believed that I would make a preacher, either. But again, I was just hardheaded about the matter. Five o'clock came that day and I finished my last day of work for a boss in the world.

When I arrived home, Martha greeted me with excitement. She informed me that my home church in Stafford had called and come to our rescue with some support. They said that the money had just happened to be made available. My sister and brother-in-law, Roger and Zina Ratzlaf, also informed us that they would help. I give thanks to God for people who have faith in unlikely preacher prospects.

I will never forget how God tested our faith in that matter until the last day. At that time it was like the Father saying, "Son, everything is going to work out. Just go." He taught me a lesson in those days that I have lived with ever since. We just go. If there is no leap, there is no faith.

Serious School

For the sake of some today who might be attending a resident Bible school, I think it would be good here to rehearse what prospective preachers went through in the Bible schools of yesteryear. It seemed in those days that the instructors felt that if you wanted to preach the gospel to the world, then you must be serious about letting God talk to you through His word. In order to prove this point, schools for preachers in those days wanted to make sure that this was your calling. I remember one of my instructors saying, "If you can't take the schedule, then get a job." Preaching is not a job. It is a calling. The instructors knew that preaching was for God-called men, not for those who were looking something to do because they could do nothing else. I think that would be good advice for those in Third World countries where young men often cannot find a job, and so, they decide to go study Bible full-time.

Our instructors seemed to believe that they could not load us down

with enough studies. We were in class from 8:00^{AM} to 4:30^{PM}, with time off for lunch. The program was for two years, wherein we completed the equivalent of 120 college semester hours. For each nine-week session we had to complete from five to nine thesis papers for the courses. We had to memorize from 100 to 125 scriptures for every nine week session. When we studied Greek, we had to study at least three hours a day for a year.

In order to keep up with such demands, I had to drag myself out of bed at 5:00^{AM} and study until 7:00^{AM}. I ate breakfast, said good by to wife and child, and headed to school. During lunch breaks all of us were memorizing scriptures or reading while we munched on a sandwich. When classes were over we headed home and had family time until 7:00^{PM}. I was then off to the library to study, research and write until 11:00^{PM}. From mid Saturday afternoon until 10:00^{PM} I was again in study in the library. Sunday afternoons and evenings were for study. We would keep this schedule for nine weeks, and then collapse for a week break. We did this for two years. This really took a lot out of us, but we learned the Bible. Those who could not make it, knew that this was not their calling.

For those of us who were married—in fact, I think we were all married in my class except one student—we were lucky. Unfortunately for Martha, she had a husband who loved taking notes. When we first entered school, we had this new portable (mechanical) typewriter. I would take handwritten notes during class, and Martha would type them out during the day. I would initially write my papers in longhand, and Martha would type them. On the average, I produced from seven to ten pages of typewritten notes a day. Martha typed every letter and every thesis paper. I did not type one. By the end of school, the new typewriter was old with holes worn in the keys by her fingernails. I often think how fortunate we are today with computers.

Martha always said that this was her school. I sat in the classes, but she had the opportunity of learning through typing the notes. That's just the way Martha has always been. She has always been a true help, meet to get her husband through. I know I would never have gained as much out of the school as I did if it was not for her tireless help in

typing notes and thesis papers. In those days we lived off chicken pot pies, my brother's car which he loaned us for two years, and a small apartment on Fitzhugh Avenue. They were hard years, but we learned how to be a poor preacher family who trusted in God to get us through.

Getting Started

God helped me do what few expected could be done with a strong-minded farm boy. I graduated. When I graduated from Preston Road, Eldred Stevens told me that when I had applied to the school he thought that I would never make a preacher. "But," he added, "You have been one of my best students." Those words have always stayed with me. They were words of encouragement from one I came to respect as one of the greatest gospel preachers of our time.

Before going to school, and while working as an employee of the world, I memorized the word of God. In order to learn the word, I believed that one had to memorize the word. The first book I memorized was the book of James. The experience helped me to appreciate every word of the word. But it was during the two years of school in Dallas when I truly fell in love with the word of God. God's word is still our source of faith. In order to have the faith that is well pleasing to God we must thoroughly saturate our minds with our Father's words. We must allow God to speak to us through His word. There is no real faith without a knowledge of the word that comes from God.

After graduation I began preaching for a group of disciples in Gulfport, Mississippi. It was a great work. I am so thankful for the brethren there who were so patient with me in my struggles through the first years of being a young evangelist. It was a great privilege to work with T. Pierce Brown, the preacher for the Gulfport church. May God truly reward every church and older preacher who breaks in young gospel preachers.

While I was preaching in Mississippi, Martha and I never gave up the dream of being missionaries. Even before attending school in Dallas, we had dreamed of going to some far off land in order to preach the gospel. The only problem was that God had a hard time getting us out of the United States and into the mission field. Both of us had grown

accustomed to the fine things of the “American Way of Life.” The thought of giving up family, friends, and the fine life did not appeal to either of us at the time. We had caught the American materialism and comforts of life. Nevertheless, God was working hard on us. The dream of going into all the world grew stronger as both of us began to see God working in our lives. And now as we look back, we can see how God was preparing us to be world citizens with a world mission.

While we were in Gulfport, I made a giant step toward another goal I always had hidden within my inner self. You guessed it. I started flying lessons. On July 9, 1970, I made my first solo flight. I had to borrow the money to complete the program, but in November of that year I passed my check ride and I was on my own. I was a full-fledged pilot. I was licensed to drive these machines through the air. I didn't know where God was going to use my flying for His glory, but I knew He was. I had worked for the pilot's license for the purpose of using it in His kingdom and I knew there was a place He could use my talents and desires to do His work.

Learning Caution

God certainly watches over us in our foolishness. In my early days of flying, right after I had received my license, I thought I was the first cousin to Charles Lindbergh. Your arrogance will always get you in trouble in the flying world. For example, I remember one incident in flying that I will never forget. I was still preaching in Gulfport at the time. One of the members of the Gulfport church and I wanted to make a quick trip to Florence, Alabama to attend a lectureship. We had to leave late in the afternoon for the trip in a two-seater, Cessna 150. On the day of our departure, we were off and into the air as the sun began to blink its last flicker over the horizon. Darkness crept over us as we penetrated the skies in almost instrument conditions—no clouds, just a greenhorn pilot flying over the almost uninhabited forests of Mississippi and Alabama.

We just flew and flew that night. Everything was going well until I came to the awful conclusion that I was somewhat lost. We had been flying for over four hours. Twenty minutes back we had passed a lighted

airport. What airport it was was anybody's guess. I was lost and fuel was getting miserably low. My palms began to sweat and a little knot began to form in the tender part of my stomach. My passenger was off in dream land asleep, so I suffered alone. I yearned for a bedsheet.

All I could see ahead was nothing. So I made a quick u-turn up there in the big black and headed back to the only airport I had located. I knew we were about to start flying on fuel vapors any minute. The forest below just didn't seem to be very appealing at the moment. So I asked the Lord to get us down, wherever down was.

By the time we reached the airport which we had previously passed, I was in a state of pure anxiety; every finger was crossed and the little knot in my tender stomach had turned into a major cramp. I lined up on the runway, and relaxed a little only when I realized we were within gliding distance of touchdown. Let me tell you that it was beautiful music to my ears to hear those tires thump down on that runway.

When we landed I calmly awakened my passenger by saying, "Well, we're here." (Wherever "here" was.) But as "luck" would have it, this was the airport to which we were supposed to go in the first place. When I had the tanks fueled up, I noticed that the pump meter registered one gallon more than the airplane manual stated that was usable fuel for that plane. Well . . . how can I explain that? To this day I still give God credit for that one extra gallon.

Of course, my pilot's pride never allowed me to tell my innocent passenger any of this. Little did he know that his life was in such great danger. But throughout the rest of my flying years, I checked my fuel tanks meticulously. I filled them up to the top every flight, no matter how short or long. And I made it a point to never get lost again. I also worked on not being too confident as a pilot. But as every pilot, there were still more adventure to come in my flying.

Outside The Cocoon

During the summer of 1972, about six preachers, including myself, conducted a three-and-a-half week campaign to the island of Grenada in the West Indies. This was my first venture outside the confines of my native cocoon of America. The purpose of the campaign was to

follow-up on about 450 Bible correspondence course students who had graduated from courses that were sent out by the Gulf Coast churches.

I can still remember those days of anxiety in preparation for the trip. I had never been to a foreign country—except Texas—and I was excited about learning other peoples in other lands. Admittedly, I had an adventurous spirit which had led me down all sorts of roads just to see what was there. I was not a person who suffered from either a fear of the unknown or a fear of heights. It was the way God made me, which making has allowed me to dare to go on from where others often turn back.

So we were all off to the Caribbean, the place of enchanted islands and adventure. All of us traveled down together to this place of pirates and buccaneers. We arrived at Pearl's Airport, Grenada, my first landing in a foreign country. We then navigated across the lush island on a winding road that would break a snake's back. For the first few days, we stayed in St. Georges, the capital.

Our plan was to cover the entire island in follow-up on the BCC students. It was from St. Georges my good fellow preachers decided to "send me out" with a handful of BCC students to the east side of the island. Several students were in and around the town of Grenville which was on the east side of the island. There was also a young Christian by the name of Aaron who was "over there" somewhere. Therefore, with my apprehensive consent, I decided that I should take the east side of the land. This was an experience I vividly remember, for it was the first time I set out alone with God in order to accomplish a mission. Such was in my nature. There I was, fresh out of the States, young and inexperienced. I was going off on a road that had some destination I did not know. Like I said, I never really suffered from a fear of the unknown.

The next day I was out of bed at 5:00^{AM} and headed down to the bus station where the buses, "trucks"—they were flatbed trucks with benches on the bed—awaited to take unsuspecting passengers on a hair-raising, roller coaster ride across the mountainous trails of Grenada. My good brethren said, "Go to Grenville and start a church over there." So, I went. I had two weeks to contact about fifty students. I was too

young to believe it couldn't be done. So, I caught the truck-bus and made my way across the island in hope of starting a church from zero.

God can do marvelous things with our feeble inexperience, and destiny of His will in our lives. I went to Grenville and preached alone. At the time, the only thing I knew to do was to go down to the market place and preach. So on the first Saturday, I stood in the market place of Grenville, Grenada and preached to the hundreds of people who were moving about buying this and that. I also preached on street corners, and wherever I could find people gathered for some reason. I preached in front of stores and factories in the day time and in the night with only the light of the moon. I preached in huts and houses alike. All I knew to do was to stand up and preach and teach house to house, from market to market, and corner to corner. Those were glorious days of preaching. At the end of two weeks over twenty people in the area of Grenville had been baptized. The church was established or reestablished, and to this day it is still faithfully there being a lighthouse for Jesus. I miss market preaching.

During the entire campaign, eighty-six precious souls were added to the church through the efforts of everyone involved. I was thrilled by the tremendous receptivity of the people. Their desire to listen and study God's word overwhelmed me. I was hooked. I felt it was somehow wrong to allow such thirsting for the truth to go unquenched. I wondered why few preachers of the gospel in the States did not realize this great hungering for the gospel in these lands. It was during this first contact with the great receptivity of mission areas that I decided that I must do my part to evangelize the world. I made a commitment to God that I would find receptive people throughout the world and deliver the gospel to them at all costs.

In those days in Grenada, and most of the Caribbean, one could ask at ten houses if they wanted to study the Bible. Nine houses would invite you in. On that first visit to Grenada, I once walked up a trail into the bush on the side of a mountain. I passed by a small house of about five meters square. I noticed a gray-haired man inside reading his Bible. As the custom was, I clapped my hands and said, "Inside." The gray-haired man looked up and said, "Come in." I explained to

him that I was visiting and talking to people about the Bible. His name was Mr. McDonald. I did not know at the time, but he later explained after he was baptized that he had been praying for two weeks that God would send him someone who would teach him the Bible. There are millions throughout the world who are of the same heart. They are out there praying that someone come and teach them the Bible. All you preachers who find comfort in preaching to the same group of people Sunday after Sunday need to think on these things. While you are preaching to the same people Sunday after Sunday, remember that there are millions in the world who seek for you to answer their prayers.

I returned from my first trip to Grenada with a deeper commitment to allow God to use me in taking the gospel to the world. I believe this one trip brought me into contact with reality. That reality was the fact that no man has a right to hear the gospel twice when there are millions who have never had the opportunity of hearing it once. That burden was placed upon my heart in Grenada. And today, I thank the people of Grenada for opening my heart to see their spiritual needs. This spice island of the Caribbean will always be a precious reminder to me that there are millions in the world who will obey if they can only have the chance to hear. It is my prayer that every evangelist will have a Grenada experience. Such an experience will change the life of those who are deeply committed to the saving of souls.

Chapter 3

THE COFFEE LAND

We had been living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast for over four years when God called us to Brazil. Martha was comfortable in Gulfport, Mississippi. So was I. But there lingered in our hearts the desire to launch out into the cutting edge of the kingdom to some land where receptivity was great and challenges were many. And on top of all this, the Grenada experience had changed me. But the longer I stayed in the local U.S. preaching environment the harder it was becoming for me to make a commitment to those who had never had an opportunity to hear the name of Jesus. I was forgetting their Macedonian calls. But deep

down inside I was always of the nature of the proverb, “Some people want to live within the sound of church and chapel bell. But God give me a rescue house within a foot of hell.”

Materialism is a deadly trap for the American evangelist. I liked the “things” of America. I always thought the materialist was the one living in the next financial bracket above me. I had forgotten that there is always someone living in the next financial bracket **below** me who thought that I was materialistic. The problem with American materialism is that from youth people are taught to consume. The American economy is based on consumption. It is a culture where one goes into a store to buy a tube of toothpaste and comes out with a whole trolley full of stuff. This culture draws immigrants from all over the world. And when living in a Third World situation, you cannot blame people for wanting a better life. But for the evangelist, a “better life” is not what it is all about. The better life is yet to come. So Martha and I had to go. People were hungering and thirsting after the truth.

Even in these modern times of communication, there are still millions of people in the world who have never heard of the name Jesus. That burden has always been on my shoulders. I have never wanted to stand before the judgment seat of the Father without ever having given it my best shot to let as many people as possible have a chance to hear the gospel of Jesus. I think God means for every disciple of Jesus to feel the same. It is not our goal to enjoy the things of this world. It is our joy to use the things of this world in order to get the gospel into all the world. There will be enough time in heaven for enjoyment.

Nevertheless, I remember fighting God in Gulfport. But God won the battle of my heart and we went forth. In Lubbock, Texas I had previously contacted Ellis Long, a longtime veteran missionary of Brazil. At that time, the Sao Paulo Mission Team was in the process of recruiting five families to take the place of team members who were returning to the States after many years in Brazil. In the presence of the diplomatic appeal of Ellis, Martha and I made a decision. We decided on Brazil. For us small town people of middle America, this was not an easy decision. And at the time, we had four children. Angella had just turned six and Lisa one month old.

My heart goes out to every first-time missionary. We contacted over sixty churches in order to raise our necessary support to go. It was a nine-month struggle that tested our faith and led us to question the faith of some who had no desire whatsoever to support any foreign mission efforts. Fund-raising for missions is one of those things one must struggle through, and at the same time, struggle not to become bitter or cynical. One must remember that it is God who calls evangelists and not churches. When one truly feels that it is God's will that he be an evangelist, then he will persevere until he fulfills his destiny. If one feels that it is the church's responsibility to send him, then he might have some trouble with himself if the church continues to refuse to send him. We must keep in mind that it is God who calls faithful disciples to preach the gospel to the world. And when I use the phrase "preach the gospel" I am referring to those who are called to stand up before the masses of the world and boldly proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I realize that I am here preaching, but I have learned many lessons as a world evangelist since we made the decision to go to Brazil in 1973. One of those lessons is that as a world evangelist, our trust must be completely in God, not in the church. The church is people, and people are sometimes less than motivated. But if one trusts in God, He will make the way. I must confess that I have absolutely no complaints in reference to the church taking care of us throughout the years. We have never had to worry about support. I think brethren just want to know that we as evangelists are truly dedicated to the task, before they make a commitment to support us. If they see commitment in our lives, they will come to the rescue. Those who complain about the church not supporting them, are looking for the support. When our primary goal is to find the support, brethren can sense this, and thus do not respond. As evangelists, we must be looking to God and the destiny God has given to us. I stopped "raising support" years ago. Once I discovered that God will take care of those who are determined to do His will, He will come through with what is needed.

Preparing To Launch Out

In the summer of 1974 we had four beautiful children. Angella

was six. Matthew was three. Cindy was two years old. Lisa was not even crawling. In fact, both Cindy and Lisa were still in diapers, and Matthew was still having accidents in the matter.

Back in those days we didn't know what a survey trip was. We just figured that if one didn't have enough faith to up and move he didn't have enough faith to make it on the field. So, we just went. Of course, this mission principle isn't always true. Many would-be missionaries have just up and moved, and then after being on the field for only a few months have just up and moved back home. Nevertheless, we packed up our few belongings in crates in Gulfport and shipped them out of New Orleans to Brazil. We shipped them about a month before we left in order to receive them around the time we arrived. We were dreaming.

When we made the decision to go to Brazil, I will always remember a brief prophetic conversation that Martha and I had with our Welsh neighbors. We went across the street to inform them that we were moving to Brazil as missionaries. As Welsh women, they were so excited. One of them said, "It's so great to see people commit their entire lives to missions!" I never said anything in response. We had only committed ourselves to five years to missions, at the conclusion of which, we planned to return to the States. Well, that was in 1974 and we have not been back to settle in the States since. Maybe at the time those two Welsh women knew something about us that we did not.

Even though our South African friends always view us as having come to Africa from America, they do not realize that we only stopped over in America to resupply before coming to Cape Town. However, the hearts of Martha and I left America in 1974. We still have roots there. Our children are presently there. But we have committed ourselves to a lifetime of world citizenship wherever we might live in the world. And since 1974, we have visited almost one hundred countries and lived on three continents.

The Long Flight To Brazil

Our flight to Sao Paulo, Brazil was our first challenge in accomplishing our Brazilian mission. I can today look back at that

flight and still wonder how we ever did it. We left Gulfport and flew all day and all night with those four little ones. In between flights, we sat in airport terminals trying to comfort four little angels who could not figure out what was going on in their lives. I can honestly say without any doubt that it was the most miserable trip Martha and I have ever made. Before we left, the doctor gave us some red looking “snake oil” for the children. It was supposed to make them sleep on the plane. It didn’t. It made them just sleepy enough to be cranky. And they cried all the way to Brazil. That was the trip that neither Martha nor I will ever forget. But we made it. I think God was telling us that it would get better. And, it did.

Getting To Work

We arrived in Brazil on September 3, 1974. Carl Henderson picked us up at the airport and we all crammed into a Volkswagen beetle—that’s right. We were then off across Sao Paulo on our rude awakening to Latin American driving. We had this urge to hold our hands in the air as on a roller coaster.

Upon arrival in Brazil, the first lesson we learned was to do without what we thought were vital household articles. The goods we had shipped in August did not arrive until December of that year. That was God’s class on learning to live without what we think we need to have to live. It was a frustrating class in which to sit and learn. However, by the time our goods arrived from America, it was like Christmas. In all the experience we learned a valuable lesson. As Americans we usually surround ourselves with a great host of material possessions, thinking that all such things are necessary for the function of life. We had been brought up with finding security in possessions. But one’s security must never be placed in such. Take my word for it, we can learn to live without all our trinkets.

Settling Into Brazil

Brazil was a learning experience in every way. My toughest challenge was learning Portuguese. I had studied some Portuguese before we left the States. Martha only received it secondhand from my

classes that I took in New Orleans, Louisiana. Upon arrival in Brazil, I took special classes in Portuguese for the first few months. Martha took classes on the streets and in the market places. But it was hard for me to learn this new language. I have since discovered that I do not have the “gift of languages.” Though throughout my years as a foreign evangelist, I have learned to preach in both Portuguese and Spanish, I am not like Africans. They are so gifted in learning languages. Every African knows and speaks fluently at least two languages. I know some Africans who speak ten to twenty different languages and dialects. But learning a different language was always difficult for me. Nevertheless, after about nine struggling months I was able to stumble through my first Portuguese sermon. I do not know how my audience survived. They just sat there and put on a good act as if they understood this foreign chap who sweated it out for thirty minutes. Fortunately, the Brazilian brothers and sisters were exceptionally patient with anyone who was trying to learn their language.

If you ever want to be encouraged in learning another language, you must go to Brazil. The Brazilians will do everything to encourage you to learn their language. They will never laugh at you, or make any gesture that might discourage you. They are truly a marvelous people for this. Nevertheless, I think they gave me an extra helping of patience as I struggled to learn Portuguese.

Brazilian culture in Sao Paulo was similar in many ways to the American culture. After our first months of acculturation, we felt more at ease in the overwhelming size of the city of Sao Paulo. I must confess, however, that at first the size of the city unnerved me. I thought, “What is a small-town country boy like me doing in a place like this?” When we arrived Sao Paulo was about ten million. When we left it was eleven million. Today it is twenty-five million.

Big City, Big Country

Brazil is big. It is larger than the continental United States, excluding Alaska. When we first arrived, we stayed in a hotel right in the middle of the city, right on the main street of downtown Sao Paulo. Can you imagine what these two small town country people felt like in

the middle of a city of over ten million? I want to tell you that Martha and I were in a daze for those first few weeks. We will always be grateful to members of the Sao Paulo Mission Team who were on the field at that time. Ken and Liz Lewis were especially helpful. We stayed in their house for one month after arrival while they were in the States on furlough. It was in the winter in Brazil, and we had just come from the humid summer of southern Mississippi in the northern hemisphere. Our summer bodies had been thrown into a winter environment. I can still remember the six of us huddled on the sofa wrapped in a blanket. We watched Daniel Boone on TV speaking Portuguese. Ken and Liz were in the States, so we suffered alone. Those were the days for adjustment, adjustment in how to make it on our own in a mass of humanity and different things.

There were a thousand different things to learn. Shopping for food was an exciting adventure. Martha would buy food at the open market. This was a new adventure for an American housewife who was accustomed to picking up finely wrapped goods off a clean shelf. There were few canned goods in stores. However, we could not read the Portuguese labels. If the can had no picture on it, we would just make a guess. We would take the cans home, open them up, and surprise, guess what we are having for lunch?

After the initial shock of the big city and the new culture, however, we grew to love the city of Sao Paulo. But I must confess that I never grew to love the horrendous smog and challenging traffic. I could have gone without both of these obstacles to human survival.

Now speaking of smog, it was bad in Sao Paulo. There were some days when you would become nauseated if you had to walk around downtown for one or two hours. When you would come home at night, there would be black stains around the collar and cuffs of your shirt. You can imagine what some people's lungs looked like after living in this environment for twenty years.

Each day in the traffic was an adventure. Upon arrival, they told us that there were only two types of pedestrians in Sao Paulo, the quick and the dead. My Portuguese teacher I had in the States was a Brazilian and had grown up in Rio de Janeiro. Before we moved to Brazil, she

said, “In Rio, when a car hits a man, they tell the car driver to go on. The police will clean up the mess.” That may be a little exaggerated, but I do believe the pedestrian does not always have the right-of-way in most Brazilian cities. Some believed that if a pedestrian were crazy enough to step out into the traffic, he deserved to get hit. But you can be assured that I never tried to test this philosophy.

One of the best school situations our children have enjoyed in our foreign living was the school they attended in Brazil. Angella immediately started her second year of school, and two years later, Matthew started the English-speaking school that was run by the Baptist church. When Cindy was old enough to go to school, she attended a small Brazilian school near our house. She was able to do so for one year before we left Brazil.

Sao Paulo had everything to offer when it came to modern living. All you had to do was pay the price. One of the great shopping advantages was the markets that were set up in the streets two days a week near our house. Almost all of our food could be purchased at these “portable markets.” And Brazil had food. I gained fifteen pounds my first year in Brazil. Of course, I think a lot of this was anxiety eating. Nevertheless, I sure enjoyed the food.

One of the advantages of working in Brazil was the right I had as a foreigner to operate an amateur radio. About six months before we moved to Brazil, I had studied for, and eventually passed, the test to receive a ham radio license. It took me six months and four attempts at passing the test before I finally received the license. Passing that test was truly difficult, but I knew I was headed for a foreign country, and wanted to stay in touch with home. In Sao Paulo, I was on the air almost every Thursday evening with calls back to the States. We made calls for team members who wanted to talk to family, friends and churches. At the time, it was a great tool in missions. Overseas telephone calls on the land line were about \$2.50 a minute. You can imagine the amount of money we saved by using the ham radio. Now that phone charges have greatly decreased internationally, there is little need for the ham radio communications that many early missionaries used. But at the time in Brazil, it was a great asset. I still have a valid ham radio

license, which I vowed I would never let expire since it was so difficult for me to acquire. However, I have not talked on a ham radio since the late 80's.

Team Evangelism

I must confess that I have always been independent natured. That's the farmer in me. Farmers never live in boxes. If they did, they would be out of business as the neighboring farmer would have adopted better planting methods and better fertilizer and moved on. There are cursings and blessings in missions with such a nature. I do not think one can be a foreign evangelist without an independent nature. If one does not have this, he will not survive. He will not adapt to different cultures. It takes a lot of guts, grit and gall to leave home and settle in a foreign culture, where you are alone with your family until friendships are developed. Without an independent nature, one will never survive such a life-style.

After several years of living in a country where one is seeking to establish the church, most evangelists become independent natured because of the nature of their work. As leaders among infant churches, they usually have no peers in leadership. This is especially true in the first years of their work of church establishment. Therefore, they have to be able to stand alone with God at their side. They must have a great faith in God who stands with them at the front in leading church movements to victory. I have yet to meet a "lifer"—the term that we use to identify those evangelists who have given their entire lives to foreign evangelism—who does not have an independent spirit.

In Sao Paulo I had the privilege of working with fourteen other men in a close team work. It was a great experience for me. With my independent spirit, I was molded by experienced evangelists in how to work together in a team effort. In those first years of mission work, I needed the company and experience of seasoned evangelists. God provided it through the team effort. I would advise any young family to first go to the mission field with a team. Either go as a team or go to a team. Such will spare one countless futilities.

I have always been impressed with team work. My brother James and

I always worked together in growing up on the farm. I remember one time when we salvaged an old engine which had been discarded in a grove of trees about twenty years before. We had the ambitious goal of getting the rusty old junker running. Both of us knew much about engines at the time, so we were determined to make the old engine run. I believe he was about sixteen and I was fifteen. Our optimistic ambitious attitudes about machines would not allow us to be deterred from getting this engine running. After about two weeks of struggle in cleaning it and in trying to get it going, I was ready to throw in the wrench. I was discouraged. So my brother James was more than willing to buy me out. I sold out my share for twenty-five cents. The next day he got the engine running. Well, what can I say. I sold my birthright to an engine that brought him much pleasure.

Work Experiences

One of the things that lured me to Brazil was a Cessna 206 airplane that was in operation there for evangelistic follow-up. The plane had been purchased to do follow-up work for the radio broadcasting that was going on in Brazil at that time. Carl Henderson was the pilot. He was one of the best pilots for the bush that I have known. And that Cessna 206 was like a truck. It would haul anything that could be squeezed in.

Carl had been working with churches in the interior of Brazil. This was really my first experience with discipleship training by extension. And these were the times when I first began to think in the area of **distance training**. Back then, we were all learning the concept of leadership training by distance education, which then was referred to as extension training. Extension training was a new concept of church growth that was introduced to us by Ed Matthews who came to Sao Paulo in 1977 and delivered a week-long seminar to all of us on the subject. Ed had been traveling around the world under the oversight of a church just to teach this concept of leadership training. His work was to educate missionaries on distance training by use of programmed materials. Little did he know that the brief seminar he gave in Sao Paulo would change the course of my life and lead to the establishment

of the **International Bible Institute**.

Because of the vast territory of Brazil, it was difficult for us to systematically begin an organized distance training school effort outside Sao Paulo. In those days we had not considered a “full” distance training program by use of programmed course. By “full” I mean the exclusive use of programmed materials without the periodic visits of the teacher. It is sometimes amazing how an idea so simple can be so far away. With the concept we had of distance training in Brazil at that time it would have been impossible for us to incorporate an extension work that would cover the entire country. Nevertheless, we did make an effort to bring Brazilian leaders into Sao Paulo for week-long study sessions at our Bible camp. At the time, we were still hindered with the belief that the teacher must see the student. It would not be until many years later that full distance training by correspondence would be developed.

Aviation Missions In Brazil

Mission Aviation Fellowship, an interdenominational group dedicated to the mobilization of missionaries by aircraft, was operating about fifteen airplanes in Brazil at the time Martha and I were there. We had one. Not bad odds, fifteen to one. Nevertheless, the plane that Carl operated was a great asset to the work.

It was also in Brazil when I began to realize the great need for literature for church leaders who were struggling to nourish isolated churches in the interior of Brazil. Carl did a great work in distributing as much material as we could print. I did some writing to fulfill some special needs. I suppose it was in Brazil that I determined to increase up my writing in order to help isolated preachers and teachers to feed national churches. At least it was there when I did a lot of writing and printing for the churches. I did so much writing at certain times that I was using up one Bic ballpoint pen a week in producing materials. That was a lot of writing. It sure would have been nice in those days to have had a computer.

Some folks believe that computers and printing presses were invented for the purpose of people to make money. I think differently.

I believe God knew the population of the world would far outgrow our efforts to personally contact the seekers of this world. Since it is our work to populate heaven, it is our task to reach as many people as possible in order to get the message of the gospel to all the world. That means that we must use every means possible which will allow us to reach the most people in our generation. With the arrival of the computer came the tremendous opportunity of producing masses of materials for worldwide distribution. As a writer, I thank God that I now live in the age of computers.

Mission Trips

Working out of Sao Paulo was like trying to evangelize the continental United States from New York. Bible correspondence courses were probably the most effective means of reaching the 210 million of Brazil in the early days of evangelism. This outreach, combined with extensive radio broadcasting, eventually led to the establishment of the church in many of the interior states of the country. Several pockets of BCC students developed in different areas. For example, Salvador, a city of two and a half million, was the focus of one of the early centers of BCC outreach. Over five hundred people had graduated from our course in this city, which to our knowledge, had no church.

Carl Henderson, Glover Shipp, Bill Sweeten and myself decided to make a trip to Salvador and Recife in order to do some follow-up work on the BCC students in the two cities. It was an eight-hour flying trip from Sao Paulo to Salvador. Carl and I first left Sao Paulo and flew over to Belo Horizonte where we picked up Glover and Bill. From there we flew four hours northeast to the east coast of Brazil. The weather became less than satisfactory and we were forced to land at a small coastal city called Ilheus.

When we first landed, we could smell something that was familiar, but we could not identify exactly what the smell was. Everywhere we went in the city there was the same sweet smell. It wasn't until we went to a local ice cream parlor to do our normal traveling evangelist thing—eat ice cream—that we determined the source of the smell. We ordered chocolate ice cream and finally discovered the smell. It was

pure chocolate from the farms surrounding Ilheus.

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, Ilheus was the chocolate capital of the world. There was still a great deal of chocolate produced in the area. However, after the natural port filled with silt from inflowing rivers, it was almost closed at the time of our visit. Add to this the fact that chocolate seeds were exported to other countries, and Ilheus was doomed to an insignificant coastal city of Brazil.

Now I figure myself to be a pretty good taster of ice cream. So I want to give my testimony that that was the best chocolate ice cream I have ever eaten in the world. I know three other men who would witness to that fact. During the evening we were there we went back at least three times for chocolate ice cream.

After we forced ourselves out of chocolate city, we continued our flight to Salvador the next morning. Carl and Glover dropped Bill and me off in Salvador. They went on to Recife. Bill had been in Brazil only a few months, so his Portuguese was a little less than adequate. So there we were in the middle of two and a half million people with a list of about five hundred BCC contacts. That was a frustrating week for both of us.

Again, back in those days we never dreamed of first sending a letter to all these students in order to invite them to meet with us at a particular hotel. Such is the method of many Bible correspondence course efforts throughout the world today. What we did was wander around the city of Salvador trying to find those students. Sometimes, a simple idea is never conceived because of non-experience or lack of models. I believe such experience should at least tell young prospective evangelists to get some training **before** they go to the field. Such training will save countless months and years of education in the school of hard knocks on the field. At least, one will acquire ideas that will help in accomplishing the goal of evangelism.

One of the highlights of that week in Salvador was our contact with a man who had received and read our material on New Testament Christianity. On his own, he had baptized about thirty-five people and started a small group outside Salvador. When we arrived, they had constructed a small building and were meeting regularly. Numerous

cases as this occurred in Brazil. Such only proved to me the power of the printed page in evangelizing vast areas of population. Such also planted seeds in my mind concerning the tremendous need for a continued educational program for these isolated church leaders. How could we take them on to advanced training, on to material that was beyond the level of Bible correspondence course material?

Another experience of that trip also formed an impression on my mind. We were on our way back to Belo Horizonte and had been flying about four hours. The weather became increasingly worse as we neared Belo. We were flying up this valley about ten miles out of Belo, searching for a way to the city. The mountains reached into the clouds and we could not find the slightest hole through which to make it over the mountains. Fuel was getting miserably low. (I remembered a former experience.) The only airport was about thirty minutes back to Governador Valadores.

After determining that the valley in which we were flying around had no opening at the other end, we turned around and headed for Governador Valadores. It was sure quiet in that plane. We had now been flying for over five hours and we were very low on fuel. That thirty minutes back to Governador Valadores seemed like eternity. But as the sun sat lazily over the western horizon, we sat that plane safely down at the airport. It was a good sensation to feel those wheels hit terra firma. Don't ask how much fuel we had left in the tanks.

Staying Healthy

In the States, children would come home from school and say, "Mama, so-and-so has the chicken pox or flu." In Brazil our children would come home and say, "Mama, so-and-so has hepatitis, or meningitis, or scarlet fever." At times, our children brought these diseases home with them, and as good Christian children, shared with their brothers and sisters.

It seemed that every year there was an outbreak of meningitis in Sao Paulo. One particular year was pretty severe, so the city decided to inoculate as many as they could in a week. Inoculation centers were set up all over the city. Drove of people three and four blocks long filtered

through the line of vaccination guns that pumped everyone full of juice. We were six of the over three million who were vaccinated in one week in Sao Paulo.

Angella came down with hepatitis and had to stay in bed four weeks. The rest of us thankfully did not have communion with her infection, but we had to receive injections three days straight in order that our bodies not invite in the hepatitis bug.

Some time later, Martha and I wanted to make a short five-hour trip to a city called Migulapolis north of Sao Paulo. It was a quaint farming city that rested in the beautiful plains of Sao Paulo State. I loved the farming community of Brazil, and thus decided to keep my children in some way associated with the roots of farm life. On the journey up, Angella did not feel all that well. After a day there, we found out why. She had scarlet fever. So it was back home and back to bed for Angella. I always remember how tough Angella was on that trip. Her parents were totally ignorant of her sickness on the way, being somewhat impatient with her complaints. But after she broke out from head to toe with a rash, we repented, and realized that she had serious reasons for her complaints. She was a tough little girl. Still is.

Fulfilling A Goal

One of the most exciting works in the kingdom is the training of evangelists to do the work of evangelism. I had always wanted to do such in a school of preaching atmosphere in the States. That opportunity came in 1978 while we were in Brazil. The White's Ferry Road church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana, about which we had heard much and knew little, offered us the opportunity of coming to work with them as a missionary-in-residence. We would have the challenge of teaching both Bible and missions. I leaped at the opportunity. This was one of those opportunities I thought would come around only once in a lifetime. And I reasoned that this was where I should be.

Martha and I loved living in Sao Paulo. It was a great city and we had an enjoyable work there. I sometimes look back and feel that we could have stayed there the rest of our lives. But at the time, we believed that God was working in our lives with an opportunity to assist in

encouraging others to become world evangelists. However, as I look back through the eyes of faith, God was taking us on to the development of something that would fulfill a tremendous need in world evangelism. We had the concept of distance training, but the dream was only a seed that began to germinate in that last year we were in Brazil.

All of the evangelists in Brazil were beginning to work with distance training efforts. We were all new at this system of education, and thus tried different methods in order to perfect the system. It was in those days in the mid 1970's that I began to conceive of the idea of establishing a distance training school in the West Indies. Somehow, I never got the West Indies out of my heart, even during the time while we lived in Brazil. On the journeys to and from the States while there, we always went through the West Indies on short furloughs. At the time, it was an ideal situation to begin a distance training school. Our work with White's Ferry Road, therefore, became only a stopover on our way to Antigua in the West Indies.

West Monroe, Louisiana

This was one of those places where we lived that it took a long time to get out of our blood. In those days there was a great fellowship of Christians at the White's Ferry church who could dream and see visions of great works to be done in the Lord's kingdom. Martha and I fell in love with this church of people. We have always appreciated working with them throughout the years.

After about six months in West Monroe, we began to feel the need of getting back to the training of leaders to evangelize their own people in a land outside the States. The seeds of distance training that were planted in Brazil began to sprout. In conjunction with this, the White's Ferry Road church was interested in the West Indies. I cannot but help believe that God brought us to this church for the purpose of getting started that which now reaches tens of thousands of people. Therefore, it was while we were at White's Ferry Road that the **West Indies Extension School of Biblical Studies** was born, the forerunner of the International Bible Institute that is now based in Cape Town, South Africa. It is now accredited with the International Association of Bible

Institutes (IABI), as well as many other local institutes throughout the world. Those of you who are working with a registered or accredited institute of the IABI must know that the dream of both the Cape International Bible Institute and the IABI were conceived in Brazil in 1977, nurtured in West Indies in the early 80's, and continued with development in Cape Town in 1989. Production of the curriculum for the IABI started in the early 80's with the development of the *Biblical Research Library Curriculum*, a curriculum of courses that is now used throughout the world with the registered/accredited institutes of the IABI. It was not until 2000 that we were serious about bringing into function the concept of the IABI, because at that time we had a curriculum of courses upon which to establish the standard of accreditation of the association.

In the late 70's one of my tasks in West Monroe was to organize a mission team from the students of the School of Biblical Studies. I also needed to recruit two men to work as teachers in the West Indies Extension School that we planned to establish. All of this was a challenging task, but in about one year the team had solidified and we were making definite plans to move to St. Maarten in the West Indies in order to begin the School.

Before this team went to the field, I thought it would be good to take them, and a few other students, on a campaign to the island of Dominica in the West Indies. This would be a good survey trip and would break them into foreign culture. It would also give them an opportunity to work together as a team. We made this trip in the summer of 1979.

I can look back now and wonder what I must have been like on that first trip I made to Grenada in 1972. There is something about "first timers" that is somewhat entertaining. They notice all the foul smells, cringe from the dirty sights, and prissy around the open sewers. I suppose that if anyone is considering mission work in the Third World, he or she should make a survey trip there first if coming out of the cocoon of a materialistic culture. I have always believed, however, that a survey trip should be made for the purpose of determining what you need in order to get the job done where you are going. If you go on

a survey trip to see if you can live there, you best not be thinking about foreign living. I can assure you that you will always find a host of things that will discourage you from living in a Third World environment. Save the brotherhood some money and find your niche somewhere in your own culture.

But keep in mind that this is a Kansas farmer talking. We grew up in dirt, fought our mothers about wearing shoes, and found it normal to sweat like slaves baling hay in 100+ degree weather. I have always thought that farmers make the best Third World evangelists. It's like an Arkansas brother who came to the West Indies on a lectureship while we lived there. After about a week visiting around the islands, he said, "One thing I have learned about coming from the rural country of Arkansas to the Third World is that I live in the Third World in Arkansas."

One interesting fact that might be of some value is that during the middle part of the last century, the State of Kansas had the greatest percentage of evangelists in Africa in comparison to the size of the church in Kansas with other State in America. They were all former farm boys. Interesting?

I have come to believe that it is harder to recruit missionaries today than it was three or four decades ago when Americans struggled to grow up in the thirties, forties and fifties. Somehow, the "carpet kids" of our generation find it difficult to go to the poverty-stricken environment of the Third World. And those who do, it is often only for a commitment of five years or so.

I have to give credit to one young man who went on the campaign with us to Dominica. The first night we were in Roseau, he was eating at the table with us. He picked up a piece of bread, chewed into it, and then looked at what he was eating. Ants had made a home in the bread and he had just eaten into their home. Afraid to let the ladies know what he had eaten a mouthful of ants, he put the bread in his hand under the table and kept on chewing. He would have made a good missionary. But unfortunately, his wife would not have made it. They never went.

Back To The Cutting Edge

During our stopover in the States in West Monroe, we organized a

mission team, bought an airplane, and raised all necessary funds for the beginning of what became our greatest work in the Lord's vineyard to that date. Our destination was set. We were going to the island of St. Maarten in order to establish a base from which to reach out to the entire West Indian region. However, complications in getting visas would not allow us to move to St. Maarten. Therefore, the central location for the base of our work was established in Antigua.

In 1980, we were on our way and excited about the work. Besides our family, the mission team was composed of Leslie and Christy Jones with their two daughters, Dana and Catina. Jim and Julie Crisp, Jim and Kim Allen, with Rex and Dede Long, were also members of the team. Leslie, Jim and I would work primarily with the School outreach. Though everyone planned on working to evangelize the small island of Antigua, our primary focus was to work with the church throughout the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean in order to train and encourage evangelists.

The First Airplane

Several months before we were ready to launch into the West Indies, it was time to buy our first airplane for the work. I had been looking and planning the purchase for some time. I had several criteria for the type of plane that was needed, but had limited funds to buy exactly what I wanted. But we did need something that would haul two adults and four children. All my searching narrowed down to a 1966 Piper Comanche 260B.

After searching and planning endlessly for the right Comanche, I located our baby in St. Paul, Minnesota. On the phone, I trusted the conversation I had with the owners. So with a cashier's check of my life's savings, cashed in insurance, and almost every dollar out of our bank account, I caught a commercial flight to St. Paul. I landed around 2:00^{PM} in the afternoon, was picked up by one of the owners of the airplane, and headed for a small airport outside St. Paul. When I first saw N8856P, it was a love affair at first sight. So I handed over my financial security in one check. Since there was a double cold front coming in, I headed out of St. Paul the same afternoon in an unfamiliar

airplane, figuring that I could learn how to fly that make and model of airplane on my way back to West Monroe.

Chapter 4 THE HISTORICAL PEOPLE

It was the 3rd of August. There were three ships and a daring crew who were willing to chance the elements and the ocean in order to accomplish their mission to dare to go where no man had gone before. Their young, eager captain and leader of this never-to-be-forgotten expedition was the son of an Italian weaver and wool merchant. In his early years, when he was only fourteen or fifteen, he had joined the crew of a ship and adventurously set off to sail the seven seas. He traveled the coast of Africa, along the Mediterranean, and across the treacherous North Sea of Europe. At one time, he was shipwrecked off the coast of Portugal. But luckily, or providentially, he was able to fatefully cling to a floating timber of the doomed ship and make his way safely to shore. This daring young sailor quickly learned the seas and respected their dangers.

Yes, the young man in command of this historical August expedition was no novice seaman. He was experienced in the perils of the unforgiving sea. And he was about to set out on a perilous adventure that would tax both man and ship against the restless waves of the deep. He was on this day about to lead three small ships and their brave crews into one of the most challenging adventures of history. The year was 1492. The captain was Christopher Columbus. And the three ships were the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria. The government that was going to finance this bizarre adventure was Spain; everyone else thought Columbus was crazy.

It was on August 3, 1492 that Columbus set sail from Palos Harbour near Cadiz, Spain. After stopping in the Canary Islands to do some minor ship repairs, he set out into the unknown west where the sun had secretly hidden every night since the beginning of time. To their knowledge, no known sailor of their day had been where they were daring to go. Many were fearful of this uncharted ocean where they

believed strange monsters existed and where giant whirlpools consumed both men and ships. Nevertheless, Columbus and his crew set a determined heading on a course to what would eventually unlock the Western Hemisphere for modern man.

After sixty weary days at sea without sight of land, the restless crew became rebellious. They demanded that the ships turn back. But Columbus's skillful captaincy convinced them that they were near land. He promised that if they did not spot land soon they would turn back.

It was on October 11th that the cry came, "*Tierra! Tierra!*" Land had been spotted from the *Pinta*. When Columbus and his men set foot on the sandy beaches of this new land, the pages of modern history began to be written for the Caribbean. Little did the friendly Arawak Indians who met them know that their greetings to these strange men with large ships would lead to the annihilation of their people. The peaceful island where Columbus first landed was called **Guanahani**. (It is disputed as to what island this is of the Bahama chain. Traditionally, the island of **San Salvador** has been accepted as the correct island.)

It was on this October day that history changed. From this day forward the reconstruction of the Caribbean would begin and last for centuries to come.

Wrong Indies

Columbus thought that he had made it all the way around the world to India, even to China. So he called these new peoples "Indians." Now you know where we get the term "Indian." Mr. Columbus thought he had sailed around the world and reached the western part of what was then called the Indies, modern-day Indonesia and surrounding islands. Therefore, he called these new lands the "West Indies." We live with this mistake of navigation even to this day. Columbus really landed on an island of the Bahamas. Sorry, it wasn't the United States. Columbus never saw the mainland of the United States.

It wasn't until seamen landed in Guadeloupe that Europeans came into contact with a second group of Indians, the Caribs, who resided in the Caribbean islands. Unlike the Arawaks, the Caribs were warlike. They called themselves "*Karina*" or "*Kalinago*." However, the

Spaniards called them *carabales*. When the sailors first went ashore in Guadeloupe they wondered what was cookin' when they saw human parts being cooked and lying out to dry. Thus, it is from the name of these Indians that we get our English word "cannibal," or "eaters of human flesh."

New Name For A New Land

Between 1492 and 1503 a man by the name of Amerigo Vespucci explored the coasts of present-day Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. In 1507, a map maker labeled this new area "America" after Mr. Vespucci. Map makers eventually used this name to refer to South America. South America, therefore, has greater claim to the term "America" than North America. And many Latins feel strongly about it, too. They have always wondered why the United States was coined with the name while they were left out.

The West Indian Tragedy

Columbus made four trips to the Caribbean. His trips opened up this new land for Spain. Unfortunately, all that Spain wanted out of the new world was gold. Everything was exploited to get gold in order to support their military campaigns throughout Europe. The Indians were only a means through whom they could get the gold. The Arawaks were submitted to cruel slavery in order to mine the Spaniard's yellow god. Lennox Honeychurch, in his book, *The Caribbean People*, wrote,

The colonists were so thirsty for gold that many Indians began to believe the Spaniards' god was really gold itself. It seemed that they would do anything to get it. The Indian tribes of the Greater Antilles suffered untold hardship under the Spaniards, and before the fifteenth century was over so many thousands had died that Spain began looking for a new source of labor.

Arawak slavery was the Spaniards' method for gold acquisition. But under the vigorous labor demanded of them as slaves, and the diseases that were brought to them by the Europeans, the Arawaks began

to die out rapidly. According to many historians, one-third of the nationals of Hispaniola (the island of the Dominican Republic and Haiti) were dead by 1497 from the labor and diseases of the Europeans. It was estimated that Hispaniola had a population of 1,130,000 Indians when it was discovered. By 1518, one historian of that day wrote, “Today their number does not exceed 11,000. And judging by what has happened, there will be none left in three to four years time unless some remedy is applied.” Nothing was done for the Arawaks in Hispaniola. As a result, it is one civilization of people who vanished from history.

To replace the diminishing Indian population, the great slave trade routes began to bring in thousands of slaves from the west coast of Africa. Goods were brought from Europe to be traded to ruling African chiefs in western Africa who stole or captured enemy tribesmen. These kidnapped Africans were then traded to the European slave traders. In 1790 alone, it is estimated that the English brought 38,000 slaves to the New World. In the same year, the French brought 20,000, the Portuguese, 10,000, and the Dutch, 4,000. It was through the slave trade that the typical, present-day West Indian’s ancestors arrived in the Caribbean.

Where History Was Made

Historians would agree that the most history-making area in the world in the 1500’s and 1600’s, was the Caribbean. The Spaniards laid claim to the land. Exploration was opened up into Central and South America and Mexico. Gold from Peru and the west coast of South America made its way across Panama and into the hulls of Spanish galleons which set sail through what became known as the Spanish Main. It was then taken across the Atlantic to coffers in Spain.

Men like Francis Drake, John Hawkins and Sir Walter Raleigh gained their fame in the colonial struggles that took place in the Caribbean. There were also ruthless pirates like Bluebeard and Blackbeard who lurched in countless cays in the Virgin Islands and Bahamas, patiently waiting for gold-laden ships bound for Spain. The looting pirates took their share. The unpredictable elements also took

their toll of overladen ships. Hurricanes smashed overloaded and fragile ships against rocks and reefs; their unfortunate crews and valuable treasures being lost beneath the deep. These treasures were laid to rest in secluded seabed places awaiting discovery by some modern-day treasure seeker. There are those who have certainly struck it rich by finding some long, sunken Spanish galleon.

The French, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish and English all had their power struggles in the making of this New World. Today, centuries later, cultures still suffer from some old wounds inflicted by treasure seeking *conquistadors* of yesteryear. Scars remain in the cultures of people who were exploited for centuries. A whole civilization of indians was erased to make room for a new imported civilization from Africa. The French, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and English were the cultural surgeons of this great sociological transplant. Their culture still lingers in the wake of their materialistic wave of social interchange.

What the colonials left was a used, abused and deserted people. In the West Indies, however, there is a people that has weathered the storm of social abuse and change. Though torn from friends, families and cultures of Africa, they have created for themselves a new culture, a culture which takes some of the best of the many that have affected them for centuries. The West Indian people are a unique people because they have an unusual history, a history different from any in the world. And as they struggle to release themselves from past colonialism in order to determine their own future, we must stand back and be amazed at their desires and determination.

From the first time I entered the culture of South Africa, I knew that they too could have been a West Indian culture where people naturally get along with one another. When people are truly free, they work out their differences. However, when they are forced into separation, there can never be a peaceful in dwelling together with one another. In the West Indies, peoples with their cultures were hauled into the islands from many different cultures of the world. Throughout the centuries, however, they have formed their own “Caribbean culture.” It is a laid back culture, and one that is certainly not arrogant. I suppose two words would explain the general nature of the culture of the Leeward

Islands: “Chill out.”

There is thus hope for South Africa and other similar cultures where people have been forced into separation. When government stays out of culture, people learn to coexist. They learn to up with one another put.

It was the Leeward Island culture and West Indian people that stimulated our interest as a place to establish a school for distance training. And it was because of this interest that I loaded my family into a small six-seater, single engined airplane on August 30th of 1980 to make our voyage to this New World. Columbus knew not where he was headed. In a similar sense, neither did we. But at the time, we knew we had God on our side and that made all the difference in the world. We walked ... for flew ... by faith. And to some extent, it was a blind faith, for we had never before done what we were about to do. But faith grows when it is stretched. On this day of August, we were stretching it to a high pitched tone.

I must say something here about our four children, and family in general. We have always ventured out on faith. We have asked faith from our children to trust in their parents to do the will of God. Both Martha and I have had strong wills to do what we have done throughout the years. I know of no other family that has moved around from country to country, and continent to continent, as we have. But to do what we have done through the years could not have been done by people with weak wills and weak faith. Martha has had a great deal of confidence in my desire to be a world evangelist, and thus has followed me where most wives would not have dared to follow. In going to Brazil, she packed up and shipped out to a place where neither of us had been. To the West Indies she packed up and shipped out to where she had never been. To Africa, she followed the same procedure. One has to have a strong will to do such things. The children just followed along like this was the way life was. With this spirit, we headed to the West Indies.

The Task Before Us

One of the first missionaries of the church of Christ to go to the Caribbean, south of Cuba, was Ralph Wharton. He went to St. Vincent

in July, 1965. Brother Wharton wrote and sent out Bible correspondence courses to most of the islands. It was from the results of this initial work that sparks of interest and conversions sprang up throughout the area.

By 1980, there were small struggling churches in almost all of the islands, though there was essentially no leadership training taking place locally among the churches. Many churches of the Leeward Islands were not growing at all. Those who were growing were going at a snail's pace. It was in recognition of this state of the church that we chose the West Indian scene as a target for the training and motivating of national church leaders to evangelize their own people. This was the beginning of our efforts to train leaders in order to evangelize nations. The West Indies offered an ideal location for God to train us in the art of distance training. Our work there molded my concepts for leadership training on the global scale we are working today.

Chapter 5

THE FLIGHT OF FAITH

We were at 7,500 feet out over the Atlantic Ocean. America the beautiful had just disappeared behind us. All we could see before us was a vast, empty panorama of open water, just water. It was the Atlantic Ocean and it looked spectacular. Admittedly, I felt a small lump in my throat as I silently thought, "Are we I really doing this?" I wanted to kiss the life raft and life vests I had brought for myself, Martha and our four children who were quietly seated in the back of our single-engined, 260B Piper Comanche (N8856P). The \$950 I paid for the life raft felt like only pennies at this particular moment of uncertainty. I had left the bedsheet and put my trust in over-water survival gear.

Amidst all the anxiety, however, we knew we were launching out into a new world, a new adventure, a new challenge. We were venturing into a land where visions meet reality, a place where dreams come true. God had brought us through two years of dreams and plans to Miami, Florida and this day of journey. Our departure from Miami on that never-to-be-forgotten September 4, 1980 seemed like destiny in the

making. And when that last bit of rubber from the landing gear lifted off the Opa Locka Airport, Miami, I felt the surging challenge of what God had providentially made possible for us in the West Indies. It was a work . . . no . . . a real dream come true.

A thousand questions rushed through my mind concerning the unknown before us. Sure, Martha and I had previously visited two of the West Indian islands on a brief trip when we returned from Brazil on furlough. But neither of us had ever thought that we would someday be making our way to a small portion of land called Antigua in a small single-engined airplane. Well, we were on that day. And for Grand Turk, our first stop on the trip, we were headed.

In my planning, Grand Turk had always been just a small dot on a flight chart. On this day, I trusted that the dot was real and that there would be an island there when we would arrive four hours after departure. This was our first leg to the establishment of what would later be the International Bible Institute. Both Martha and I had offered no few prayers for this beginning

Flight Into The Unknown

To say the least, I was very apprehensive about this initial flight. You will never understand the security in having radio contact with civilization on earth when all you can see for miles in any direction around you is water. I was a fresh pilot to over-water flying and I thanked the Lord every time I climbed in N8856P for the new radio a good brother bought for us before we left the States. It worked great and kept us in contact with mankind while we flew over those lonely waters of the West Indies. I would learn later that these waters would be a joy to navigate. It would become a joy to be there, out over the crystal green and blue waters, gazing into the bright orange and yellow sunsets that peak over the horizon every evening. But this first day was different. It was a day of apprehension.

“Nassau, this is Comanche N8856P,” I anxiously called into the mike. No reply. I called again, but still no reply. “Am I lost? Does my radio work? Can’t anybody hear me!” A thousand questions went through my mind as I tried to contact Nassau. I was anxious. You

would be surprised what the mind of an anxious pilot conjures up when things aren't going right.

Again, with forced calmness I said, "Nassau, this is Comanche N8856P. **Do you copy?**"

And then came the sweet sound of a reply, "Comanche N8856P, this is Nassau."

I looked back at Martha like a 747 pilot, and thought, "I told you so." She relaxed a thousand muscles. Of course, I would never have told her the thunderstorm of anxiety that was going on in my mind. This type of trip was a first for all of us. Not just any pilot would load his wife and four children into a small airplane and head across an ocean. Better yet, not many wives would let a pilot do such a thing in the first place. But Martha was a trusting wife. And we both believed that good works for God are worth the risk. It was Paul who said, "*What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 21:13).

The Devil's Trangle

Then there was also the "Bermuda Triangle," the Devil's Triangle they called it. We were in it on this eventful day. That haunting feeling was sweeping into my cautious mind that we might be zapped by some mysterious force that was silently lurking in the depths of these forbidden waters. Or maybe there were goblins out there secretly waiting to sneak their cool claws around intruders who ventured into their guarded domain. Back home there were those good-meaning friends who had been saturated with fairy tales about the Devil's Triangle. When we said we would be flying through the Bermuda Triangle (the Devil's Triangle), their eyes widened in wonder. All caution was given that we slither not into some twilight zone to a never-never land of no return. I logically perceived that all such talk was foolishness, but still there was that thought that . . . well . . . forget it.

The Storm

There was one of those possible goblins out there on this day, a

tropical storm that I had been nervously watching for the last two days. We were flying to the south of this big demon, but we could still cast our eyes upon the gigantic thunderheads whose tops reached even unto heaven. The storm had already passed to the north of us so there was not much about which to worry.

Someone asked me before we left the States what we would do if a hurricane came through Antigua where we were planning to live. I just said, “Jump in the plane and take a quick vacation.” I wasn’t going to have the airplane of our sacrifices wrapped around some coconut tree. But the hurricanes never came. The weather disturbances were usually Tropical Depressions or Tropical Storms when they were in the Leeward Islands. They turned into hurricanes only when they moved into the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea or Gulf of Mexico.

The Great Squeeze

To say the least, all six of us were cramped into our small airplane. However, we had it worked out as sardines in a can. The two small children, Cindy and Lisa, sat in the back on a trunk packed full of clothes. Martha and Matthew sat in the middle two seats. My oldest daughter, Angella, sat in the right front seat. There were bits of goods packed everywhere in between bodies. We had a plane full of bodies and bags.

We had ninety gallons of fuel on board. At about fifty-five percent power on the engine, we had a little over seven hours of flight time. My bladder, however, didn’t have that much endurance. The longest flight I had made in the plane was the time when I traveled in the Comanche six hours and fifteen minutes on a direct nonstop trip from the east coast of the States to Monroe, Louisiana. That was a long for me. My bladder enjoyed better the short trips. However, the time would come when a five to six hour flight would be common in my days as a flying evangelist.

Grank Turk

It was exciting to myself and my children—Martha didn’t say much at the time—to see each island of the Bahamas as we passed over them. For me each one seemed like a haven of security as we flew the great

lengths of water between them. The children thought about their uniqueness. I looked for drug smugglers in every secret cay. (This was the interstate highway for drug smugglers into the States.) Martha, though, was maintaining radio silence, trying to catch a wink of sleep here and there in an effort to forget that we were really out there doing this sort of thing. She and the children had popped a few dramamine tablets before we left. The pills helped them with air sickness. Martha ate Skittles to help with her nausea. I also think she wanted to do a lot of sleeping on this particular trip. At the time, I couldn't figure out why; I just kept on flying.

“How far to Grand Turk?” Martha muttered.

“About forty-five more minutes,” I confidently affirmed.

We had been flying for four hours since we left Miami. Our bladders were at capacity. It was thus a long forty-five minutes, but there it was at last. It was flat, little and just a dot as the map indicated. We would have taken anything at the time, just so it had a toilet where we could find relief.

When we finally touched down on Grand Turk and rolled to a stop at the terminal building, six aching people jumped out of the airplane and headed straight for the toilet. I am sure those standing around had seen this sight before, since Grand Turk was a common stopping off point for small aircraft flying to and from the Caribbean islands.

We planned to stay one night in Grand Turk and fly on to Antigua the next day. When we started to pay the exorbitant prices, we were glad to leave this expensive little island. Taxi from the airport to the hotel—about four minutes—twelve dollars. In those days, that was unreal. When we left, Martha took the taxi with the luggage back to the airport. It cost her three dollars. The children and I had a nice little walk. The hotel was forty-five dollars a night. Not too bad. We were all thirsty when we arrived so we decided to have a coke each. The waiter brought the bill for the cokes and I almost had a crash landing.

“Six dollars and fifty cents,” I laughed. (I had to laugh or I would have cried. We had just left the States where a coke was thirty-five cents. Here they were over one dollar each.) The young lady who was waiting on us just said, “I’m sorry.” Somehow, that helped as I forked

over the bounty for the six cokes. Of course, we later came to accept such outlandish prices for such things in isolated areas of the Caribbean.

Actually, at the time we were in the Caribbean, one could travel relatively inexpensively if he or she were willing to go without air-conditioning and carpets, and those other nice things that have spoiled Americans so much. In the Caribbean a guest house was community living, and inexpensive. Everyone had their own room. But there was a community toilet. In those days, for \$10.00 a day for a guest house one could travel throughout the Caribbean. If you were spoiled, it was at least \$100.00 a day. Neither Martha nor I were spoiled. But the price we did pay was a battle with a lot of mosquitos in some places that were questionable habitats for humans.

Hello, St. Thomas

We took what money we had left, boarded “Dickson Airways” and escaped from Grand Turk. Our next destination was St. Thomas, one of the United States Virgin Islands. This was the part of the entire journey I did not particularly like. It was a flight over 350 miles of open water from Grand Turk to Puerto Rico. I would have to use the ADF (Automatic Directional Finder) almost all the way for navigation.

The ADF is the most difficult electrical navigational instrument in an airplane by which to navigate. It is a lifesaver, however, to those who can proficiently use it. At the time, my proficiency was not that good. But with many hours of flying time in the Caribbean, I came to appreciate this little instrument more than any of the other navigational instruments in the airplane when flying over water. In the West Indies, one could not do without it. It was the primary navigational instrument. I had two in my airplane. However, this has all changed with the use of the Global Positioning System (GPS). Flights to destinations over water have become quite comfortable.

Before departure from Grand Turk, Martha and the kids had taken a few more dramamine tablets. She and the children were off to dream land after about thirty minutes out. “Good,” I thought, “I would rather be anxious on this leg of the trip by myself.”

As far as time, it took a little short of eternity to reach sight of land

after our departure from Grand Turk. (Now I know how the crew of Columbus' ships felt after being at sea for sixty days without sight of land.)

From fifty miles out, Puerto Rico looked great. The weather, however, was just a little short of terrible over the island. Betwixt clouds and rainshowers, I could see bits of precious land. St. Thomas was about thirty miles due east of Puerto Rico. All we had to do was fly down the northern coast of Puerto Rico and land at St. Thomas. That was simple. Right? Wrong. There was a belt of thunderstorms along the north coast of Puerto Rico and a big fat thunderhead sitting on top of St. Thomas. St. Thomas was in a downpour with winds gusting to forty-five miles an hour.

Martha was awake by now and alert, but had not yet broken radio silence. I told San Juan radio where we were and they located us on radar. They kept an eye on us as we bounced through rain and clouds on our way to St. Thomas, which was due east.

Things were not all that bad until we arrived near unto St. Thomas. The airport had only a VOR approach for an instrument landing. But the VOR station was on a 1,550 foot peak, with the airport at sea level about five miles away from the station itself.

The rain was so bad that I could not see anything outside the window. And because of the intense rain, I could not hear anything inside the window. I was on a VFR (Visual Flight Rules) flight plan so things were not too "according-to-the-rules" of flying. The airport shut down temporarily because of the storm. So for about fifteen minutes we were sent out to circle over the water somewhere southwest of St. Thomas on a radial out of the St. Thomas VOR. All the circle time was consumed in this torrential rain. Martha continued radio silence.

The rain lifted slightly and I asked for a special VFR clearance to land. They wouldn't give an instrument VOR landing because of the location of the airport with reference to the VOR station. Guess they didn't want unfamiliar pilots running into either mountain or town. However, we flew east just below the tops of the mountains on the south side of the island. With a heading toward the airport, I knew it would come into sight any time. And sure enough, when we came out

of the storm about one mile out, the airport came into view directly in front of us. Martha broke radio silence and said, “You’re a pretty good pilot.” I needed that.

Antigua, Here We Come

After waiting out the storms around St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands, we were off in a crystal blue sky to Antigua, our home for the next few years. I had been there twice before, but only on brief visits. Neither Martha nor the children had ever been there. It was truly by faith in the Lord and me that she was on her way. As I said before, when we went to Brazil, she jumped on an airplane and went with four small children. The same procedure was followed on this journey to Antigua. She has truly been a wife to me as Sarah was to Abraham in making such moves. She has just picked up and moved. You cannot ask for more than that as an evangelist. It reminds me of the wives of the apostles when Paul wrote, “*Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, even as the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas?*” (1 Co 9:5). I had brought along my believing wife, and she had to have a lot of “believing” to do the things we have done throughout our lives.

It took only an hour and a half to make the two hundred miles from St. Thomas to Antigua. The weather was typical Caribbean weather all the way. Except for occasional thunderstorms because of passing tropical waves, the weather in the West Indies is just great for flying.

To say the least, there was no little excitement in the cockpit as we started looking across the blue horizon for a glimpse of Antigua.

“Is that Antigua?” Cindy first asked.

“No,” I answered. “It’s just a cloud’s shadow on the water.” (The shadow of clouds can be very deceptive over water. At a distance it looks almost like land through the haze.)

It wasn’t long, however, when beautiful Antigua made its way through the haze and into our view. What a relief! Satisfaction. Mission accomplished. My first international flight was about to end in success.

Chucking down the landing gear of the plane and lining up for final approach to Coolidge International Airport brought a sense of

accomplishment to my aviation bones. It was a feeling of “Well done good and faithful pilot.” (Only pilots can really understand these accomplishments.)

We had flown a little over sixteen hours from West Monroe, Louisiana. I thanked God for a week for the safe journey He had made for us to bring us to these beautiful souls of the West Indies. He had brought us to a task of beginning a great work of extension training. I just felt a fantastic amount of gratitude to Him. I have always been grateful to God for His work in my life, but at that particular time, the gratitude was extra special. God had worked so much in our lives to help us launch out “over” the deep. We never sank once because of His help. My advice to any prospective evangelist would be, “Go for it. Trust in God. He will bring victory to our feeble plans and human resources.” To this day He has not let me down once.

One thing that Martha and I always amused ourselves with concerning our immigration to Antigua was what happened upon our initial arrival at the airport in Antigua. When we were at immigration, the officer asked us, “How long are you going to stay?” I replied, “Well, we are going to live here.” He then said, “If that’s so, then within a month go in town to the immigration office and tell them that you want to live here.” We had entered on our Louisiana driver’s license and were granted permanent residence by just notifying the people in town. I am sure things have since changed concerning immigration. But back in those days, everyone was not all up tight about immigration. Unfortunately, the rest of the world is a long way from the West Indies.

Chapter 6 INITIAL OPERATIONS

Three days after our arrival in Antigua, Leslie and Christy Jones arrived with their two daughters, Dana and Catina. A week and a half after their arrival, Jim and Julie Crisp arrived. Leslie and Jim were recent graduates of the White’s Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies. They were both eager to work with the establishment and operation of the distance training school. It was great to finally have all of us together

in Antigua. Our plans for the last year and a half had become a reality insofar as God bringing us together at our base location of Antigua. Now it was time to dig in and go to work.

The Program

Before we go any further here, I need to explain the basic mechanics of the initial beginnings of the Institute that was first established in Antigua in 1980. Keep in mind that these were only beginning plans upon which we would learn and develop the program in the years to come. The development of the Institute was more of an evolution of learned experiences than an established model of operation that was unchangeable. Even today, we continue to perfect its operation to meet the needs of those to whom the courses are sent.

What we wanted to do was to put into operation the principle of 2 Timothy 2:2. In this passage, Paul had written to Timothy the following instructions: *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* Our plan, therefore, was to evangelize nations by bringing Bible teaching and motivation to West Indian church leaders. I felt that such continued studies among church leaders was desperately needed in the West Indian church situation.

The driving philosophy behind the above approach to world evangelism is the belief that God has an army of soldiers throughout the world. These are some of the greatest spiritually minded and dedicated workers one would ever encounter. However, because these men live in areas that are usually underdeveloped, they often lack the skills, tools and educational opportunities to effectively continue or build more effective works. Therefore, by training and motivating national church leaders to evangelize their own peoples, great strides can be made toward world evangelism.

The mechanics of our extension program were simple. We would choose a specific country (island) to which we would begin one-day teaching sessions once a month for a determined period of time. This period of time varied from six months to one and a half years. The first country on our list was Dominica. We went to this country and

assembled all the leaders of the church. We conducted all-day seminar studies with the men and usually returned home the following day or went on to another island. It was our plan at the beginning to conduct these seminars once every month at each specific location which we called a “teaching point.”

Between the once-a-month sessions, we had each leader read selected materials, complete workbooks, listen to tapes, memorize scriptures, read chapters out of the Bible, and anything else that would aid them in their local work with churches. Our main purpose was to educate and motivate. We wanted to motivate faithful church leaders in the Caribbean to study their Bibles and apply the truths they learned to their lives.

At one time in the program we had approximately three hundred direct students and five hundred indirect students. The direct students were those who were in our once-a-month classes. The indirect students were those the direct students were to be training in the same manner they were being trained. As a result of this system, in one month’s time a tremendous amount of teaching took place because of the chain of teaching that was being conducted on a continuous basis. The church in St. Vincent almost doubled in size during the one and a half year period we conducted the classes. I later asked Jimmy Bracken, a preacher and one of our Vincentian students, why the church grew during this time. He said, “The teaching and motivation you brethren brought to us on a continual basis encouraged us to work. And we did.” Of course, we certainly would not take credit for this. It was actually God who was working. We were only ministers of that word which works in the hearts of men. And, I think we came to St. Vincent at a time when things were right and receptive.

We taught every subject we thought was needful for the local situation. Local needs usually determined at least one course that was to be taught during every seminar. In almost every seminar we also taught a session on leadership.

One challenge we had in the West Indian churches was what one brother called “diplomaitis.” This is the attitude church leaders develop who have graduated from some school where they received a diploma.

Their graduation from school often signaled the end of their personal Bible study. From there it was usually a slow process of spiritual stagnation. Some of the church leaders in the Caribbean had suffered from this ailment. They had become unproductive in their works because they had ceased allowing God to talk to them through His word. The churches for which they were working were not growing. Souls were not being disciplined and baptized. On the other hand, there were those leaders who were doing a fantastic work. We wanted to get the ideas of the successful workers to those who were lacking. We also wanted to challenge the slothful with the zeal of the diligent. After all, this was the Caribbean, and self-initiative was somewhat lacking in a culture where nothing ever changed.

Transportation throughout the islands would have been a major problem if it were not for the airplane. We believed that God worked out the answer to this problem by providing us with N8856P. The airplane was without doubt a necessity for the mechanics of this type of distance training program. As we learned later, commercial flights, when we had to depend on them, almost brought the program to a standstill. We were ever so grateful, therefore, to have the airplane which we used to fly to the different teaching points every week.

Admittedly, in the beginning, the above plan sounded to some like one of those dreams or visions coming out of the mind of one who was not all cooked. But it was my practice then, as it is now, to plan big and above what one thinks he can personally do. I always believed that God could fill in the gaps. Faith will accomplish more than our sight will ever be able to see. In following this principle of life, God has yet to let me down.

We did have a dream. We wanted to help some truth-seeking churches in the West Indies. Our dream was based upon helping the church to grow by concentrating our energies on those who could make it grow—the leaders. I thought that was a worthy purpose with which to begin. I have always believed that we often spend too much time with those in the church who are continual backsliders. Or as leaders, we spend too much time with those who cause no growth. We often classify the unproductive as weak Christians when actually the New

Testament refers to them as lukewarm and lazy. We should not entirely neglect these people, but more time should be spent with those who will carry the church into evangelizing the area in which it is located. The evangelist must concentrate his work on those who will carry on the work when he leaves. It is interesting to study how Jesus spent so much time with so few disciples. Once He ascended to glory, the reason for spending time with the few paid off in reaching the many. It takes time to disciple faithful men in order that they might teach others also. It is a solid principle of church growth that evangelists must spend most of their time with those who cause growth.

The Church In Antigua

There were about thirty-five members of the church meeting in the Hawkins Street church building when we arrived in Antigua. Cornelius George was a faithful national preacher working with this church which had been established about seven years previous to our arrival. A second newly established congregation was meeting in a school house in the Villa area of St. John's, the capital of Antigua. Wayne Stubblefield, an American missionary who had been in Antigua for about one year, was working with this two-month-old church. The Dorian Flynn's and C. D. Pruett's had just arrived to work with this church. There were also study groups meeting in the area of Jennings and Liberta with which brother Stubblefield was faithfully working. However, the meeting of the group which was in Jennings was eventually discontinued.

Betwixt The Two

Jim and Leslie came to Antigua to work as staff members for the Institute. They were both enthusiastic about getting their feet wet in real mission work. We would later be joined by the Jim Allens, Rex Longs and Steve Hursts who would work primarily with the establishment of the church in Antigua. The initial plan was for all of us to stay in Antigua from three to five years. After reaching this goal of establishing an indigenous work, we would all leave. I believe we accomplished that goal.

Our initial plans in the distance training program for Leslie, Jim and myself were hindered some by the pressures of starting local churches in Antigua. Our primary purpose was to train men throughout the West Indies. For us, Antigua was to be secondary. The establishing of a new church later proved to be very taxing on our time. Nevertheless, we felt that we could not help others throughout the Caribbean in having church growth if we ourselves were not involved in the establishment of a church in the same cultural setting. Starting a new church, however, takes a tremendous amount of time. We later found that all three of us did not have the time to do both local work in establishing a church in Antigua and the time that was needed to develop and operate the Institute.

The frustration between giving time to the local scene and the international scene of the Institute was strong from the beginning of the program. What eventually happened after about a year was that Jim and Leslie went mostly into local work and I stayed almost exclusively with the extension work. This plan was necessary and seemed to work, though it put a lot of stress on me to recruit teachers for the program. Jim and Leslie would do seminars only when they had time and not on a regular basis. We soon discovered that first year that our work was complicated by trying to ride too many horses at the same time. But as everyone in Antigua helped with an occasional trip to teach in a seminar, the distance training continued.

Saints In All Saints

In the beginning, we firmly believed that there should be saints meeting in the village of All Saints, the third largest village of Antigua. This town of about 5,000 was situated in the middle of the island and promised to be a key central church for the surrounding villages.

There is always an excitement about starting a new church. You know that you are a part of what will become a great effort. Such was true concerning our feelings in the beginning of the church in All Saints. There were six in my family, four in Leslie's family and two in Jim's. That made a total gathering of twelve to begin the church in the village of All Saints.

The Lord provided the meeting place. We rented the Union Hall in the center of town for fourteen dollars a week. We could meet there every night but Wednesday night. Though the town of All Saints was located in the middle of the island, it later proved difficult to maintain the meeting with the single-assembly methodology that we brought to the island.

Antigua was an island of scattered villages that ranged in size from 500 to 6,000, excluding the capital of St. Johns. With the methodology that we brought to the island, we put ourselves into the bus ministry. Since we were all assembly-oriented in our concept of “church,” we set out on every Sunday to round up all the members from various villages in order to bus them to the central location of All Saints. Great plan? Not really. We had all the cars and those we bused had only feet. When the cars left with the evangelists, so did the greater portion of the assembly.

If we knew then what we know now, we could have set in place a concept of assembly for the saints that would have been carried on throughout the history of the church in Antigua. Instead of trying to transport all the members to a single location, we should have been transporting the teachers to the members. Though we sometimes met in houses throughout the week, such meetings were not typical of our work. If we would have been house-church, and thus, multiple-assembly oriented, we could have set a pattern of meeting in homes in the small villages. A generation of young people would have grown up in house church environments, and thus no vehicles would have been necessary for the assembly of the saints. I still wonder today what we could have done if we had only taught the people that meeting in a house was fine. Sometimes, obvious ideals are so hard to come by.

The First Sunday

We did have some interesting meetings in the union hall of All Saints. Why can one always remember so vividly first events? Our first Sunday in All Saints was a first for what later became the Liberta church. Today, I can still vividly picture those five small backless benches placed in the middle of that old union hall building that had so

many holes in the roof that one needed an umbrella every time it rained. The building was gigantic for the small group which began meeting there. I can also remember the pile of sand at the back of the building that was left there by the owners of the facility to patch the holes. But we didn't expect anything greater. We were just excited about God bringing us to this first meeting.

Martha had prepared the bread for the Lord's Supper. It was her first effort, for we could not buy unleavened bread anywhere on the island. She tried her recipe on me first. It tasted like Noah had served it on the Ark. But it would have to do. We had paper cups for the communion service, and of course, Welch's grape juice. (Somehow, the Lord has taken Welch's grape juice "into all the world.") I can also remember vividly seeing Christy lighting a mosquito coil to keep away man's number one tormentor.

It was a worship period never to be forgotten. Leslie preached. Jim led the singing, and I taught the Bible class. The ladies had prepared a small "love feast." We ate, had another period of singing and prayer, and then concluded for the day. There were twenty people present that first Sunday.

We had decided to have no Sunday evening meetings, since some of the members had to walk great distances to be present. We wanted to have one long assembly one time on Sunday in order to accomplish everything that needed to be accomplished with the whole church. Sunday evenings could be used for teaching home Bible classes. It really worked out well.

For our second meeting on Tuesday evening we had thirty-four present. We were on our way to growth. Our local work was looking great and we were excited about it. We knew it was God who was giving the increase, and as long as we gave Him the glory, all was sure to go well.

This was the beginning of the All Saints church. We later moved this church assembly to the neighboring village of Liberta to unite with the church that was first organized there from a midweek Bible study group that had been started by Wayne Stubblefield. This group was later developed by Leslie and Christy. Liberta was only about a mile

and a half from All Saints, so the union of the two groups was only logical when Jim Allen made plans to build a building.

We functioned with the concept of taking people out of their communities in order to focus on a central place of assembly. Since we all had vehicles, this was possible. It was possible until our vehicles reach their seating capacity. What we did not realize then was that we were making two fatal errors. First, we made the assembly of the saints dependant on our ability to transport people to a single location. Second, we were taking people out of their communities to do “church” in another community. We should have done the reverse. As teachers, we should have transported ourselves to the communities where the members lived. We could have easily established a multiple-assembly church, that is, one church that met at several different locations on Sunday throughout the island. But we were uneducated in these matters in those days. We simply imported the American concept of assembly to a Third World setting. Bad idea.

Chapter 7

FIRST EXTENSION EXPEDITION

I was about as excited as a ten-year-old on Christmas Eve to make our first extension trip. We had been in Antigua about month and were ready to get things going with the program. It was October, 1980 and I was anxious to bring the dreams and plans of the Brazil days into reality.

Where To Go First

Leslie, Jim and I had been to Dominica on a campaign a year before our arrival in Antigua. We knew most of the church leaders on this particular island. We determined, therefore, that this island should be our first attempt at our plan of extension seminars since we had talked to the leaders there a year earlier about the program. We planned to conduct the first seminar on a Thursday morning in Roseau, the capital. We prayed that two or three church leaders would come whom we had invited earlier by letter. We would teach the all-day seminar and then return to Antigua on Friday morning.

I sent a telegram to John Massicot, the only national leader on Dominica we knew who had a P.O. Box. After a year of silence from us since the campaign, I wondered how the telegram might communicate our desires. I simply stated, “Will arrive October 2nd, at 9:00^{AM} to talk with Dominican church leaders about Extension Training Program. Could you meet us at the airport?”

At this time we were still very apprehensive concerning our approach to the leaders. We were new to the West Indian church and they were not familiar with us. We certainly did not want them to feel that we were coming in with all the right answers. Some of the men had been working with the church for several years. Most were young men, but they were very dedicated to the work and wanted to learn more. Our purpose was to give Bible teaching, not make church decisions. We always proceeded with caution and stayed with this basic plan. As a result, we had some great discussions concerning the work of evangelism and the sharing of ideas that worked in other places.

The First Flight

For the first trip, I suggested that Leslie, Jim and I meet at my house at 7:00^{AM} Thursday. I also suggested that from my house we go to the airport that was about five minutes away. This was our first trip and I must confess that I was as fidgety as a dry leaf on a windy Kansas day. I awoke at 5:30^{AM}. The butterflies started up. I thumbed through my checklist. “Life raft, life vests, flare gun, portable emergency locator beacon” The flight plan went through my mind a dozen times. After all, this was my first flight in the West Indies after our arrival. We were flying into “unknown” areas for all of us. It was all new, but it was challenging and great. It was the scenario of things that feeds an adventurous spirit.

At 6:15^{AM} I went to the airport. I wanted to check on filing a flight plan. I was new at this in the West Indian airports so I wanted to talk to the men in the tower before we left. One files a flight plan in the tower in the West Indies, not on the phone or in a Flight Service Station as in the States.

The control towers in some Caribbean islands are something

between the local coffee shop and Grand Central Station. It's not your everyday U.S.A. controlled control tower.

When I received the flight plan form from the control tower operator, I tried reading the French on the form. That did not work. These flight plans, I thought, were certainly different from what I was accustomed to in America. The controller recognized that I was having a terrible time trying to look all professional while attempting to read the garbled mess.

"Cana hep ya," he asked.

"What?" I inquisitively responded.

"Cana hep ya full ou da flat plun?", He repeated. I knew I was in trouble. I thought, "What in the world am I going to do when I talk to this fellow while airborne?"

After about twenty "what's and huh's" I managed to give the information for the flight plan. I went home exhausted. I hadn't even got off the ground.

When I returned to the house, Leslie and Jim had already arrived and were ready to go. So it was back to the airport on our motorcycles. The gate which opened to the road leading to where the airplane was parked was locked. We waited. I should have known that it was too simple just to get into N8856P and fly off. I was in a new world of flying and it had not yet occurred to me how many changes I would have to make, both culturally and in the system of aviation. But I would soon learn more patience and the system of aeronautical maneuvering characteristics that was typical of the Caribbean.

The keeper of the gate finally showed up, so we were on our way. While getting the plane loaded, a pilot by the name of Philip came by looking for a ride to Dominica. He was a transport pilot who had much experience flying in the Caribbean. I thought, "Thank you Lord for sending this guide for our first trip."

"Well, we're ready to go," I joyfully said.

"Have you cleared customs, yet," Philip questioned.

"Customs? What about customs?", I asked.

Philip proceeded to inform us that all private flights must first clear customs and immigrations before every departure. Well, I knew

that. It was back to the airport terminal. I always wondered what would have happened if we would have just jumped in the airplane and left, just like one does back in the States and Brazil. But we were not in the States and Brazil anymore and that fact was becoming increasingly clear to me. Every flight was international since it was between nations, not states or within a nation as Brazil.

Up And Away

After completing what later became a routine procedure for every trip—paperwork for immigrations and customs—we were off. We climbed into the crystal blue sky to 7,500 feet, contacted Guadeloupe flight control and informed them that we were about to enter their airspace. Their portion of terra firma was about fifty miles ahead, approximately sixty miles from Antigua. We began descent over Guadeloupe toward Dominica, which was only about forty miles due south of Guadeloupe. In a few minutes, Marrigot Airport, which was on the east side of Dominica, was in sight, at least the east end of it was. The west end of the airport was enjoying heavy rain showers. Of necessity, therefore, we landed downwind into the rain. The approach from the west end of the airstrip was over the mountains and down into a valley. I didn't really want to take that route in heavy rain showers.

After again venturing through the diabolical paperwork, we found none of the church leaders waiting for us at the airport. Immediately, I thought that our telegram had not been received by the brethren. Or, no one wanted to meet us. Or, . . . there were a thousand other “or’s” that went through my mind. It was an hour and a half taxi ride through the winding roads of the mountains of Dominica to Roseau the capital.

Though the mountain road was exhausting, the beauty of Dominica captures one's mind to the point of forgetting potholes and mountain curves. The lush, green vegetation of Dominica is something to be experienced, not just seen. The mountains look like big green cucumbers standing on end with a dab of whipped cream clouds on top. This country is truly the “isle of nature.”

We arrived in Roseau at 11:00 in the morning and were overjoyed. Brother Massicot had given up on us at the airport, since we were late.

He had thought that we were on a commercial flight. So when the commercial flight came and went, he thought we were not coming.

He had received our telegram and had contacted all the church leaders of the island. They came from all the churches. A total of eight were present. It was fantastic! At the time, we needed their encouragement. Being together with these good men for the day was the shot of spiritual adrenaline we needed. We could not have had a better introductory session. All of the men were excited about the program, but not half as excited as their foreign visitors. I cannot explain in words the deep satisfaction Leslie, Jim and I had concerning the success of this first seminar. God had taught us that all of our anxieties and worries were only human frailties and wasted emotions in His work. He was still teaching me to trust in His work in my life. I thought of the passage, *“All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.”*

Mission Accomplished

The next morning we were up at 6:00^{AM} and on our way back to the airport. Daniel Didier and brother Massicot took us to the airport. N8856P stood there with her blue nose ready for her commander. Again, after the Great Paper Caper was finished with customs and immigrations, we were heading out of Dominica like birds to 4,500 feet.

Leslie had not flown much in a small plane. In fact, this was about his second flight. The first had been the day before. This meant that he had not experienced any thunderstorms in a small plane. Nevertheless, over Guadeloupe we were taking one in at 4,500 feet. It was times like these that I appreciated the good brother Alton Howard who had encouraged me to get my instrument rating before going to the Caribbean. He also paid for the course. The weather in the West Indies is almost always great, but there are times when one has to penetrate clouds and weather in order to make it to one's destination.

I must relate to you a time when my brain was thoroughly drained. Before leaving the States for the West Indies I had accumulated the required 200 hours of flight time to apply for an instrument rating. I passed the written exam. All I needed was forty hours of instrument time with an

instructor, an official check ride, and I would be on my way to the Caribbean.

I had to get this done fast. So, I enrolled in a week-long crash course in New Bern, North Carolina that was designed for pilots like me who wanted to get on with the instrument rating. I therefore flew N8865P from West Monroe, direct to New Bern, except for a stopover in Charlotte, North Carolina to wait out a thunderstorm. When I arrived at the school in New Bern, I was given residence in a camping trailer (caravan) as was all students. Within the camping trailer I was supplied with my own flight simulator. I could spend as much time as possible on the simulator. So I went to work.

In five days I flew twenty actual instrument hours with an instructor and did thirty-two hours on the simulator, for a total of fifty-two hours of instrument training. On the morning of the sixth day I took my flight test with the local aviation official, passed it, and headed out on the six and a half hour trip back to West Monroe. My brain was tight and stressed. But I would not have done it any other way.

After what I thought were only a few minor bumps and a little rain on our way back from Dominica, we passed through the clouds into the clear blue over Guadeloupe. Neither Jim nor Leslie had said a word the entire time we were bumping around in the clouds. After a sigh of relief, Leslie leaned over and said, "Is that the worst thunderstorm you've ever flown through?" It wasn't, but I could never have convinced him of it at the time. They would themselves later experience worse weather. I would also experience some challenging thunderstorms that would beat us around so much that the gauges of the plane would be blurry. But the nerves of Leslie and Jim on this trip would settle and later flights would be a little more enjoyable.

Our first extension seminar ended in Dominica with great success. All of us were encouraged. To this day you could never convince me that God did not specifically plan it that way. He knew we needed a great send-off. We knew it, too. I prayed for such and He delivered. The distance training program was a work that was desperately needed. I believe God wanted to let us know that it was needed. At least, I have

no other explanation for the unusually smooth operation of the work throughout those first months. I believe God wanted to break us in easily and encourage us to keep going. And we did.

My faith grew in those early days of the Institute. I will never forget those first weeks of the work. Everything went so smoothly that I was thoroughly convinced that more was working in the effort than just our feeble planning. My faith grew as I saw the Father work out every problem. Every obstacle that presented itself to the work was overcome. I was convinced once again that our efforts in life as His children are nothing without the providential hand of the Father. In those days, we could “*do all things through Him who strengthened us.*”

I maintain the philosophy of work as a Christian that one must first plan one's work for the Lord. Work out the details as much as is humanly possible. Next, pray that God bless our plans. But we must understand that Satan will work against our plans with all his might. We must pray therefore that God help us overcome any obstacles that Satan may put in our way. Plan our work, and then let God work our plan. If we do this, God will come through with a host of surprises. One will be overjoyed by what He does in our lives.

Chapter 8

DOING GOD'S BUSINESS

I bought a motorcycle in West Monroe and shipped it to the West Indies when we moved. I thought it would be a little less expensive to buy and operate than a second car. And, I could just motor around feeling good while gas was at the time a traumatic two dollars a gallon in Antigua in 1980.

It wasn't long, however, until this unpredictable machine slipped out from under me. Within a month upon arrival I made an unsuccessful turn at a slippery intersection that left me laying embarrassingly prostrate on the ground, face down with skinned knees and a red face. And to make matters worse, I had an audience of local bystanders who got a chuckle out of seeing this Yankee sliding across the road on his belly

and knees. The motorcycle suffered a few broken ornaments. But my pride as a fashionable motorcyclist took a mortal blow. For a week my knees were so sore from the scabs that the only thing I could comfortably wear was shorts. My eight year old daughter Cindy said, "Daddy, you need to put your helmet on your knees." Well, what can I say.

I suppose I will also have to tell you about an incident I had in downtown St. Johns in the middle of about a hundred spectators. I really don't know why there were always so many people around when I had these unfortunate accidents on motorcycles.

I had driven up and parked the motorcycle at the edge of one of those open sewers in downtown St. Johns. This one was about two feet deep and full of all sorts of . . . well . . . you know what is in a sewer. I went into a store, purchased some goods and returned to the cycle. I first put on my helmet, and then leaped from the left side of the motorcycle onto the seat. I had forgotten that I had parked so close to the edge of the sewer, which was on the right side of the parked cycle. When I went to put my foot down to stop the motion of the cycle which I had just thrown off center to the right by leaping on, there was nothing there for my foot, except what was two feet down. This all happened in slow motion, mind you. Being off balance, me, motorcycle and goods, just fell right over into everything that was in that sewer. Slush! I can still smell it today. When I looked up, it seemed that the entire city had rushed there to see this most unusual stunt of a crazy American. Was I embarrassed.

Seriously Involved

By December 1980, we were seriously into the work of teaching seminars. I was making at least one flight out a week and we were averaging five seminars a month. The work was going great. God was blessing it in every way.

Our experiences with the church in the Caribbean on such a broad and continued bases allowed us to gain a very good overall view of the church as a whole. Our travels also opened up revelations on key problem areas of mission efforts throughout the islands. We were there to deal with these problems the best we could. This is not to say that

some of the problems were very challenging. Many churches in the East Caribbean were experiencing little growth; some were not growing at all. We wanted to understand the reason for this in order that some encouragement might be given to the leaders. But at the same time, there were some churches that were growing by leaps and bounds. These were very exciting works and manifested great promise for the future. What we wanted to do was “cross pollinate” ideas in order to encourage those who were struggling.

In our first seminars we conducted church growth studies to orient our understanding of the churches in general. Such studies were quite revealing. These studies revealed a stagnation that had set in with many Caribbean churches. They also revealed the reasons why other churches were progressing at such a great pace, while others struggled. One of our tasks was to inform churches of growth methods that were working in different areas, as well as give ideas that were working in other parts of the world.

We knew that God wanted growth. The leaders wanted the same. Our reason for being in the West Indies was to sit down and work out how we could encourage growth. Justification for any program of work is the salvation of souls. This would be the true test of our work. But during our work, it did not bring us any encouragement to see churches that were not growing. It was also discouraging to see churches that were divided over matters which had no relevancy to the saving of souls. It seemed that in some areas brethren elevated arguments over nonessential issues to the exclusion of evangelism. While energy was used up senseless arguments, and attention diverted, souls were going unevangelized. There was much to be done to help the existing churches to get over their misdirection on issues in order to refocus again on evangelism.

There were also many areas that had not been evangelized. Our method of evangelism at the time was to disciple and motivate national church leaders to evangelize their own people in their own culture. We wanted to give them the necessary literary tools in order to hold up their hands in reaching their own areas. We also wanted to provide education and motivation for the challenges that faced them. It was

through the local leaders that we wanted to reach out to those areas in the West Indies where the simplicity of the gospel had not yet gone. We were relying on a 2 Timothy 2:2 approach to get the job of evangelism accomplished.

Regardless of what methodology a foreign evangelist may use, at the end of the day, his task is to train and encourage local disciples to claim their area for God. It is always a challenge to focus people on their task of local evangelism in the presence of one who is visiting from a foreign land. Too much dependence on the foreign evangelist weakens the thrust of the resident disciples. Full-time evangelists always seem to cause local members to become indifferent in reference to their personal responsibility to evangelize. When an evangelist is full-time in one location for any period of time, it is only natural for members to develop the thinking that evangelism is the sole responsibility of the full-time evangelist. The Thessalonian church was a good example of the evangelist moving on after the initial establishment of the church (Read 1 Th 1:1-10). When the evangelist moved on, the church grew exceedingly. The point is that evangelists must move on after they have trained and motivated local residents to claim the field.

The Unevangelized

Speaking of evangelism, we were at 7,500 feet over the country of Martinique on our first trip to St. Vincent. Over 400,000 people lived on the island paradise of Martinique. It was a beautiful country filled with lush vegetation and spectacular mountain views. God no doubt smiled when He allow volcanoes of ages past to form this haven of nature. Tropical mountains of the island stretch into the silhouette of the Caribbean blue skies. Vegetation coats every square foot of the island like a thick green blanket.

Martinique, a country beautiful in nature, was still stained in darkness at the time we lived in the West Indies. The number of assemblies of the church on this island at the time we were there could be measured by a great big zero. When I made this first flight over the jagged cliffs and mountains of the island, all I could think of was how we could start the church 7,500 feet below on this French-speaking island.

The government of Martinique had already rejected the visa of one possible worker from St. Vincent. The French were careful about allowing immigration from the other islands. I later learned that one could get a visa into this country if the correct procedures were followed. At the time, however, it seemed hopeless to find an evangelist any time soon who would answer the Martinique call for help. It was not too long after we left the Caribbean, however, that the church was started on Martinique. I did not know much about who went to the island, only that there were Christians at work on the island in the mid 80's.

First Teaching Session

Our first full seminars when we started the program were focused on the island of Dominica. I remember one of our first trips there when we left Antigua in blue skies and spent forty-five minutes in tune with the birds on our way to the island. On final approach to Melville Hall Airport on the west side of Dominica, we made our way over the ridge of mountains and down into the valley with N8856P. This was always a thrilling approach as the mountains would slowly creep above us on descent. Banana and coconut trees would then rush by us at 130^{MPH}. At least it was thrilling for the pilot. He always knows that he has everything in control. The poor passengers, however, only stare at the trees going by at 130^{MPH}. The touch of the landing gear on the runway of the Melville Airport, therefore, was always reassuring to the passengers. One reassuring thing was that if one ever had to go around for another shot at the landing, he could be comforted in the fact that climbout was straight out over the Atlantic.

Our landing on the second trip to Dominica began a great session of leadership training. This seminar established the structure for most of the seminars we conducted. After we assembled the church leaders, the session began at 10:00 in the morning at the Merigot building on the east side of Dominica. Seminars were always an endurance test for teachers and students. Because the leaders of the church in Dominica were truly hungry and thirsting for the word of God, they lapped up every morsel of bread we could throw out. Fatigue grew as we came to break for lunch.

With an interval of one hour for lunch, we concluded the class sessions at 11:00^{PM}. Afterward, we had private discussions until 1:30^{AM} to 2:00^{AM} in the morning. About half of the leaders had to get up at 4:00^{AM} in order to get to the bus station on time to return home throughout the island.

Like I said, these were intense seminars. All of us enjoyed every tiring movement, though we tried to shorten the hours of some meetings. However, it was difficult to shorten seminars simply because all of us enjoyed being together around the word of God.

However, not everything always went smoothly. On one of our seminars to Dominica we were up at 6:30^{AM} to return to Antigua. We packed up and made our way to the airport. Through immigrations and customs, we went. And of course, I paid landing fees, customs fees and immigrations fees. We felt fleeced like a flock of sheep every time we landed or took off from some Caribbean airports.

We jumped into N8856P. Everybody was ready.

“Clear,” I yelled. I rattled off the check list. I turned the key and there was silence from the engine compartment. The battery was as dead as a door nail. The Red Baron of aviation had left his master switch on the day before and run the battery plum down. Every sipping of energy had been drained from the suffering battery. This was a humbling experience for a pilot. Leslie and Jim spared me by maintaining radio silence. But I can assure you, they thought what they wanted to say.

When I finished beating myself on the back, I decided to resort to archaic principles of aviation motoring. Have you ever tried to turn the propeller of a 260 horsepower, fuel inject aircraft engine in a futile effort to bring it to life? Probably not. But let me tell you that it doesn't work so well. First, there's that gigantic propeller looking to slap you a good lick when the engine fires. Then, there's the fuel injection. It is always temperamental. After about fifteen minutes of foolishly flipping the prop, I decided that there should be a better way to solve this mania.

So, we were in a predicament. I looked over to the airport fire truck and thought, “I wonder” It did. It was times like these that I thanked Piper Aircraft for the old 12-volt electrical systems that they

retained in the Comanche 260B. I knew that pilots like me could always find a 12-volt battery somewhere around the airport

“I’ve a little problem, Sir,” I politely stated to the reluctant fireman. “Could you bring the fire truck over and jump your battery to mine?”

He did not have any jumper cables, but he knew where to get some in town. So he was off, and in about thirty minutes returned with the cables. With a smile on his face – I knew what he was thinking – he hooked them up. Have you ever seen a fire truck jumping the battery of an airplane? I had to take a picture of it.

After a few revolutions on the starter, N8856P fired into life, and I was tremendously happy. The blast of the prop wash felt good and most reassuring. After I kissed the fire truck battery and the attendant—I really didn’t, but I wanted to—we were off. We floated to 4,500 feet and slithered through the atmosphere for home. It was a great seminar with great men and a great Textbook. Can’t say much for the forgetful pilot.

To South America

In November 1980, I decided I would make a trip to the Pan American Lectureships in Caracas, Venezuela. This was the annual lectureship where most of the missionaries of the church in Latin America meet with representatives from their supporting churches in the States. It is truly a great event and one I tried to go to as much as possible. This particular year I wanted to go through Trinidad on the way to Caracas and return through Grenada. So, I printed a handful of General Declaration (Gen. Dec.) forms and headed out. (Pilots must fill out and file several of these forms at every stop in the Caribbean and South America on entry into and exit from a country.)

After three hours of flight and a little weather over the northern end of Trinidad, I set N8856P gently down at Piarco Airport in Trinidad. The paper machine began to function. First of all, there were Gen. Decs. for health clearance. Then, there were Gen. Decs. for immigration. Of course, they had to have their share. And then, there is the share of Gen. Decs. for Trinidad customs. Yes, it took six copies to get in. (I always thought how many trees could be spared if these airport officials would just give up the Gen. Dec. business.)

After a couple of nights in a hotel that stunk like a stale sewer, I was back to the airport. It all started again. Two Gen. Decs. for customs. Two Gen. Decs. for immigration. Two Gen. Decs. for the gentlemen of the Health Department. And of course, the tower needed their copies also. It took thirteen Gen. Decs. to get in and out of Trinidad. I thought it a little ridiculous at the time. I have always believed that the world paper shortage was directly caused by the Piarco Airport in Trinidad. These people should be reprimanded for their incessant obsession with paper.

Flight Through The Mountains

Flying along the north coast of Venezuela on a clear day is nothing short of an exhilarating experience with nature, a naturalist's dream. Big green extensions of earth reach to over seven thousand feet from the coastal waters into the sky. The blue blanket of Caribbean water lay snugly to the base of these giant heaps of mother earth. It's really a beautiful sight, one never to forget.

I had descended to 4,500 coming into Maiquetia Airport east of Caracas. Now get this. I was flying west. I was on the north side of the seven thousand foot mountains at 4,500 feet. I was about a mile out over the water and the tower controller instructed me in broken English, "Maka turno to 180 da ... gree." (Translated, "Turn left heading to 180 degrees south.")

"Somebody is not thinking here," I nervously thought to myself. "Maybe the controller wants to see how far I can fly through a mountain."

"Maiquetia Approach," this is N8856P. "Are you sure I should be flying 180 degrees south? I'm flying straight for the mountains!"

"Oh, oh" the controller gasped over the radio. "N8856P flya norte (north)!"

I get the heebie-jeebies every time I think what could have happened if I had been in solid IFR weather. For sure, I would probably not be writing this book.

Grenada Communism

On my way back from Caracas I wanted to stop and visit the

churches of Grenada in order to set up a series of seminars. I had not been back in Grenada since 1976, and this trip would offer an opportunity to visit the brethren. Several months earlier, however, Maurice Bishop had overtaken this peaceful country in a military coup. He had unfortunately called in the Cubans and Russians to give him advice, and of course, they brought their guns with them. It was heartbreaking to see this happen to such a tranquil and freedom loving people.

One thing the Russians always gave the people in those days was a load of guns. Guns came before food and hospitals and schools. This was how control was maintained. When I was in Grenada in 1972, I did not see a single gun on the entire island. In the villages, no one even locked their doors. But things had changed. Communism was there at the time of my visit.

To say the least, I was a little apprehensive about this visit. While in the air, the air traffic controller asked me what was my purpose of visit. That was the first time I had been asked that question in my Caribbean flights while in the air. It did not ease my apprehension, either. But I had decided to land and take all the questioning. I felt sure I was going to be interrogated in some dark and roach infested room off in some back room of the airport.

Well, they didn't throw me into any concentration camp as I had imagined. They asked their questions. I gave my answers. I was relieved. They may have been, too. Every trip after that was without any problems. Since American and West Indian troops liberated Grenada after the Cuban occupation, things have settled back into the normal environment of the typical Caribbean culture. However, all this came after our work there. While we were there things were a little tense at times.

Challenges

When I returned from Caracas, it was my first visit to the church of Grenada in four years. A lot had happened in that four years. The only way I can describe the situation is by the words of James. "*You lust, and have not: you kill and covet, and cannot obtain: you fight and war ...*" (Js 4:2). The brethren had been doing their share of fighting and warring.

West Indians can really go head to head with one another. Even in the lay-back culture of the region, when tension needs to be vented, they can vent. I had known this of their culture for several years. So, it seemed that some real venting was going on in the church at the time of my arrival.

Ninety-five percent of the problem at the time in the church was with the Grenadian preachers, and one preacher in particular who assumed preeminence over the others. Three men had written a letter viciously attacking another preacher who was supported by a Stateside church which knew nothing of the goings on. A group of preachers who wrote the letter were trying to get the other preacher off the island. The accused procured the services of a lawyer to threaten the accusers with a lawsuit. The church in St. Georges, the capital, split. Another letter was written with a more vicious tenor. Threats came from all involved. I thought the government had problems in Grenada before my coming. But compared to the state of the church, the government was in perfect peace.

The situation caught me by complete surprise. It was not encouraging to see brethren so unmercifully and maliciously attacking one another. Satan had invaded the church with relentless power. I tried to encourage the brethren to make peace as much as possible. I promised that we would return with seminars. And I prayed.

As it worked out in the months to come, the real problem of the church in Grenada left the island. Almost all problems of this nature center around personalities. The real problem in Grenada at that time centered around a common problem in the West Indian church. There seems to always be an individual who wants to be a Diotrefes. When you get two of these individuals on one island or in one church, something usually has to give. We can thank God, though, that the church in Grenada made it through those years of struggle and is carrying on today. Satan was defeated and God was glorified.

One good thing did come out of that first trip to Grenada. When I went to file my flight plan to return home, the tower controller was curious about my work. So we talked Bible. It was my first home Bible study in a control tower. It was a "tower study." The man was an

Anglican and I promised I would return. We would study more. However, when I returned on the next trip, I could not find this particular tower operator. My life has been filled with onetime occasions of study in passing as I traveled from here to there. I often wonder if I will meet some of these “one timers” in heaven.

Challenging Airports

Sometime in the past—I believe before airplanes were invented—they started to make airport runways in the Caribbean islands. They made the runways, and then waited to see if an airplane could be invented to land on them. If an airplane landed, they called it an airport, and not main street for some town.

Montserrat is the classic example. You have to approach from the northeast. To add a little luster to the approach, you will always have a ninety degree crosswind of about 25^{MPH}. If you're lucky, it will be less than 20^{MPH}.

Well, here we come into Montserrat. Hang on. In from the southeast, we cautiously set up our approach. One thousand five hundred feet down to one thousand. (Traffic always lands on runway 14.) We're at about eight hundred feet now, on left base. (Pucker nose and lips at this point.) We look up and there is a rock-solid cliff that goes straight up. At eight hundred feet it looks like it is ten thousand feet high. We head straight for it. At the right time—it must be right the first time—we hang a sharp left turn, catch an updraft—sometimes a little turbulence—hit the flaps, mash on the right rudder while crabbing into the wind for a crosswind landing. The trick is to hold your nose on your face just right and pucker your lips. Then there is that clump of trees right at the pucker point where unwary pilots touch down. It messes everything up when you are about ten feet off the ground.

At the threshold we flop around in the cross currents of wind for a few seconds. With a little luck, you'll hit it right almost every time. Of course, there is always the smashed up Cessna 310 piled up over to your right at the end of the runway to remind you that not all pilots have puckered their lips correctly at the point of pucker.

Those airports can be challenging. Only two pilots were allowed

to fly into Saba island at the time we were in the islands. The airport there is another “cliff-hanger.” It is built on essentially the exact top of a small mountain. If you undershoot the runway, too bad. You are straight into the mountain. If you overshoot, or your brakes go out, you’re shark’s food. But for the comfort of those who would like to try their hand at a Caribbean excursion in a small plane, all airports are in good shape. All of the major islands have good runways because of the commercial airlines that fly in. If you are thinking about instrument approaches to some of the more challenging airports, forget it. At the time we lived there, only a few airports even had an NDB approach. And the NDB’s were sometimes out of service. But places like Guadeloupe, Trinidad, St. Croix, and of course, San Juan, are made for good instrument approaches, some with ILS (Instrument Landing Service) approaches. When you get to the smaller islands, however, its VFR all the way.

But again, most of the flying is in excellent weather. Just do not go down during the hurricane season, or from about September to November. December and January seem to me to be very good months. The air is clear and the temperature is cool. I believe these are the two best months of the year for being in the Caribbean. But again, I think every month of the year is great to be in the Caribbean. It is one of the best places Martha and I have ever lived. When we as a family reminisce concerning where all of us would like to go spend some time, it is in the Caribbean. Unless you have been there, you cannot understand what I am saying. Maybe I am an old romantic thinking back on good old days. But when we were there, they were good old days. It was like living the good old days in the present. Yes, you guessed it. My family and I miss Caribbean living. Even while I am writing these words twenty-five years later there is a surge of enthusiasm passing through my heart to return to the Caribbean breeze on the beach of Nevis, Grenada, Barbados, or just somewhere there.

Chapter 9

LEARNING THE TERRITORY

When we began seminars in the West Indies in 1980, we jumped

in with all fours. The flights to our destinations were not all that long. They averaged only about an hour and a half to each seminar. But it seemed like some of the trips lasted ten hours after we had taught all day and into the night hours. The work was going great. Every successful trip just added fuel to our enthusiasm about the program. But it was very hard work.

There was only one limiting factor to the work. It was m-o-n-e-y. It was economical to operate the airplane, especially when we compared the use of it with commercial flying. We were praying that we would get more funding for the plane in order that we might be able to expand the program. But I also knew that in such situations the evangelist is often deceived into thinking that the work of God is limited to the supply of money. It is not, of course. God is the only real supply that is necessary. Money has never limited His work, and never will. We must never think that we can do the work of God only if we have enough funds. We may not be able to do a particular work we would like to do. For example, the type of work we did in the West Indies was unique. It was a work that only a few could do. Because of the uniqueness of the work, funds were necessary to carry on with what we did. But we must never conclude that because we do not have funds to accomplish what we want to do that God has nothing for us to do. We must keep in mind that the work of God in our lives is about Him, not us. We must thus seek to discover in our lives the destiny God has for us to do, and then get on with the work.

Spread Too Thin

When I went to the West Indies at the beginning of the distance training program, there were some leftover works from the States that I had to finish which did not specifically relate to the work in the Caribbean. I was at the time working with the translating group of the English Standard Version. But I worked out of this responsibility in about six months. I was also finishing a book on Christian apologetics entitled *The Fall of Unbelief*. I had been working on this book for ten years and it was good to finally dot that last period in those first few months in the West Indies. I also had to complete a book on world

evangelism that I had been working on for about three years, a book entitled, *The Call To World Evangelism*. Another project I wanted to continue in the area of writing was a book on doctrines. Most of the material on this work had been put into Portuguese while we were in Brazil and I wanted to get it into English. There were also a few other minor works with which I as seeking to bring into print. All writers have those on-going projects. Some of them never get finished. Some do. I was determined to see that the preceding projects fall among the completed.

These writing projects from the States added to my burden in the first few months of the work in the West Indies. But they had to be finished. At the time I was a persistent and addicted writer. Besides that, I firmly believed that God wanted these works finished. I felt destiny in writing and when one feels such, he cannot stop until he has accomplished his goal.

I do not know why I like to write. I suppose God gave me a desire to write, though I don't know if He really gave me a prolific style. I have always believed that I was never a good writer. However, I have always felt guilty when I did not write because I could see so many areas in evangelistic work that needed special pieces of literature that no one had filled. At the time we lived in the West Indies, writing religious materials for mission efforts was one course I had set my life on which to this day has not changed. Some writers write because they like to write. Others write to make money. I did sell a tract of mine back in the early seventies to a publisher for a few peanuts. But since then I cannot remember writing a book for profit. That has just not been my motivation for writing. Nevertheless, the "financial" writers are usually living in poor houses. And then, there are those who write because they feel it is their God-destined duty. I feel that I am one of the latter. I have always been driven by the thought that the printed page will take one's teachings to distant lands and into the future past one's own life. And besides that, I have always felt I had something to say.

I do remember that when I was a freshman in high school, the government passed out these aptitude tests to students in the state of

Kansas that took all day to complete. So as part of the freshmen class in Stafford, Kansas, I spend the entire day with my classmates completing what I thought was a silly test. Now at the time, I was a farmer boy. I loved tractors and engines, building and repairing things. I was a mechanic. My brother and I could tear down an engine and put it back together blindfolded. Really. I once had a 1956 Chevy car in which I had installed an Oldsmobile engine with a Mercury transmission. I had broken the transmission so many times in racing that I could have it out of the car and on the repair bench of the shop in thirteen minutes. That's the type of person I was and interest I had as a teenager.

Now we farm boys took this ridiculous test. Once completed, the results were then sent off to the educational department of the state of Kansas. In about a month or so the results came back to the school, and each student was brought before a teacher to review the area of aptitude to which we were most suited to pursue in life. I sat down before my reviewer. She pulled out my results. Out of the seven areas of aptitude for which the test was designed, I scored the highest in composition and English. Now I thought, "Hang on, that's someone else's test results." No, it had my name on it. At the time, I thought something was definitely wrong. But then again, maybe God does give us talents that we must discover and develop to His glory. The sooner we discover our gifts, the better it is for His glory.

When it came to the purpose and use of literature in world evangelism, brothers J. C. Choate, Dryden Sinclair and I were always in agreement. We all believed that what is important is getting the printed message out. I always appreciated their efforts on a worldwide basis for accomplishing this goal. Few brethren probably realize the tremendous impact these two brothers had on worldwide evangelism through the printing of literature.

New Testament Study Commentary

When we were in Brazil, a dream was conceived when I realized that mission churches usually had Bibles but no commentary to help them to understand the Bible. Bibles can be distributed, but there must be a teacher to sort out the many twisted concepts that men have

developed by promoting traditional interpretations or erroneous cultural practices. I believed that this was the situation in most areas of the world where the church is not so strong.

Third World churches do not have and usually cannot acquire commentaries to aid them in their Bible studies. Its easy to say that they can just use their Bible. But put yourself in their position as a Bible teacher or preacher. It is easy to say let them buy Bible research books. But they are not available. And if they were available, a one-volume commentary produced on just one book of the Bible in the industrial/business economy of the West would cost a good month's salary in many Third World countries. Would you give a month's salary to buy a commentary on one book of the Bible?

Because of the above need and predicament of Third World Christians, I decided in 1980 to begin a project which I called "*The International New Testament Study Commentary Project*." What I set out to do was to write a one-volume commentary on the entire New Testament for mission distribution. I wanted to include helps and study outlines that would assist church leaders in their efforts to lead struggling and isolated saints to a greater understanding of the Scriptures. In the fall of 1980, I began the project.

The writing of different sections of the material aided the extension work we were doing in the West Indies. I could write, print and distribute samples to the church leaders. This gave them something to study. It was like killing two birds with one stone. However, it did consume great amounts of time at different stages of the work. I was determine, however, to fulfill this need.

This project was first completed in 1982 with the initial printing of 10,000 copies for worldwide distribution. Another 5,000 copies were later printed and distributed worldwide. In 2000 and 2001, the thousand-page volume was expanded into two volumes of 2,400 pages, with the inclusion of the *New American Standard Version* and *New King James Version*. Three thousand copies were printed of this two-volume edition. And in 2006 another 5,000 copies were printed in one volume as the *Dickson Teacher's New Testament*, with the inclusion of the *21st Century Revised King James Version*. Add to this the inclusion of this work in

the *Gospel CD* and *Biblical Research Library CD* which have been duplicated in the thousands worldwide. The great amount of time in writing the commentary has been well worth it when considering the thousands of people who have been helped in their Bible studies. And at the time of this writing, the printing of this volume is planned to be an ongoing project for the church.

Extension Schedule

After about four months of operation of the Institute in the West Indies in 1980, we were making regular flights to Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, Montserrat, Nevis and St. Kitts. We were making trips to other islands for church workshops and special counselling sessions. These sessions usually involved encouraging local leaders, problem-solving and/or setting up workshops for future dates. At the time, I was doing about everything I could. As a pilot, I had to go on every trip, though the trips consumed only about two days out of the week. But a trip of two days (two seminars) often took a week of preparation. This left little time for local work in Antigua, which at times was quite frustrating.

Local Work

The small church we started in All Saints was showing signs of growth. Thanks to the faithful local work of the Joneses and Crisps, we were averaging about forty-five in attendance. With the establishment of this church came the responsibility of teaching classes, making visits and discipling the saints to live what they learned. We also had three campaigns the first year we were in Antigua. At the time, I didn't know how we could do everything we had planned to do. But again, I was thinking only of manpower and not Godpower.

I always had a bad habit of biting off more than I could chew. Martha says I dream too much. And then she says my dreams are her nightmares. I was about to choke on my dreams, her nightmares, by the end of our first year in Antigua. But I knew God would work out my dreams. At least, I had the faith that He would. And to this day, He seems to have always worked them out. God seems to have always

worked exceedingly abundantly above all that I could possibly conceive in my finite mind. I have always believed that He has worked strong in our lives. The proof is in what both Martha and I have been able to do throughout the years. The work could not have been accomplished without God doing His work in our lives. There is no room here for boasting. All glory must go to God, for He has worked exceedingly in our lives.

One thing I give credit to my upbringing on the farm was hard work. I can thank my father for that. During the work season on the farm we slaved twelve to sixteen hours a day. My father owned an old P-Case combine, an out-of-date contraption which he used because I think he just liked to tinker with it. The old combine was broke down much of the time. He would spend weeks working on it before harvest. Prior to harvest one year, his brother Herman was unfortunately killed in a car accident. Herman's farm machinery was subsequently auctioned to the public by his surviving wife in order that she might move to the city.

During the auction, I believe God knew we needed some relief from that old P-Case contraption. Anyway, my Dad decided he would stay in the background in order to bid up the Model 55 John Deer self-propelled combine which his brother had recently bought. It was a great machine. My dad placed a bid on the machine. No one else bid. He had to buy it. He went to the bank to get some money and we three brothers greatly rejoiced.

That harvest I remember staying up until one and two o'clock in the morning cutting wheat just to drive that machine. I learned one thing about work, if you have good machinery and enjoy what you are doing, you cannot get enough work to satisfy you. I have never felt it burdensome to work for God day and night. When you have the best Boss in the universe, it only makes it easier. And when you enjoy His work in your life, His commandments are not grievous. His grace has always been powerful in my life. Here's a good passage. *"For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God"* (2 Co 4:15). Our work is a ministry of causing people to thank God for all that He has done through His grace.

Visit OF The Feds

Meanwhile, back to the airport in Antigua. There was this pilot who took off in a Piper Aztec but did not quite make it into peaceful flight. One engine conked out on take off, the other was about to give up the ghost, too. This wasn't a real good situation, so the pilot headed for a clearing to plow a new landing strip in the thorn bushes of Antigua.

Well, the plane, and the pilot, and the single terrified passenger made a great gear-up landing in the backyard of a local Antiguan's property. The pilot and passenger climbed out of the smashed up Aztec without a scratch. Since the plane had an American registration, the US FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) officials had to come over from Puerto Rico to check out the problem. And while they made this "business" trip they had to give a few field checks to other American registered aircraft in the area, of which also was N8856P. So they walked up and down the parking areas of Coolidge Airport, like guards looking for escaped convicts. Their primary objective was to find aircraft with too much corrosion. And, they caught one unsuspecting carcass. Fortunately, N8856P escaped these scrutinizing inspectors.

Drug Runners

I must tell you about the time I took N8856P to Grand Turk to check out an Aztec with the possibilities of buying it. It was an interesting trip. Grand Turk is where a lot of refueling goes on, both for the good guys and the bad guys of the great drug capers of Latin America. The good guys in Grand Turk decided to relieve the drug smugglers of a few airplanes. The confiscated flying machines were then put up for public auction in order to support the local economy. So, I went to look for a confiscated machine in order to support the economy of Grand Turk.

At about this time, I was hurting for a twin. I knew how safe single-engined machines were, but if an engine ever did go to sleep ... well ... just hope you can swim if you survive the landing in the waves. But I also thought that a twin would at least give my passengers some psychological relief. The Grand Turk police had five or six planes on which they were taking sealed bids. They were going cheap. A \$30,000

Aztec would sell for about \$15,000. That was too good to resist, so off I went.

Grand Turk was four hours' flight from Antigua at 10,000 feet and about 160^{MPH}. I left about 6:00^{AM} and flew straight to Grand Turk nonstop. But about three-quarters of the way there I came upon this sixty-foot yacht that was burning like blazes in the middle of the sea. I circled to take a look.

Here was this giant specimen of a boat out in the midst of the ocean just being barbecued. I was curious, to say the least, so I immediately called Grand Turk tower to report the mysterious happenings. They said that they would take care of it. Luckily, or whatever, there was a small sailing boat proceeding toward the distressed boat. I could not figure out what was going on. I did know that drug smugglers would steal a boat, make their run, and then burn the boat at sea. I could not determine if this was one of those cases. So I left the scene for the remainder of my journey on to Grand Turk.

I skidded in on the asphalt of Grand Turk International Airport a little after 10:00^{AM} in the morning and called the chief of police to talk about the Aztec for sale. They had two Aztecs, a Beech 18, two twin Bonanzas and a Navajo. I was interested in one of the Aztecs. This was a buy "as is" deal. So you could get stuck with a lemon. But I trusted that the drug dealers had kept their ships in tip-top condition. After I prayed that God would give me the particular plane that "I wanted," I proceeded to get my bid into writing for the chief of police.

The officials would determine the highest of the sealed bids in about three weeks from the date I was on the island. I had placed a low bid, but raised it later. At the time, I just knew that the Lord wanted us to have this plane. But as I learned later, I figured that the Lord did not want us to have this plane.

I jumped back into N8856P and headed home. It was about 3:00^{PM} in the afternoon by now. Guess what? I passed over the yacht that was having the barbecue that morning. Well, it was really cooking now. But the amazing thing was that the Grand Turk tower had done nothing about the matter. After a little more persuasion, they did call Puerto Rico and the U.S. Coast Guard dispatched a helicopter to see what was

going on. This incident certainly did not give me any encouragement about the possibilities of one receiving immediate aid if he had been marooned somewhere out in the deep around Grand Turk.

Ditching

Speaking of water, waves and airplanes, let me tell you about ditching. To you who do not know what ditching is, it is a technical term related to a pilot trying to dig a thirty-foot wide ditch in the water with a few hundred pounds of aluminum called an airplane. It usually doesn't work out all that well for the airplane. But when your fans stop flipping around out over water you don't have much of a choice.

There was the one fellow over in St. Croix who decided to fly a Cessna 185 right into the water one calm night. He was descending at night and somehow became confused about his altitude. The surface of planet earth just came up too soon. He simply flew that beautiful aircraft right into the salt water. He and the four other startled passengers did get out with the raft. After paddling to shore, they decided to buy the pilot a new altimeter. He also needed a new airplane.

There is also the clown who was goofing off in a Piper Aztec off the west coast of Guadeloupe. He was trying to see how low he could fly over the water. I guess he was trying too hard. Everything was going great until his props started hitting the water. He then started digging ditches in the water with his prop. The plane splashed in and he and his passenger got out with their lives. The plane had flipped over and remained afloat for a short period before sinking like the Titanic into the deep blue Caribbean Sea. The pilot and passenger, though, were out in the ocean in their raft for nine hours before they were finally picked up.

There were those cases, too, of airplanes that just flew off into the blue, never to be heard from again. When we had been in the West Indies for about a year a Cessna 310 took off from Trinidad. It just disappeared. Gone! Of course, a lot of this "disappearance" business was the work of drug runners. In fact, a lot of the disappearances in the so-called Bermuda Triangle were drug related. I suppose this was why there was often an indifference to such happenings by those who dealt with the events on a regular basis.

Dangerous Flying

In the Caribbean one is either flying over mountains or water. To some, this may be considered dangerous flying. Such flying in a single-engined airplane would, I suppose, be considered by some to be just a little short of lunacy. There may be a little daring adventuresome spirit in every pilot to fly continually in such conditions. I believe this is especially true for missionary pilots. The apostle Paul said, “*We are fools for Christ.*” I am sure Paul must have been some kind of pilot. But when a job needed to get done for God, I never really considered the risks. I suppose Paul was somewhat that way when he went to Jerusalem for the last time. The Caesarean brethren begged him not to go to the city after Agabus had prophesied that Paul would be bound there. I was again reminded of Paul’s words: “*What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*” (At 21:13).

The Piper Comanche that we had brought down from the States was a good plane for ditching, if that time ever came. But ditching in the ocean is serious business. Those waves can be like brickbats to aluminum and rivets. If we ever had to ditch in rough seas, I knew that our number would almost be up. In smooth water there was a pretty good chance. If the tradewinds were up, however, forget it. But again, in flying the islands one is close to land most of the time. I have often been asked if flying over water bothered me. In those first few months of the work, there was always that lingering feeling, “What if?” But after a short period of time it became home. (I would later learn that crash landing in trees was far more dangerous than ditching in water.)

One thing about flying in the Caribbean that’s great is the weather. It is almost always beautiful. If the weather is a mess over an airport, simply wait for about ten minutes. In a few minutes the tradewinds will have the weather swept away. If you are on the ground when the weather is bad. Stay on the ground. Things will clear up soon. Thunderstorms are rarely the big woolly wonders in the Caribbean like they are in the States. Usually, there will be a buildup to about ten thousand feet. It will then dissipate in a few hours. If you are instrument rated, you do not have much about which to worry. If you are not, then

you need to be more careful. It goes without saying to stay out of and away from hurricanes.

Reaching Out

It did not take long to learn that the distance training program was quite demanding. I was getting tired after about six months operation. But the work had to go on. I knew God would keep it going and me, too. Besides, it was very fulfilling and the most productive work I had ever done. God was truly working in our lives.

By the end of the first year we had visited most of the islands with which we had planned to work. But there were other mountains to climb. Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Aruba and a host of other challenges stimulated our desires. If we accomplished anything, at least I wanted to feel that God had used us to encourage small, struggling and isolated assemblies of the church out there between somewhere and nowhere. Most Christians in the States go from new birth to burial in the company of a host of saints. But those in mission areas know that it is different. Every day is a struggle of faith against every wile of discouragement Satan can throw at you. One of our missions, then, was to bring encouragement to those who know the meaning of Acts 14:22, "*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*" At the time, I was sure God was trying to teach us that great spiritual lesson. The burden of the West Indian churches laid heavily upon our hearts.

Chapter 10 FOR PILOTS ONLY

This chapter is for pilots. If you are not one of those bird men who go to sleep at night thinking about flying a Lear jet over and around clouds, then you might want to skip this chapter of regression into birdland.

I suppose every obsessed pilot has dreamed of taking his ship on an island hopping adventure through the secret hideouts of the mysterious West Indies, or possibly a worldwide adventure to some

unknown land. I know I did. And in many ways I have been there, done that, got the T-shirt. There was and is something contagiously exciting about an international flight journey into the land of the unexpected atmosphere of the tropical Caribbean. I can remember those exciting first flights I made as a newcomer to the Caribbean region of planet earth. Each flight was an adventure because of the challenge of the unknown. The flights were pieces of adventure that came around every Thursday and Friday. I thoroughly enjoyed these trips of flight ecstasy, not only because of the flying, but because of the fantastic challenges of the extension training work in which we were involved at the time. Every foreign evangelist has a sense of adventure, and so, I confess mine. However, let me remind those who might dare to be evangelists because of the adventure. The adventure soon leaves as the burdens of the work are tightly strapped to your back.

When I first went to the West Indies I was an inexperienced low time instrument rated pilot. They say you are usually the best at instrument flight immediately after getting your instrument rating. So I went on the confidence of that experience. I had a little over two hundred hours of logged flying time. That was very low time for a pilot. I was really a greenhorn pilot still meant for fine weather flying. But at the same time, the West Indies is the perfect setting for new instrument pilots.

In the beginning of their flight life, all pilots are inexperienced. But we should not allow inexperience in anything to become a hinderance to learning. Neither should we let it hinder doing good. How can you get experience if you do not start experiencing things? We must always be willing to launch out into the deep. God has already given us the victories. We must go to and stay in the battles. Sometimes the risks are high. But for the gospel's sake, we must not count ourselves or our lives as dear unto ourselves.

I was once shocked into reality on this point many years ago when I visited the Museum of Martyrs in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Those who established the museum constructed a history of those who have died for Jesus from the time of Jesus on the cross to the present. In the museum there is one wall about six feet high and eight feet wide. It is

a map of the world with small holes in every nation where one can pin small crosses. Any time someone in the world is in any way killed for preaching the name of Jesus, they will take a small cross from the tray at the bottom of the map and pin it on the map where the individual was killed. At the beginning of every year, they take all the crosses down and start over. What emotionally struck me about this exercise was that at the end of every year they would have to take down over 10,000 crosses they had put up during the year.

Good Advice

Someone asked me what I would advise one who wanted to command his flying ship through the Caribbean waters. Well, there are others who can give better advice than myself. But since I am the one writing this particular book and you are now reading it, then you will have to settle for my advice.

First thing on the list would be a good airplane. I would not fly to the Caribbean waters in a new plane or with a plane that had a newly overhauled engine. I would put at least fifty hours on the engine or on the new plane before going. Make sure the powerplant is thoroughly broken in and not ready to break up. A good mechanic will tell you that. I would not fly an airplane in the West Indies which had an engine running close to the major overhaul, either.

As in Africa, the saying is, “Don’t drive junk.” Junk will get you in trouble out there where there is no return to civilization. If you cannot have good machinery to carry you here and there, don’t go. I can tell you all the horror stories about aviation and African travel that have ended in tragedy because someone was driving junk. Just take my advice. Don’t go there in questionable machinery.

Single or twin? This question always comes up when pilots start talking about mountains or water. It also comes up when mothers start talking to missionary pilots about flying in the Caribbean. I would not go over water in a single without some essential insurances, which insurances are often required by law. I would have a life raft which costs a pretty penny—about one thousand greenbacks, depending on the size or capacity. But if you ever needed it, you would care less how

much it costs. If you were going to make a holiday trip through the islands, just rent a raft in Miami.

I have always carried a life raft, a life vest for every passenger, a flare gun and a portable Emergency Locator Beacon (ELT), all required by regulations. The portable ELT was to make sure they found me out there in all that water. The flare gun was to make sure they could see me. The life raft and vests were to make sure that I was able to use the ELT and flare gun on top of the water. Whenever an emergency occurs, it is always good to have the best equipment handy to deal with it.

As far as instruments in the airplane, the modern wonder is the GPS. It sure has made life easier for pilots. However, one would also need an ADF. One is almost always in range of some Nondirection Beacon or VOR station throughout the Caribbean. For many of the islands the ADF was the best security in the years I was there. It was an instrument I always loved to master. It was a thrill to make an ADF approach on a cloudy day, with a twenty-knot crosswind. Not too many pilots go for such mania, but if you navigated on IFR in the West Indies in those days, you had to be sure you knew how to use an ADF. One must remember that he is essentially IFR when flying over water with no land in sight or in a thick haze. In the Caribbean you are always over water, and often in a thick haze. So regardless of being able to see outside the cockpit, you are essentially IFR between islands.

Speaking of haze, I flew direct from Antigua to Grenada on at least two occasions on a cloudless day. And on that cloudless day I could not see below or any of the other islands over which I flew. At 7,500 feet, I could not see anything below. This is what is called a “white out.” In the West Indies, the haze can get that bad.

Long Range

One reason why I liked the Piper Comanche—Piper made a mistake when they discontinued this ship—was that it would fly beyond the capacity of any man’s bladder. Fifty-five percent power would give a long seven hours and twenty minutes of flight. I later traded the Comanche for a Beech Travel Air with larger tanks which had almost the same endurance.

On almost all of my flights in the Caribbean, I did not have to refuel at the destination. That was good because there was usually no fuel at my destination. I always felt more comfortable having a two-hour reserve after almost every trip.

An old pilot who had been in the Caribbean for several years told me that there were two things that caused most accidents in the Caribbean. One was old airplanes that had not been maintained well. The other was pilots trying to stretch out a tank of gas. If you are going to fly the Caribbean, remember that airplane gas tanks just do not stretch. They go empty, and when they go empty, some exciting things begin to transpire.

Many of the islands do not have fuel. So, one should carefully plan his flights. Before leaving Miami, be sure to contact the Flight Service Station to see if there is fuel in Nassau, if you plan to stop there. Also, check Grand Turk if you plan to stop there. Georgetown and Exuma almost always have 100LL. Usually, they have it in all of the major stopover places. However, I did set down in Grand Turk one time when they were bone dry. Luckily, we could fly fifteen minutes over to South Caicas which did have fuel. When one gets down into the Lesser Antilles, just make sure you ask before going. If your destination is as dry as your tanks when you arrive, then you have problems.

For charts, we used the World Aeronautical Charts, CH-25, CJ-26, CJ-27 and CK-27. For the instrument pilot we used the L-6 and L-5 Enroute Low Altitude charts. As usual, it was necessary to have the *Low Altitude Instrument Approach Procedures* book published by the Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Another excellent guide for VFR pilots was Randal Agostini's *Caribbean Flite Guide*. Agostini also gave numerous bits of information concerning the airports of the West Indies. This was a must for the first time pilot.

If I had to make a decision between flying in the States or Africa and flying in the West Indies, it would not be difficult. In the States there would not be the unnecessary hassle with documentation. Every flight in the West Indies is an international flight, and therefore, one

must do all the paper work. But again, think of all those customs, immigration and tower controllers you do not get to meet personally in the Stateside system. When one gets acquainted with the Caribbean system and the men, he easily overlooks the paper work. The personal contact with aviation people is closer in the Caribbean. It is a good place to fly.

Chapter 11

THE WEST INDIAN DILEMMA

One of the greatest virtues of the West Indies is the people and their historical culture. There are few places in the world that have had so many diverse events and epics in their history as the Caribbean people. In a previous chapter I mentioned the fact that the French, Spanish, English, Dutch, Caribs and countless other cultures have left their cultural marks on these unique people. The closer one comes to know the West Indian the better one can identify the unique cultural trademarks of the residents of each island. One also begins to appreciate the West Indian because of his diverse heritage which produced a culture of people that I have not witnessed in any other country of the world.

In visiting the Caribbean one should never classify the people of the islands as having one culture. Each small island has its own unique history, its own loyalties, its own direction, and its own way of doing things. Of course, there are those cultural traits that permeate most of the islands, especially those islands of the eastern part of the Caribbean. But one must remember that each island has its uniqueness, an individual uniqueness that the islanders cherish very much.

The West Indies has a very colorful historical background. To understand any culture, one must first have a panoramic view of the history of the people. History is the factory of culture. In order to understand the West Indian today one must understand the cultural relics of the past that have been left over from centuries of historical change. I believe the West Indies is a most unique place in the world because it experienced the collision of many colonial nations from the early 1500's to the middle 1800's. Because of this vast assortment of colonial

struggles, the West Indian culture is a mixture of European colonial powers with Africans who were imported to the islands during the colonial centuries.

Cultural Fruit Basket

When we talk about the West Indian people, therefore, we are talking about a historical archive of cultures. Each island has a different history. However, there is some diversity even with some of the islands. Islands as Dominica have three different sections of history. This island was once divided between the English, French and Spanish. The culture of each of these European countries affected the areas of Dominica that they possessed. As a result, each particular part of the island that was controlled by each of the countries can be seen in the culture of the people today.

One of the most evident characteristics that divided the English from the French settlements in the Caribbean was that of intermarriage. The French evidently had less scruples about intermarriage with the imported African slaves than the English, though many of the relationships never progressed to the point of marriage. In the northern part of Dominica, which was at one time ruled by the French, there are numerous black families today that have French blood. There are a number of very light colored blacks, or dark colored whites, and a lot of blacks with blue eyes. It is not uncommon to see a brother and sister who are literally as different as “black” and “white.” But in the English territories, such intermarriage (or, “inter relationships”) did not occur as frequently. The English did not cherish mistresses among the slaves as did the French. In many areas, therefore, it is not a matter as to whether one is “white” or “black,” but what shade of color. To a great extent, therefore, color is not relevant in the West Indian culture.

Among whites physical identification is usually described by one’s color of hair. At least, the hair is the primary identification mark of the individual. But in the eastern Caribbean the shade of skin is the major feature used to describe a person. West Indians often describe themselves as either “dark,” “clear,” or “more clear.” However, do not construe this to be a prejudicial description. West Indians are some of

the most unprejudiced people in the world. They are such because of their past history. One really does not go to the West Indies with a “white-black” concept of race. Such thinking has no place there. When there exists every shade of color from black to white, who is black or white? In other words, leave your prejudices at home when you visit these lands.

What makes the Caribbean culture intriguing, therefore, is the history that made the people who they are today. Most of the countries did not have just one colonial power ruling over them throughout the years. Depending on the political struggles of the colonial powers in Europe, the islands often changed hands throughout the centuries. This is what makes the Caribbean so culturally colorful. If England had claimed St. Lucia, or St. Maarten, and retained rule of their claimed countries continually through the centuries, then cultural studies of the people would be most boring. But fortunately, the West Indies has had the privilege of tapping from the cultures of several countries over the years as they were exchanged at the mercy of European affairs.

Through years of global strife, therefore, the Caribbean lands were juggled from one world power to another. During each period of possession, each particular colonial country injected its little piece of culture into the people. What has resulted in this historical mixing are cultures that are constructed with the sociological relics of France, England, Spain, the Netherlands, Africa and other countries that had their influences in a minor way. This is what makes the people so exciting. We cannot stereotype the West Indian. He is different; he is unique. That difference and uniqueness adds to his cultural richness, if not a global example of what can happen in other countries that are so culturally mixed.

I think African countries would do well to study the culture of the West Indies. It would give them hope. Every nation of Africa is made up of a host of different tribal groups. For example, in Angola there are 147 different languages and dialects, each representing a different cultural group. The Portuguese colonials brought Portuguese as a common language. However, the diverse number of languages still poses a challenge for unity among so many who speak so many

languages. A nation can never really be a united nation until all its citizens speak at least one common language. African countries are doing well in teaching either French, English, Swahili, or another common language to their citizenship. They are getting better at establishing a common language of communication, and thus becoming more united as nations.

Dependent Independence

Independence was the principal movement in the Caribbean for the 1970's and 1980's. There was an underlying surge—a momentum—to determine one's own future in the islands. For centuries the people had been used—exploited. That which other countries wanted out of the New World and West Indies in the past was usually profit. People were manipulated to get gold, or cane or whatever. When all the profit was gone, the colonials looked at the leftovers as a burden to bear. They said, "We will now grant you independence."

As all people, the West Indian wanted to determine his own future in an economic atmosphere of free-market enterprise and freedom. However, there were still a few countries like Montserrat, population 12,000 in 1980, who wanted to hang on to the Mother Country, England. And really, who can blame those few who wanted to maintain economic ties with their heritage. Those who had already become independent in the early 80's had their share of political and economical struggles. But this was their choice. This was why they wanted independence. They could deal with the struggles of politics and economics as long as they were allowed to determine their own future. A people has come of age when they want to map out their own future.

However, there was a political contradiction here with some islands. Antigua, for example, wanted to go independent for several reasons that contradicted their reason for wanting to go independent. One of those reasons for independence was that they would as an independent country be eligible for more foreign aid from other countries and world benefit programs. In other words, they wanted independence in order to become more dependent. Not much consistency in this, but in politics one does not always have to be consistent.

A dentist in St. Vincent related to me another problem with the independence movement. He said, “We want independence but we have no leaders.” In many cases this was true. As soon as the day of independence came, there were those little demagogues who came out of the bushes to claim their right to power.

When Antigua went independent, the associated island of Barbuda wanted to separate itself as an independent country. However, there were only 1,500 people living on Barbuda. That number included every man, woman and child. (A few pigs and goats may have been thrown in just to get the count up.) At the time, they had no real agriculture. They had no industry. They had nothing. But they wanted to be their own independent country and have a seat at the United Nations. I think the problem was that there were a couple small fish looking for a big pond in which to rule.

For some, the phrase should be changed to dependent-independence. When Grenada went independent, Mr. Gary, the elected Premier, became a dictator. However, he was out of the island one day and a man by the name of Bishop came out of the bush and formed a military coup. He subsequently took over the island, claiming it for his little kingdom. In order to guarantee his assumed leadership of his own kingdom, Mr. Bishop invited the Cubans and Russians to help him in his dependent-independent movement. But the situation did not last for long. Uncle Sam kicked out the Cubans, and then gave the island back to the residents. Now they are dependent on Uncle Sam for aid. So actually, “colonial” control does continue in some places in the West Indies. The only thing that has changed is the manner by which it is administered. However, I must be fair here. The West Indies industry of tourism has greatly helped the islands. With a little help from outside, they are doing a great job in determining their own future. All the coup business is in the past and they have a great future.

Freedom-Loving People

In understanding the independence movement of the Caribbean one must understand that the Caribbean people are freedom-loving people. They do not like dictators. And they do not like communism. It is only when the communists and dictators take advantage of an

opportunity do they get into power. At the time we lived in the Caribbean communism had yet to show any real significant force at the ballot box in any Caribbean country south of the Virgin Islands. Jamaica was leaning toward Cuba for a period of time during those years. But the power of the ballot box changed that and the Cubans had to go home. Everyone considered Cuba a political anomaly. It was communistic only because Castro and his hit squad controlled the people. However, the Leeward Islands did not like Castro or communism.

One of the most interesting events that took place during our initial life in South Africa was when Nelson Mandella was first set free from prison. What he did in reference to Castro totally confused the typical West Indian. Let me explain. As most of the rest of the world at the time, the West Indian was totally against the Apartheid government of South Africa. Once in the early eighties, several of the star West Indian cricket players were hired by the South African Cricket Board to come to South Africa to play the South African cricket team. To be mild about recalling the event, this infuriated the West Indians. They said these cricket players would never play cricket again in the West Indies. Fortunately, the South Africans paid the cricket players enough money to come and play in South Africa that they could retire without ever hitting another cricket ball. But the event manifested the political boycott the West Indies had against South Africa. They were totally against Apartheid and they were totally against communism. Both were against freedom and democracy, things for which the West Indian was in the midst of achieving after centuries of colonial control.

Now at the time, South Africa was going to have a new leader in the early 1990s, Nelson Mandella. But the West Indians could not believe their newspapers when they picked them up one day with a front page picture of Nelson Mandella hugging Fidel Castro. They just could not believe what they were seeing. They hated communism. They hated Apartheid. But here their iconic hero was hugging their historical enemy. They could not figure out how one who had spent a lifetime fighting for democracy, the same thing for which they struggled, could be hugging one who had stolen freedom and democracy away from the Cuban people. Go figure.

West Indians cherish the power of vote. They are generally very emotional concerning politics. They like open speech. They like to vote in order to express their will. The reason for this is that it took them longer than most countries in the world to acquire this right. And since they now have it, they never want to lose it. Through all the hypocrisies of politics, the West Indian islands have come of age in reference to freedom and democracy.

Geographical Trap

The West Indian countries wanted to go somewhere. But in those days, they did not really know where to go. They wanted to be like the colonial powers who had set them free. But lack of leadership, lack of education, and poor economic conditions are things that make countries stand still in a time warp. The typical West Indian country had its share of these problems. Trinidad and Barbados were on their way to economic development. They were twenty years ahead of the other Leeward Island countries in the early 80's, though Guadeloupe and Martinique were doing well under the aid of France. Places like the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were also two decades ahead of the typical West Indian country. In fact, as far as development, the island countries of the Caribbean should not be grouped into the same economic category. Several of the countries were still in the midst of struggle for development at the time we lived there.

And then there is Haiti that was and is at the bottom of the economic ladder in the Western world. It is the poorest country of the western hemisphere. Haiti gained its independence in the early 1800's, far too soon to develop under the nurture of an economically powerful colonial parent. In comparison, Haiti's sister French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, former colonially controlled countries, stayed with France for more than a century after Haiti gained her independence. As a result, they are highly developed today. But African voodoo culture that came over from Africa with the slaves has held Haiti in the dark ages unto this day. There is a tremendous lesson in this. Christianity enlightens people. The power of truth overcomes debilitating fear that holds the minds of people in bondage and a state of being backward. The

sociological lesson that is learned from Haiti is the lesson that God's truth works to free people's minds from the nonsense of spooks and demons, and the fear that is preached by sangomas and witch doctors. Any culture that promotes a religion of demons and evil spirits is held in the bondage of fear, and fear hinders faith from taking people into a better future. Those who would blend Christianity with such spiritualistic beliefs are not helping people. They are accomplices to those who would keep people in the fear of the Dark Ages.

At the time we were in the West Indies, the lack of education was the major hindrance to many West Indian countries. Ignorance continued to enslave many, though all of the countries realized the necessity of education. They realized that an ignorant people can never be a free people. Nevertheless, there was hope then as governments began to place greater emphasis on developing the educational systems of their countries. They were counting on the next generation to be better educated. And to a great extent, they have accomplished their goal ... except for Haiti which was still held in the bondage of demons that were created in the minds of the ignorant.

At the time we lived in the West Indies, there was a cultural dungeon in which the West Indian lived which is difficult to explain. It was a dungeon of hopelessness. "We've been living this way for four hundred years," the West Indian reasoned. "The future doesn't promise much economic change." Many had unconsciously fallen into the despair of this curse of Third World fatalism.

The West Indian may have had his own type of fatalism. He resented being stuck on the islands as a result of the slave trade. The dream of the typical West Indian was to get out. His ancestors were brought to the Caribbean against their will. Historical slavery did that. His world had thus been relegated to a small island a few miles long and a few miles wide. There were few jobs on the island of his habitation. If he escaped to America or England or wherever to receive a good education, he had no place to use his education in his home country. Therefore, who could blame him for not returning to his home country with a Master's Degree in engineering. Who would want to come back to a two-hundred-square-mile world that had a few factories that

produced a little more than clothes or shoes. As a result of this economic environment, education beyond high school on the islands became less important. Those who wanted to excel, went somewhere else and stayed there. This “brain drain” had stunted the economic growth of the islands for decades.

There was the feeling that we had not come very far in the last one hundred years, therefore, we are not going too far in the next one hundred years. Tomorrow will be the same as today which was the same as fifty yesterdays. “I’m going nowhere, so why try.” As a result of this Third World fatalism, a flavor of pessimism ate away at hope for the culture. And truly, it is hard to be optimistic and energetic in a situation that offers little economic hope. People accuse the West Indian of being slow. But most would be slow if they had no where to go and no hope for a better tomorrow. In fact, you might not call it slow. It is only being content with your predicament.

This may appear to be a bleak picture of the West Indian situation. But this is the picture of the Third World. The West Indian, however, has dealt with his predicament in a marvelous way. He has developed a type of contentment that allows him to be happy with what he has. The concept of “getting ahead” does not drive him to hypertension in competition with his fellow man as it does the typical stressed-out Western materialist. He is not in competition with his neighbor. This is where the West Indian culture has an edge over cultures that thrive on competitiveness. In the Caribbean, one enjoys life in contentment. In America, one endures life in competition and social struggle with the other guy. The West Indian would teach Americans that there is disaster at the end of our materialistic road. The disaster is that we lose our God on our way to the economic top.

I would not, however, leave you with a pessimistic view of the West Indies. At the time of this writing, the islands are doing better economically. Tourism has brought millions of dollars into the islands, and thus made it possible for a better life. The West Indian has refused to remain backward and in the past, and thus is seeking to make for his children a better world.

The Rasta Man

No discussion of the Caribbean people would be complete without something said about the Rastafarian movement. A true Rastafarian is an individual who lives completely off the land. However, there are only few Rastas who go to this extreme. It is his desire to disconnect himself with the established life of society. Nevertheless, most Rastas have become a part of the system while hanging on to their basic beliefs. Many West Indian Rastafarians do not seek jobs. Many have the pastime of smoking “the herb” (Marijuana), which is a very important part of their spiritual beliefs. There are so many brands and breeds of Rastafarianism that it is difficult to categorize the typical Rasta. This is a social movement, though the true Rasta claims to admire a deity and practices his Rastafarianism with religious vigor.

As a religious belief, there are actually two main groups of Rastafarians. There is the group that accepts a former Ethiopian religious leader (Ja) as the center of their religious belief. There is also the group that accepts Jesus Christ. There are Rastas with these beliefs scattered throughout the Caribbean. This movement has even spread to Africa and is prevalent in South Africa.

Some have wrongly compared the Rasta movement of the Caribbean with the hippie movement of the States in the 1960’s. But this is not a true comparison. The hippies revolted against the “establishment.” There were job opportunities and money and every other blessing of life for the hippie. The hippies just said they did not want anything to do with it. They revolted against the “established way of life” that they discovered did not offer them solutions to human relationships. The cultural irony of the hippie movement that rejected the materialistic system, is that when he grew up he became a yuppie who embraced the materialistic system.

The Rastafarian movement is different from the hippie movement because it is based on different premises. First of all, there are many Rastafarians that are highly educated. They left their islands to receive excellent educations in England, Canada and the United States. But they returned to their Caribbean homelands with no hope. There were no jobs that demanded their higher education. It would be years before

the islands could catch up to their high level of education. Therefore, many just withdrew from society to focus on the herb.

Secondly, at the time we were in the West Indies, the Rastafarian was rebelling against foreign rule. He did not like his country being a commonwealth state or possession of any country. If his country happened to be independent, he did not like his country or people being financially dependent on other countries. He could not politically change that economic dependence on foreign countries, so socially he rebelled. His proof that he could live totally independent was to live with nature, dependent on the fruits of the land. This was his answer and his proof of independence. Many West Indians, consequently, looked at him as an antisocial who was living in the bush.

The hard core Rastafarian movement told us something about the people of the Caribbean. Years before our arrival in the West Indies the Rastafarian movement had a very small beginning in Jamaica. Today, there are Rastas scattered throughout the Eastern Caribbean. However, they are not prominent in the countries of Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The economic opportunities of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico did not produce the fertile soil for the Rasta philosophy of life. Castro prohibited their behavior in Cuba. Most Haitians were living in the bush already. The Eastern Caribbean islands, however, nourish an atmosphere for the growth of the movement. The growth of the Rastas in the eastern islands, therefore, told us at the time that many West Indians were at least receptive to the ideas that were promoted by the movement.

The Rastas told us that the people of the Caribbean wanted to be truly free. They told us also that the area had a long way to go before it would truly have political and economical freedom. Many Rastas told us that they wanted to go it on their own; they wanted to call their own shots. All of these were noble desires. The Rastafarians, however, seemed to be approaching social reform from a very radical position. In fact, I doubt they will ever have much effect on the general direction of the Caribbean countries simply because of their approach. One cannot change things by remaining separate or isolated from the main stream of either political or economic development.

The Mother Countries

Do not think that the Rastafarian's desire to throw off his colonial heritage was the general belief of the typical West Indian. When African rule eventually came to old Rhodesia in Africa, the government tore down the statues of Cecil Rhodes, after whom the country was named and after whom the country was economically built. After three decades of rule by Robert Mugabe, the country was taken back a century in economical growth. By their rejection of a very significant part of their history, Zimbabwe became a backward country. This did not happen in the West Indies. The West Indian retained respect for his colonial years when he gained his independence. When we lived there, they still honored the queen of England as if they were still under the rule of England.

The West Indian would never forget his history. He has a deep respect and loyalty toward his original Mother Country. West Indians have this respect and loyalty even toward the United States, which would not be classified as a Mother Country since the United States was not a colonial power over any of the West Indian islands. From the Virgins to Barbados, there is great loyalty of the West Indian toward England, France and the United States, especially among the older West Indian populace. There is a loyalty toward the United States because of what it represents—freedom.

Few Americans realized the cultural ties that were strengthened with the United States during the Grenada crisis a mid 1980's. The West Indian believed that if worse came to worse, Uncle Sam would bail him out. This not only applied to their beliefs concerning economic feelings but also with political happenings. Grenada was in a tough situation at the end of the Bishop reign. The country was down and I know the common person out in the bush there felt trapped and helpless. He could do nothing against the guns of the Cubans and the anarchists who were taking over the country at that time. But in came Captain America and saved the day. The rest of the world will always call this an "invasion." But I would like for you to ask that terrified Grenadian farmer or shop owner what he called it. After all, he was the one being delivered from a chaotic rule. The American army came to deliver a

government from that which they could not deliver themselves.

What this deliverance did for the West Indian was to give him reassurance. He always knew he had a big brother up north that would help out when things went wrong. That big brother delivered when one of their fellow countries was down. Such only strengthened the belief that they feel a part of the Americas and want to be connected with the West. However, they want to be taken care of in a sense that self-determination is not endangered.

Taking The Best

In order to examine a culture one should be careful not to over-emphasize the negative side of the culture. Every culture has its negative side. We must examine that side in order to better understand the culture. The more we understand the West Indian, the more we can appreciate him. We discover how far he has come. And when we discover how far he has come, we appreciate the people more for who they are. The true cultural anthropologist is not in the culture-comparing business. He takes every culture at face value. That is what the West Indian asks of us.

The West Indian also asks us to respect his beautiful islands and culture. He doesn't want to be looked down upon. He has had enough of that over the past centuries. He wants American friendship, not control. Americans should not be turned off by those few who are zealously vocal with anti-American jabber. I have found throughout the years, and by living in cultures throughout the world, that those who are most vocal against America are often those who have a low cultural self-esteem, and subsequently, feel inferior to the American culture. The West Indian, therefore, may reveal his cultural inferiority complex by making anti-American statements, but such statements must only be viewed as statements made by those who consider themselves to be a part of the family of the Americas.

The West Indies is a place of contentment and peace. It is one of those places in the world where you can decelerate and appreciate life. You will come away thinking to yourself, "Didn't God mean it to be this way?" Because the West Indies is the way it is, stressful Western

residents by the thousands seek the atmosphere of the culture in order to readjust to the reality of a slower pace of life. The West Indian tourist industry is based on the fact that the Caribbean offers something to the hyperactive Westerner that he cannot find in his own world.

Chapter 12

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN

Now let's get back into N8856P and climb up to 7,500 feet. That is where living really takes place according to pilots who cruise the skies over the waters of the Indies. If God wanted us to drive around in cars, He would have put wheels on us. At least that is what pilots believe.

The weather in the Caribbean is almost always beautiful. (I know I have said that before, but you won't believe me until you see it.) However, during the rainy season of tropical storms and hurricanes, it can rain like you have never seen it rain before. As the trade winds blow from east to west, the moisture of the warm Atlantic Ocean is forced up by the mountains of the islands in the Eastern Caribbean. The moisture of the clouds is cooled by the cooler temperature at the higher altitudes. It condenses. It then descends to the earth in torrential rains.

The mountainous islands usually receive more than their share of heavy rainfall. The convection currents also form little cotton puffs of clouds over each island. The land mass heats up during the day, but the water temperature remains the same. What happens is that the air over the island areas rises and forms little puffs of clouds over each island. It is a beautiful sight to see. There are these little cream puff clouds sitting on top of each island as you fly down the chain.

Beautiful Sights

I have always believed that the best way to see things is from high altitudes. Ask a mountain climber about that. In the first six months of our travels up and down the Lesser Antilles line of islands, we had yet to see the Soufriere volcano on St. Vincent. Clouds always loomed

there to block our vision. But one good day we were puttering down the west side of St. Vincent when we saw a break in the clouds over the volcano. We decided to fly through the hole in the clouds to the crest of this 3,864 foot wonder of nature.

Soufriere had erupted two years earlier with all its fury, covering the north end of the island of St. Vincent with a gray blanket of ash. As we flew through the clouds, I could not help but feel a little tense. I suppose smoldering volcanoes should do that to us. But as we broke through the clouds on this particular day, we could see this mammoth beauty of nature in a panoramic view before us. There it was, one big and black dome. It was like the top of a gigantic dome stadium. It looked like the black, bald head of Satan crouched down in a crater of earth

Caribbean Flying

Though flying in the West Indies always had its thrills, it also had its inconveniences. Maintenance was always a problem. My static system plugged up one time and that put a stop to the function of three instruments in the plane. When this happens, one just flies by the seat of his pants. These unexpected things will always happen when you are off somewhere between nowhere and anywhere.

Getting the required annual inspection on an airplane in the Caribbean isn't all that easy. I had to go to Puerto Rico to get a clean bill of health on our airplane the first year we were in Antigua. Puerto Rico and Trinidad were the only two places that had an American registered A&P mechanic with a U.S. A&I Certification. But I didn't mind flying over to Puerto Rico all that much in those early days. It was good to get a taste of the western world. At the time, I never dreamed that one day I would actually be living in and operating from Puerto Rico. I visited the island in 1978 and Martha said that I had said at that time—I don't remember—"I would never live in Puerto Rico." But never say never.

Call The Exterminator

Sometimes things get down right exciting in Caribbean flying. For

instance, we were 7,500 feet over Dominica one time in beautiful tranquility. Leslie was seated beside me and Jim was in the right back seat reading his Bible. We were flying along in all peace of mind when all the sudden Leslie started wiggling and wailing as if he had gone into convulsions. I quickly looked over and there was this centipede crawling up his left arm. It was time for excitement, since centipedes have a vicious bite. I tried to hold the plane level and straight while Leslie flopped around on the connecting end of his left arm. He and Jim both started the attack after the terrified critter fell off Leslie's arm and onto the floor. Feet were stomping and hands were flying everywhere. Dust rose from the floor as three sets of human legs stampeded after one lonely intruder. I thought we would stomp the bottom out of that airplane. Things really got tense for a moment.

Somehow, the centipede escaped our rampage and fled for refuge under a seat. (He probably wondered what kind of maniacs these were with whom he had hitched a ride.) We sat looking out of every eye for an hour until we finally reached our destination of Arnes Vale Airport in St. Vincent. Believe me, there was no peace of mind until we got out of that plane.

After we had landed, I sprayed the inside of the airplane with insecticide until it looked like a dense fog had set in. I was determined not to get back in there with that centipede. The next morning I opened the doors of the airplane to find Mr. Centipede's carcass curled up on the floor, and fortunately, deceased. Beside him was the lifeless body of what must be been his brother. To this day I cannot figure out how those two creatures got inside that airplane. Who knows how long they had been stowaways.

Bugs are always a hazard in the Caribbean. There was the time I decided to work on my autopilot. Ever hear of Cooties? Well, there was a dead cootie in my autopilot mechanism. No telling how long that thing had been in their trying to fly that airplane.

I landed in Grenada one time and had problems with bees. These little creatures like to build their homes in the end of airplane pitot tubes, the outside mechanism of an airplane that must be kept clean in order to have an airspeed indicator. They undoubtedly wait around

airports in the southern part of the Caribbean hoping for airplanes to land. When some unfortunate plane comes in, these little troublemakers go through customs, sneak past immigrations, and go up to the airplane's pitot tube to build a home. It is there that they take up residence by building their mansions in the hole that is in the end of the pitot tube. Woe unto the pilot who does not check the pitot tube in his preflight check, for verily he will take off and ascend without an airspeed indicator. Believe me, I learned the hard way.

Cheap Gas

Sometimes gas is cheap, that is, to the thieves. For some time we had this problem with the auto races in Antigua. Let me explain this. Whenever there was a car race on the island of Antigua there would be a rash of gas stealing at the airport. These hot-rodders would use high octane aviation fuel to power their cars. Of course, such high octane fuel was not good for the cars, neither did it help them run better. Nevertheless, at the airport we had to lock our tanks or park the planes where they could be seen. But regardless of all our precautions, we still lost that precious and expensive aviation fuel.

Time For A Twin

Listen, I'll be honest here. I have a lot of faith in airplane engines. But when there's just one engine per plane, deep down inside there is that nagging feeling that that one engine might lay down and die when you are out there a hundred miles over water. They always said that the propeller operated as a great fan for the pilot. If you don't believe this, just watch a pilot's hand sweat when it stops turning. Well, mine hadn't stopped fanning yet, but there was always that possibility that it might. I loved over-water flying, but wanted to love it more with a twin-engined aircraft.

When we were ten months into the extension work, I formally announced that N8856P was for sale. My heart's desire was for a twin. Martha said get one at any cost. I guess her faith in aircraft engines was weaker than mine. The accident rate for twins is the same as single-engined airplanes. But at least for psychological reasons we decided to

go the twin route. A twin would bring a little more peace of mind to our passengers.

I began the search far and wide for a twin in the West Indies. I sought to sell N8856P in the West Indies. But why is it that everybody wants to buy your airplane when it isn't for sale? And why is it that no one wants to sell a twin when you want one? Finding a twin in the Caribbean proved to be impossible. I knew I had to return to the States to sell N8856P and to find a twin. But the time to go was another problem. At that time in the work of the Institute, I was conducting about two extension seminars a week throughout the islands. Something had to be done, however, so we decided to return to the States for a short visit in order to search for a twin that we knew God had there waiting for us.

Out Of Gas?

Airplanes often come with several fuel tanks, the fuel of which is accessed by turning a valve to the desired tank. It is not a good practice to intentionally run a fuel tank dry in an airplane before switching to another tank. But sometimes one inadvertently does so when trying to use all fuel in a particular tank. Nevertheless, I should warn my passengers when I intentionally run a fuel tank as low as possible before changing to another.

There we were, cruising along over the clear blue Caribbean waters with not a particle of land in sight. Jim Allen and I were returning from a trip to Dominica. We were about thirty miles south of Antigua. We were just talking away concerning our recently conducted seminar. All of the sudden the engine coughs, spits and sputters. Jim goes dead silent. His heart sputters a few strokes and coughs before you switch tanks and explain to him what's going on. He doesn't easily forgive me. He said his whole life passed before him, thinking this was the end.

The Comanche we had operated on four tanks. It ran on two of the tanks at any time. I sputtered the engine at least three times while switching tanks out there over the water. I always thought it was interesting to note the different reactions of different people on this

matter. My wife almost faints. Others get stiff. Some start an intensive stare, an indication that their whole life is passing before them. Then there are those who look, thinking, “Not now, Lord. I’m not ready.” When you are over water in a single-engined aircraft I guess some passengers just get right excited about the powerplant sputtering when it runs out of gas. Even pilots get a little excited, especially when it comes without warning. Nevertheless, I shouldn’t do that with passengers. But when you are deep in conversation, you sometimes forget.

Accidents

It appears, however, that singles have had better luck around the Caribbean than twins. The engines of airplanes are highly reliable. They just don’t quit, except over the forest of southern Arkansas (More later). There was this one pilot in Montserrat who tried to take off half way down the 2,500 foot runway with a Piper Aztec. He didn’t make it. As I mentioned before, there were those two who took off from Coolidge Airport in Antigua in a Piper Aztec and didn’t quite make it either. Liat Airlines once lost a twin Islander between St. Maarten and the Virgins. It was never found. Having a twin, therefore, is no guarantee for safety.

On the south side of the island of Antigua there was this pilot from Guadeloupe who was making his way home in a Cherokee Six. (This is a single-engined aircraft.) When his engine went to sleep, he planned to land on the beach. But the tourists were there having a front seat view of this incident. So the pilot gave them a stunt attraction by landing on the water. He splashed his machine in, jumped out, doing a backstroke to the shore. Of course, that beautiful Cherokee Six bubbled to the bottom of the Caribbean.

So about this time I was getting real serious about buying a twin-engined airplane. Martha, the children and I, therefore, packed up in N8856P and headed for the States. This was the summer of 1982.

The Search Begins

When we arrived in the States we searched everywhere for the

right airplane that would satisfy the needs of the type of flying we were doing for the Institute. I made so many telephone calls I think I developed a callous on my index finger and a flat ear shaped in the form of a telephone receiver. It was a time when everyone wanted to sell, but no one wanted to buy or trade for our plane. Deep down inside I knew that God would somehow make it all possible. I struggled on my own, however, without allowing Him to work in my life. So He worked my case.

We were on a deadline to get this business taken care of and get back to the West Indies. I remember getting down to three or four hours of sleep a night. I was desperate and anxious. To say the least, I feel that God tried and tested me more during those days than at any other time in my life. I knew that He knew that I was an impatient person. And I am sure He was working to get that impatience out of me. But through much prayer, He delivered. We finally made a trade for a 1964 Beech Travel Air.

Another “Crash” Course

Remember the crash course I took for the instrument rating—pilots have some apprehension about using the word “crash”—it was now time to get a twin-engined rating? I was off to a small airport northwest of Dallas, Texas to do another course, this time to receive this rating. When I bought the Travel Air in Arkansas, the owner pointed to all the controls, took me around the airport, and sent me off. I learned to fly the Travel Air on the flight back to West Monroe where I parked the plane. Farmers are like that. We are very machine oriented. Give us a piece of equipment and we will figure out how it works. Admittedly, figuring out how to fly a twin-engined airplane alone while in flight is a little more challenging, but you are driven to learn quickly.

When Martha and I were first married I was twenty years old and working for a construction company in Hutchinson, Kansas. I was hauling dirt back and forth in road construction. My truck was loaded by an articulating diesel highloader. Once loaded, I was off. When I once returned for a load, the highloader operator was no where to be found. So

I though, I can operate this piece of heavy equipment. So I jumped in the seat and started figuring. After about fifteen minutes of self-education in the operation of heavy equipment I was loading my truck. Everything went well until it was time to shut off the highloader. Since it was a diesel, I could not figure out how to turn it off. A carryall operator who was watching all this eventually came over and said, “Just pull back on the accelerator pedal and the engine dies on its own.” Who would have ever figured that out?

My point for mentioning this event is for the sake of my Third World farmer brethren. In America we grew up as farmers who learned to operate equipment, not garden equipment. Machines performed the task, and thus American farmer boys grew up machine oriented with the developed skill to figure things out. That is why I could jump in an airplane and figure it out.

So I was off to the small Dallas airport in order to be legal with twin-engined aircraft. My goal was to get the twin rating in one day.

I arrived at the airport about 7:00^{AM}. My instructor then proceeded to take me through all the theory of twin-engined flight and operation of the Piper Apache airplane in which I was to receive my rating. After some pointers on the aircraft, and theory on twin-engine operation, I spend six hours in the Apache that day. I remember that was 6:00^{PM} when I took my flight check with the local aviation official. I passed the flight test that evening and was on my way home as a twin-engined rated pilot.

The Flight I Will Never Forget

While I was in the States searching for a twin, I had one very exciting flight, the flight of my life that almost took my life.

It was 6:30^{PM} and a very beautiful fall night. There was not a cloud in the sky. Darkness had crept over the heavenly canopy and I was waiting for a good friend, Jim Young, to fly up from Monroe, Louisiana to pick me up at Pine Bluff, Arkansas. I had flown our newly purchased Beech Travel Air (N5670K) there to have the instruments worked on by brother Tommy Tomlison of Tomlison Avionics. Jim

was coming up from Monroe to take me back to West Monroe, from where my family and I planned to depart for Antigua in about a week.

The sun had already slid over the horizon when Jim arrived in his Cessna Cardinal. After a little chat, the two of us were off and into the crisp evening air on our way back to West Monroe.

Both Jim and I were instrument rated pilots. But there is always that lingering spook in the back of your mind about mechanical failures. Of course, those things always happen to the other guy. This night, however, we were the other guys.

We were at 4,500 feet and twenty minutes out of Pine Bluff over the forest of southern Arkansas when it all began. Both of us heard a muffled crunch that came from the engine compartment. Jim, who was piloting the plane, didn't say anything. Neither did I. But we both knew that something definitely had unscrewed somewhere in the plane. The search for trouble lasted about fifteen seconds. As soon as our searching eyes saw the oil pressure gage we knew we had problems. It was on zero. Jim was immediately on the radio to Monroe. "Mayday! Mayday! We've lost oil pressure and will try to make it to Crossett Airport." Crossett was about ten miles away.

I started looking for places to land amongst the forest of trees and darkness below. (I again yearned for a bedsheet.) The engine ran for about five or so minutes and finally came to a screeching halt. We both silently concluded that we were now in definite trouble. Our number was up. But I can honestly say that I was not afraid. Jim can speak for himself. I just knew that we would somehow come out of this in good shape. God had a lot of work for me to do. Therefore, we calmly went through those emergency procedures we were trained to do as pilots.

I had one before been challenged by death in my life. I remember one time as a teenager in Preston, Kansas where I went to high school. My brother James and I were going through high school in this small town of central America. One day after school, I was racing down one of the back streets of town in my father's 1956 Chevy pickup. My brother happened to be rushing down another street with a friend in this friend's car, though my brother was not driving. The only problem was that these two streets

were joined at an intersection. The other car slammed into my right side at the intersection of the streets. Back then we didn't know what a seatbelt was. The pickup I was in was thrown around and into the air, striking eight feet up on a telephone pole. I was thrown against the door on the passenger's side of the pickup. I gashed about a six inch slit in my head. I fell out of the pickup in a daze. Neither my brother nor the friend he was with were hurt. They hauled me off to the doctor, sewed me up, and I was back in school the next day. The stitches and gash were the talk of the school and town.

Now Jim and I were over the forest of southern Arkansas in an airplane with a dead engine. This was real trouble. We were sailing around up there wondering where we would land. In the darkness below I had seen a car driving our right. Jim made a 180 degree turn and we descended against our will. We found the road and were flying straight down it, but we were a little to the right. We were at about two hundred feet, now. The road, however, just disappeared. We were too low to make a 180 degree turn back to the road to try to find it again. So, it was straight ahead into the trees. That last thing I saw was the giant pine trees rushing up into the landing light. It was crash, bang, boom after that.

We made it, though, alive! I knocked out a tooth. Jim, unfortunately, broke both legs, evidently when we hit a three-foot-high stump on his side of the plane when we came crashing down out of the top of the trees. He did a great job, however, of placing that Cardinal right between the big trees. It wasn't too good for the wings of the airplane, but if we would have hit one of those giants headon, it would have been the end of us.

I immediately jumped out of the mangled airplane and dragged Jim from what used to be a great looking Cessna Cardinal. Gas was dripping somewhere and I knew we needed to get away from that plane as quick as possible, for surely, I thought, it was going up in flames. I made sure the Emergency Locator Beacon was on and we left the plane for dead.

Now back in those days Jim wore a hairpiece (toupee). In all of

this excitement, he was worried about that toupee which had slipped off his head in the crash. After I had dragged him from the smashed airplane with his legs all busted up, he was concerned about that toupee. When I laid him down about thirty feet from the wreckage, he said, “Roger, Roger, could you go back and get my toupee.” So here I went, back to scrounge around in the dark for a patch of hair amidst the mangled carcass of what used to be called an airplane, which airplane I was sure was going to explode into a burning inferno at any moment. Jim’s explanation for this incident later was, “Well, I didn’t want the rescuers looking around out there day after day, wonder what happened to that **third** man.”

Though we were somewhere in a forest, I heard a car passing by at a distance. It was dark, but I could see the stars above. One of the dangers of being lost in a forest, is staying lost. But this is where my farm boy nature kicked in. I established my bearings with the stars, and started walking toward the direction in which I had heard the car. My only fear was to be able to find Jim in the forest when I walked back.

After only a short time, I stumbled out of the dark forest onto a road and flagged down a passing car. I knew that the driver would be very surprised to see a bloodied man standing in the middle of a road in the night in the forest of southern Louisiana. So I stood right in the middle of the road. He had to stop or run over me, one or the other.

Sometimes God does things for which you have no conclusion but to say that He did it. There I was in the middle of a forest road in southern Louisiana. Here were two brothers who had just escaped death in the crash of an airplane in the forest, a very unlikely happening. You would think that if there is a God, and that He would take care of His people. The conclusion to this matter is that there is a God, and at this time He went to work for His people. He first spared our lives, and then He sent help. The first car that came by was a brother and sister of the Lord’s church in Crossett, Arkansas. We were subsequently in the emergency room of a hospital in West Monroe within 45 minutes after the crash. God takes care of His own in times of distress.

In the next few days, Jim and I went through the normal patching up of two men who had crashed an airplane in the middle of the night

in a forest. Jim had a few steel pins put in his legs. I got a new tooth. But we were both thankful to be around to talk about this event. God had delivered both of us from the face of death. Evidently, He had better plans for us in the future.

What had happened to the engine was the disintegration of the oil pump gears. It was times like those that made one thankful that he has a meaningful relationship God.

I have come to believe that God has truly worked in a protective way to preserve me so that I can even write this book. So many things have happened in my life that could have ended in tragedy. But they did not. I have no other explanation than the fact that God works in our lives to protect us until we have finished our destiny.

I remember one very telling incident that took place one Sunday evening northwest of Lubbock, Texas. Martha and I had just finished visiting a church in Littlefield, Texas. We lingered with the brethren for some time, and thus it was at sunset when we were making our way back to Lubbock. But on the way, the timing chain of the engine of the car broke, and that was the end of that engine. So we rolled to a stop on a four-lane, divided highway. I raised the hood (bonnet) of the car, and concluded that this vehicle was finished. Now what to do? On the other side to the four-lane highway, a van was heading in the opposite direction, headed for Littlefield. The van went down to the first available place to make a U-turn and came back to where we were. He pulled up beside us and asked, “Are you having problems?” I briefly explained the situation, and he said jump in and I will take you on to Lubbock. So in Martha and I went with his pet cat, and on to Lubbock. We had not been broken down but a few minutes and this “angel” of help came by and took us on to Lubbock.

The individual in the van had just come from New Orleans doing “religious work” and was headed across the United States to the state of Washington to do more “religious work.” I must confess that there is no other explanation for this than that God knew we would be stuck on that highway between Littlefield and Lubbock, and thus sent a messenger on his way for us before that engine decided to produce an opportunity for us to realize that God is always close by. I do not mean

that this book be a catalog of how strongly God has worked in our lives throughout the years, but I could make a long list of events as this that would be a witness to the fact that if you give yourself to do His work for His glory, He will be with you.

For God to work in our lives, however, I have learned one great lesson. That lesson is that you must do His work by leaping out into the deep water. If one is simply living his or her own life and calling on God to occasionally break in for a visit, then he or she will never perceive His work. You must leap out into the deep and take risks for Jesus. You must assume that God will take care of you. If you do not, then how can we ever witness the marvelous protective care of God? How can we ever provide an opportunity for God to care for us if we are always taking care of ourselves?

Tested And Tried

A week after the accident outside Crossett, Arkansas, I was back in our Beech Travel Air and ready to head back to Antigua. I wanted to get out of the States before I got killed.

We returned to Antigua from the States ready to go to work again with the distance training of the Institute. When we returned, however, things really started happening to strengthen our patience and faith. I guess our Father knew we needed to grow in these virtues. Challenges of this life are only opportunities to grow into a spirit that is suitable for eternal dwelling.

In those first few weeks after we returned, it seemed as if a mechanical gremlin went to work in our lives. Martha had to wash by hand again, because the washing machine went on the blink. The refrigerator also decided to have its turn of problems. The problem with all mechanical things is that they are mechanical. And mechanical things are destined to break. It was times like these that I admired Martha for her strength and ability to do what had to be done. Not every wife in these modern times would contend with the many inconveniences that we went through while living in Antigua. It was a truly Third World existence, but one that educated us in understanding how our brethren in Third World economies had to live.

We were back in Antigua only a few days when the car also started giving up its faithful nature. The water pump went out. We had to thus park the car because the parts for the water pump had to be flown from Germany where it had been manufactured. The car was down for about two weeks. It was our only means of getting our children to school, therefore, this meant that they did not go to school. You guessed it, they could not have been happier. Our last resort for transportation was the motorcycle. So for about two weeks we motorcycled around the island doing only the essential things for survival.

I suppose we needed a little more patience. About three weeks after we had returned from furlough, Martha and I had to use the motorcycle to go to All Saints Sunday morning for the meeting of the saints. The children had to stay home, since it was not possible to get six people on one motorcycle.

We left the house with me driving and the teaching supplies on Martha's back. We headed down the quarter mile of dirt road that led away from our house. We turned on to a narrow half-paved road and started down a hill and around a curve. When we came around the curve there was a car coming up the hill right in the middle of the road. We swerved to miss the car, but instead, hit the bushes on the side of the road. Something caught the front wheel of the motorcycle and down we went. Splat, all over the pavement. I hit first and Martha landed right on top of me. That was good for her, but not so good for me.

After using my body for a surfboard on the tarmac, we were both skinned up pretty bad, but especially me. My face hit the pavement on first impact. I won't go into what I looked like. She skinned her feet, but having landed square on top of me she was spared total contact with the pavement. With all the scrapes and bruises, for a week we looked like something out of a Frankenstein movie.

And so we remained isolated in the country where we were living. We had no telephone to tell people what had happened. After several days, others on our team came looking for us, wondering what was going on. By then, we looked a little more presentable. Scabs had formed, and thus we brought less fright to those who first saw us.

Growing In Faith

After being back from furlough for four weeks, I felt like I was ready to go on furlough again. But I can understand better what Peter is trying to tell Christians in 1 Peter 1:6,7

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we praise God in times of trial. Trials of this world keep us dissatisfied with the world. And after all, we are to be longing for the place where we will no more have tears and sorrows, or planes that go crash in the middle of the forest. It would be a wretched world indeed if we had no hope of heaven. I am truly sorry for those whose hope lies only in this world and terminates with death. But thanks be to God for the hope that is an anchor to our souls.

Chapter 13

RESTARTING OUR ENGINES

While we were in the States in 1981 I had resolved to make some changes in the system of the distance training program of the Institute. I wanted to reach out to some new areas and make a greater dent in Satan's kingdom throughout the West Indies. A desire to always improve on a work has always been one of my approaches to doing things. As one learns and gains information concerning a specific task, he or she must be willing to change. Good leaders have no fear of change. If you cannot change, you get stuck in a rut.

Martha always said that I was not content with what was going on. Admittedly, she was right in some areas. I always wanted to change something in order to try to make it better. It was something I inherited from my father. But this sometimes got me into trouble. I remember when we were first married. Martha had secretly worked on a small

desk for me as a present. It was a two-week effort for her to get it repainted and ready for the big surprise. When she gave it to me, I was excited but made the fatal blunder of saying, “This is great, I could probably change this” Well, what can I say. That statement haunted me for many years.

Nevertheless, one change I wanted to make in the distance training program was to spend more personal time with the West Indian church leaders. I did not think I could make disciples unless I was with the disciples. What they had lacked most in their lives in maturing as church leaders was someone to discuss new ideas or events that were going on outside their island location. We had discussions in our seminars, but we were not able to deal so much with personal problems in the lives of the leaders. Most of the preachers had been working alone since they began preaching. And as every preacher knows, there comes a time when he wants to talk preacher talk with other preachers. The seminars did offer an opportunity for the men to get together to do just this.

The seminar environment was a great opportunity for all of us to get together and talk about the work. I remember having some very long discussions concerning problems and dreams of the men as they struggled to build existing churches and start new churches. One of the frustrating things the teacher always has in extension work is that he cannot spend the amount of time with the student that is needed to make a formidable impact on the student’s life. This time is sacrificed in order for the teacher to be able to touch a greater number of people. Because of the system, we were touching the lives of a great number of people. However, our contact with each individual was limited.

Workshops

I made a commitment in 1982 to conduct workshops at least once a month in order to edify local churches as a whole. This type of workshop would involve a Friday through Sunday arrangement with specific churches. This was going to take me away from the local work in Antigua, but I felt that the work in Antigua had more than enough contact with teachers to keep it edified and growing. There were many other churches throughout the Caribbean which needed attention and

prayers. The workshops had always been a shot in the arm for local churches and I wanted to give more shots.

More Print Power

We must never underestimate the power of the printed page in world evangelism and church edification. In the West Indies, one of the greatest advantages for having the airplane was the delivery of great amounts of literature throughout the Caribbean churches.

The need for Bible-based literature in the Caribbean at the time was awesome. This same situation prevailed in Brazil, Africa and every mission location to which I have traveled throughout the world. Anywhere the church is poor financially there seems to always be a dearth of literature. And the churches with which I worked in the West Indies were poor.

While in the States on furlough I asked churches everywhere to send us any literature they had. I would take anything, and then sort it out upon arrival in Antigua. I did not care what they sent. We would and did use almost everything that landed at our P.O. Box in All Saints. I placed some pleas in brotherhood papers and we received everything from 1940 *Gospel Advocate Quarterly* to copies of poems. The West Indian Christians thoroughly enjoyed it all.

We kept receiving books from all over the United States. We stacked them in Matthew's room until I could get them hauled out to the churches in the airplane. However, at times there were the boxes of books and materials stacked everywhere throughout the house. This was not uncommon in our lives. We always lived in a book storeroom.

On every trip out, we hauled thousands of pieces of literature. We could have used tons more, but we could not convince enough people that the need was so great. One thing I have never been able to understand about American churches is the fact that though they depend so heavily on literature themselves they find it difficult to distribute great amounts of literature for world evangelism. By the time we were set up in Africa, however, we solved the literature problem by building and equipping a first class print shop.

I once heard the story of a missionary who traveled through a train

depot somewhere in Europe. Unfortunately, or fortunately, he left his Bible in the terminal building while he was getting his baggage together to catch the next train. One year later, he received the Bible in the mail. (He had his address in the Bible.) A small note had been carefully tucked inside the pages of the Bible which read, "Sorry we kept your Bible so long. It took us longer to copy it than we first thought." Out of Cape Town, South Africa we were seeking through the AfriBible Project to print and distribution Bibles to people who thirst for the word of God. One of the easiest and most economical means by which we can evangelize the world is to literally get the Bible into the hands of those who would make copies of it just to have a copy.

Writing Again

I those days I had also committed myself to write several series of lessons for the churches in the West Indies. These series of lessons later developed into the *Biblical Research Library* when I combined them with material that I had developed in Brazil.

As I mentioned before, one of my key projects was to write a one-volume commentary on the New Testament. One of the problems in working with Third World countries is that the member of the churches are usually poor. Therefore, they cannot afford to buy the books at prices Christians pay in economically developed countries. For several years I wanted to produce a one-volume commentary that could be economically distributed throughout the world. This writing project, plus several others, consumed a great deal of my time in 1982 and 1983. I kept telling myself what all writers of religious materials must keep telling themselves. The materials they produce will influence a thousand fold more individuals than what one can do in his personal contact with people. When the scribe is dead, the inscribed lives on. The writing of this commentary began what would later be published as the *International New Testament Study Commentary*. Over 15,000 copies were printed and sent throughout the world. From this commentary, additions were made and it was published in a two volume set for the *Biblical Research Library*, and then, the *Dickson Teacher's New Testament*. As of 2008, 23,000 copies had been published.

It was in the West Indies when I began the production of the programmed courses which are used in the Institute today as the *Biblical Research Library Curriculum*. We first produced the materials on a hand operated spirit duplicator. We graduated to a mimeograph machine, and then on to a copy machine. Each course went through several revisions. Reproduction and reprinting of the courses has taken them through a long line of development. They are now distributed as the curriculum for many independent institutes throughout the world. While I was in the West Indies, I wrote over **one thousand pages** of programmed material and other related literature that are used by Bible institutes throughout the world today. I can truly say, therefore, that the writing time was not wasted time. God has certainly blessed the circulation of the material that I have written.

The Most Published Book

The most widely published and distributed book I have written is what is now referred to as the *Encyclopedic Study Guide*. This small book was first published in 1972 when I was preaching in Gulfport, Mississippi. It was published under the title, *Selected Scriptures on Bible Subjects*. The book was later published under the title, *The Sword*, by the Western Christian Foundation, and then by another publishing house somewhere in Alabama. A Portuguese edition was published in Brazil. It was added as supplement material to the *International New Testament Study Commentary*, and then the *Biblical Research Library*. It was then published as the study material in the *Study New Testament* of the AfriBible Project. The book was also a part of the *Gospel CD*, as well as the *Biblical Research Library CD*. Both of these CDs have been distributed worldwide in the thousands. I do not know exactly how many times this small book has been printed, copied or duplicated. My best guess is that as of 2008 well over 300,000 copies have been distributed throughout the world. As a part of the AfriBible Project (a project to print one million *Study New Testaments* for Africa), and the internationally distributed *Biblical Research Library CD*, its projected distribution will grow by thousands every year. Little did I know back in the early 70's when I first wrote the material that God would allow it

to become a source of study for hundreds of thousands of people throughout the years. God can certainly do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we can imagine.

I believe that God gave me the desire to write, though I have often questioned the talent. I have not buried this desire, but have sought to increase it as the years have gone by. I would never have imagined in my youth what God would do with the results of an aptitude test that I took in my youth that said my inclination was toward literary composition.

Book Publishing

My first effort at publishing and printing was with the *Selected Scriptures on Bible Subjects* in the States back in the early 70's. But as an author of religious materials, my primary focus throughout the years has been to publish material for mission efforts. For the Stateside audience, J.C. Choate of Choate Publications, and Alvin Jennings of Star Bible, have either published or circulated some of my material. But my primary focus has always been on those who have had little opportunity to acquire biblical materials from the First World book publishing economic. My heart has always been with Third World brethren who could never plug into the First World market to buy books. First World books are very expensive. Since the days of Brazil I dedicated myself to that world citizenship of brethren who are often left out of the economic bookpie. To make this commitment I resigned myself not to sell books for profit, but simply to raise funds for printing and distribution. Some books have been sold to cover distribution costs, but most are freely distributed as I have freely been given food and shelter by supporting Christians. I have always appreciated contributing brethren who have paid all the printing bills to make these books available throughout the world to brethren who could never have afforded to buy them.

Because I have been in the book business most of my life—I am an obsessive writer—potential writers in Third World economies often ask for advice on how they can publish their writings. The fact is that they generally cannot publish their books because of the expense of printing and distribution. However, in a limited way, there is a way

Third World writers can write and distribute their material. I suggest that the potential authors first type their book with a new typewriter ribbon. Make at least ten copies of the typed material. This is the primary expense. However, one can usually make some deal with a business in order to use their copy machine to make the copies. The next step is to distribute the copies to others, asking them to make any suggestions and corrections in the manuscript they would like. People are usually more than willing to make suggestions on one's writings. Give the ten copies of the manuscript to ten different people. Once they have completed the manuscript, give it to another ten people. Keep doing this until you have circulated the manuscript to many, many people. And so, one has not only published his book, but he has had many people read it. This is better than printing 500 copies and selling only one hundred, while storing the rest in your garage. At least the author has encouraged others to read the message of his material. This system of publishing works and it encourages writers to produce their material, as well as it encourages others to read what they have written.

Building In Antigua

At the end of 1981 two the churches in Antigua had decided that 1982 should be the year to get the church into some permanent meeting places. So an intense effort began to build or buy buildings. We had all let ourselves believe that stability of the church in a country depended on a permanent place of meeting for the church. We had also let ourselves believe that church growth depended upon church buildings. Well, neither do, but it was hard to convince ourselves of this when there was such a great urge to build.

The Villa church in St. Johns had been meeting in a school house for over a year and a half. They were ready to move into something more conducive to "church edification" and "stability."

The All Saints church had been meeting in a union hall for a little over a year. My family and I were meeting with this particular group of disciples. Admittedly, we were ready to move out of that union hall into some kind of environment that did not give you a shower every time it rained.

The Liberta church had the same problem as the church in Villa. They had been meeting in a school building for about a year. As it turned out, we united the church in Liberta and All Saints. We built a building between the two villages and merged the two groups in assembly.

We struggled with the idea of church buildings for some time. We went over the pros and cons of the building matter. There were some problems that constantly plagued us. (1) Good or bad, the Antiguan people had been raised for four hundred years with the concept of a church building as the center of religion. We were known as the “group in the union hall,” or “the ones meeting in the school.” The communities did not look at us as a permanent group in the community because we had not yet put down any roots. At the time, however, we were foreigners in a nation with a few new converts. We had also not properly taught these new converts that over the long term buildings have little to do with either spiritual or numerical growth. We were still creatures of the Western building-oriented system of assembly. (2) Because of their religious heritage, the members of the church in Antigua wanted permanent facilities in which to meet. Rented halls and houses were fine for a start, but it seemed that the Antiguans believed that they would not feel a sense of establishment until it they owned permanent facilities. (3) We also led ourselves to believe that meeting in the homes of members was not practical in Antigua. Most member’s homes would seat about five to eight people. In a village situation, it just was not practical to have five or eight people meeting in one house and a block down the road have another five to eight people, an so on. (Keep in mind that we knew nothing about house churches in those days. The dynamics and organizational structure of such meetings was totally foreign to us. We were all products of the American/European building-oriented religious culture.) (4) Our fourth problem was that we wanted a place where we could have offices, literature storage, fellowships, and classrooms. This was probably the most valid reason for a building. In building, therefore, we were not building a center for our religion, but a service center for the community. (5) Another problem centered around a government regulation. People could not become legally

married unless they were married in a building which was registered for such with the government. All these reasons sounded good at the time. Our inexperience led us down a road that was not necessarily the best road, but one that produced two church buildings. Those buildings still exist today.

When it comes to building a building in a Third World country, there is usually little chance that the national Christians can pay for the type of building we Americans would like to build. The only other source of money is to raise the money from the States. The Antiguan Christians could pay for the land and begin a building fund from which initial payments could be made. However, help from foreign churches had to be raised. This always opens up problems in one's efforts to establish an indigenous church. If others pay for the building, the local disciples often never take ownership. The building always belongs to those who paid for it.

One thing we did do in raising U.S. support was to demand that the national churches support a large percentage of the actual building funds. This gave them the sense of having sacrificed for the building. When we got down to the actual building, we were really surprised as to what the Antiguan could do in sacrificing for the buildings. All of the churches gave more than we thought they could. Our problem, I guess, was that we had faith in the figures, but the Antiguan had faith that God would provide. We walked by figures; they walked by faith.

I want to add here that it is always best to operate within the economic and cultural confines of the national economy and environment. I do believe that churches can be established within any given culture without the practice of "robbing other churches." In the initial stages of church planting, the missionary can get away with the practice of importing funds from outside to support himself and do some indirect work for the establishment of the infant church. However, it seems to be a general principle that the longer the outside funds come into a local work the more handicapped the established church becomes. When we moved to the West Indies we found that those churches that had been supported for long periods of time by outside funds, actually grew the least, if they grew at all.

Pressing On

Our return to Antigua after our first furlough, therefore, was an exciting time. We had a fresher look at the work. We had made some new plans. In those first months after our return, God graciously granted to us victory after victory in the work. The church buildings were completed. To this day, my faith continues to grow as I look back on how God worked mightily in our lives to accomplish so many victories for His glory.

The fresh look with which we saw the work after our first furlough reinforced our belief that evangelists should take breaks from their work. Church establishment is hard work. It involves getting into the lives of many who have previously been unchurched, and thus have a lot of baggage that must be sorted out. Too often, however, the zeal and self-initiative of the evangelist gets him in trouble in this area. It is not that he should stop his work. He could possibly slow down. But I am sure Paul had something like this in mind when he said that we are “fools for Christ.” Sometimes, evangelists may just be fools. Nevertheless, it is hard not to do with all your zeal that for which you have a passion. It is not work. It is a joy to be doing what you feel God wants you to do. I would not want to do anything else. And, right now, I do not really want to do it any slower. However, my body continues to slow me down. I remember my mother saying that her greatest frustration in growing old was that her body could not keep up with her mind. I now have that frustration.

Chapter 14 THE ENCHANTING WEST INDIES

As we progressed through our objectives, the work in Antigua and the West Indies became more fulfilling as we began to see the fruits of our labors. It was exciting to work with the West Indian leaders. It was fulfilling to challenge them to establish more churches and to train established churches to be more evangelistic. As with many objectives, however, one always wants to do better. We never seemed to have the time to accomplish everything we wanted to do. When we were hard

into the work, I still wanted to conduct more seminars. I could do this by being away from home only two or three days a week. My office was in our house, so this allowed me time with my family while I was doing preparation for the seminars.

The need for preacher and leadership training in a mission field context is always a challenge, for new converts are always coming into the fold. This is especially true in cultures that do not get all that excited about doing much. The need for training leaders in the Eastern Caribbean churches was to some extent a unique task, though the cultures of the West Caribbean are somewhat more aggressive. In the East Caribbean we always had trouble getting men to lead out. The lack of self-initiative was the negative side of a fatalistic world view in the islands. In the west (Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Haiti), it was a problem of trying to keep unqualified men out of the leadership. There is a vast difference in leadership between the cultures of the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles. The one is aggressive, and the other is a little laid back.

Keeping Busy

The more time I put into the extension work the less time I could put into the local work in Antigua. And as local demands increased in Antigua, the other evangelists had to devote more time to the Antiguan churches. This left me virtually alone in conducting seminars. But this also allowed me the time to be away from the local work of Antigua without having to return to fulfill obligations at home base. This arrangement worked out quite well. In fact, I would advise anyone who is going to do distance training through seminars to have few obligations at home base. Distance training work is a full-time job if one does the work throughout a large region of churches. One is either on the road or in preparation to be on the road. Because of this, teachers who work distance training schools will have to make the choice of working with one group of disciples locally, or regionally with many who need guidance.

By mid 1982 I was working with about fifty churches that were composed of about 3,000 disciples. It was hard for me to leave this

tremendous opportunity in order to concentrate on one or two churches in Antigua which had twenty-five to thirty members each. At the time, I believed that the needs of the many outweighed the needs of the few. As a result, I involved myself completely, or at least ninety-five percent of the time, with the fifty churches. I remember one month when I had nine leadership seminars both in and out of Antigua. The following month I had eleven. I later backed off from such a demanding schedule. It was too tiring and I was away from my family too much.

Much time was spent in prayer in those early days of the work. In the infancy of new churches there are always those problems which need special prayer. On one trip, for example, Jim Crisp and I went to Grenada to see how things were fairing. The church was still divided there over several problems. But almost all of the problems stemmed from one man who had a history of church problems. At that time, he was causing no little disturbance in the church of Grenada. It took much prayer before this problem was straightened out because it had developed over a period of about five years. But finally the one causing the trouble moved out and the church has had peace ever since. It was situations as this one, however, that kept us on our knees.

In Antigua at the All Saints church we had a men's retreat in January of 1982. We escaped to a small island—it was about a hundred yards long and fifty yards wide—off the coast of Antigua about a half mile. It was just us and the birds on the island. We slept in a cave. The Antiguan men cooked the food. We took several hours to make plans for 1982 for the church in All Saints. It was a night that we called upon God to work in our lives in the saving of souls in Antigua. It was a great retreat and one that brought us closer together and closer to God.

I mention this because leaders need to take time together. Prayer and fasting must be characteristic of their lives together as they lead the disciples. This is the Acts 13:1-3 principle of leadership behavior. The prophets (preachers) and teachers were in ministry and fasting. It was then that the Holy Spirit called on Paul and Barnabas as evangelists to the Gentiles. When leaders work together in ministry, that is combined with prayer and fasting, it is then that the Holy Spirit starts to work in their lives. Prayer and fasting identify leaders.

N5670K In Good Health

One of the major concerns I had in all my travels was keeping our Beech Travel Air in healthy condition. It was the only thing between us and the deep, blue ocean. Therefore, I always spent time at the airport making sure everything was plugged in and gummed together. I kept a list of things that needed to be done, and when I had time, I made sure it was done. Preventative maintenance was the focus of any pilot of the Caribbean.

As a former mechanic, and farmer boy, keeping the airplane in good shape was a hobby. I did not have any other hobbies that would keep my mind balanced, so I would go out to the airport and scrape off some corrosion, or tighten a screw here and there. This routine with the airplane helped me to get my mind off the stress of the work in order that I remain focused.

My children will want me to add something here about which they laugh and joke to this day. I often made going to the airport to work with the airplane a family event. It was a family event when the airplane needed washed and waxed. Since the plane was close to the salt of the sea, it needed washed and waxed about every two months. My children remember those days. “Get the wax out of the cracks and from around the rivets,” they say I said. “Wax on, rub off.” It was a real work session, but one that had to be done.

There was a charter service at the airport of Antigua that owned a 1960 Beech Travel Air. The owner and I always compared notes on machines. We kept one another informed on all Airworthiness Directives—these are official maintenance bulletins—that came out on the Travel Airs. We helped one another out on maintenance. He helped me more than I could help him. It was great having someone around who was in the same predicament in which we were operating, that is, operating from an isolated island.

Since our plane was running good, I felt good. I never liked being in a flying machine that I did not feel good about. Neither did I like to own one that I did not know from one end to the other. It seems that a week never went by that I did not feel grateful to God for the airplane. I knew we could not do the type of work we were doing without it. I

suppose that is why God blessed us with it. And we thank those brethren in America who had our dream of growing the church through leadership training.

I need to expand on this point. There are some tools in mission work that are necessary for the existence of mass evangelism. Some works need presses, computers or 4X4 vehicles. In the distance training evangelism we were doing in the West Indies, the airplane was as necessary as a printing press is to a printing ministry. However, it is always challenging to keep in high maintenance machines as an airplane in order to guarantee safe operation. It was always a struggle to keep the airplane safely operating in reference to the maintenance.

When we came to the West Indies to begin the program, I scrapped up every dollar we had to buy the Comanche. Life savings, cashed in life insurance, and all went into the airplane. When we traded for the Travel Air, we had almost saved enough to pay for the difference between it and the Comanche. An understanding church—the church in Stafford—with an elder who owned an airplane, helped make up the difference. We appreciated so much those brethren who did understand and who kept the Institute “in the air” throughout those years. At the time, Alton Howard, an elder of the White’s Ferry Road church, was fully funding the Institute, which funding included the operation of the airplane. He was a unique man and one who understood that missions as this needed the operation of an airplane. Alton was a great elder of the church because he could dream to do great things. Both in Brazil and in the West Indies, he accomplished a great deal through his support of mission efforts.

I have found that few brethren really understand the true nature of foreign mission work. Even fewer understand aviation missions. At the time we were operating in the West Indies, we were the only church of Christ mission effort in the world that used an airplane. I knew of a denominational group at that time who used twenty-eight planes in Zambia alone. But this type of equipment was new to the church. As a result, it was often difficult to convince some brethren who lived just this side of the tracks that we now live in another century.

Grenada And Communism

Let me insert another comment here about Grenada. I love this small island country and have had a deep concern for it ever since my first campaign there in 1972. I think it has a special place in my heart since this was the first country to which I traveled outside the United States. But I think it is also dear to my heart because of the great receptivity I experienced there in the early 70's. One could talk to everyone about the Bible. Though it has lost some of its receptivity, it still remains to be an island country that is greatly "Christian" in world view.

I believe also that the Grenada situation before its U.S. deliverance from Cuba is a good example that illustrates some of the socio/political characteristics of the Caribbean. It is amazing how the social atmosphere and political environment of the islands affects the minds of the spiritually weak. I suppose this is because the spiritually weak concentrate too much on the things of the world. But this is also true of the church in general. We as the church should not let the culture in which we live affect our thinking. As the children of God who are submissive to His word, we should be affecting the culture. We must continually remember that our citizenship is in heaven.

In the Caribbean islands I have seen both good and bad effects of socio/political influences on the church. In 1979 Hurricane David ripped through the country of Dominica with devastating winds of over 150^{MPH}. It was the worst hurricane to hit the island in history. After the hurricane, there was a spirit of reconstruction. Combined with the natural disaster, there was the election of a new government. It was a new government in which the people had a great deal of confidence. This environment of reconstruction and new government beginnings united the people and produced an optimism that was not characteristic of the people in the previous years. I remember brethren in Dominica telling me that people felt more religious or were more willing to discuss religion in the times immediately following the hurricane. The church had a greater sense of urgency. The spirit of growth was in the hearts of the members. Such was a good effect that was produced by a natural catastrophe in the environment.

However, negative environmental influences can also hurt the church. Previous to 1986, the small country of Grenada was in political peace. The country gained its independence in 1974. A tyrant was eventually elected as head of government. When the government was later overthrown by a coup, the coup leader began a propaganda campaign against the free world, especially the United States. Marxism was introduced. Russia and the Cubans were given the right hand of fellowship and the troubles began, not only in the country but also in the church.

The attitude of the people of Grenada definitely changed. I conducted month-long campaigns in Grenada in 1972 and 1973. The receptivity of the people was just great in those years. Though the church was in an infant state of development then, it was growing. I was told that it grew to about four hundred members during the years from 1974 to 1976. But the influence of political turmoil had its negative influence on the church. As the influence of Marxism increased, all churches were indirectly discouraged. Religion was not a part of Marxism. At the time, it was hard to believe that communistic Marxism was being propagated in a country like Grenada.

Bitter strife had entered the church in those days. The political atmosphere only added to the problems in the church. West Indians took their politics very seriously, much more seriously than Americans. Therefore, when the political environment was in trouble, there were times of trouble in the religious world. In Grenada, it seemed that the trouble in the church intensified soon after the political environment became tense. This may have been a coincidence or it may have been the influence of a Marxist government on the church. In a Marxist state, there is always the influence of government on religion. Nevertheless, the membership of the church fell from the known four hundred members to about one hundred and fifty.

For a brief period of time, this same political influence on religion also occurred in Dominica. The effect on the church was the same as what happened in Grenada during its dark years. This is the reason I say that political disturbances in the eastern countries of the Caribbean usually had a negative affect on religion in general.

But things changed in Grenada, as they also did in Dominica. Peace was also restored in the church. The government has since been changed in these countries. As a result, Christians have been able to influence the minds of people for God, rather than being hung up on politics. The leaders are in harmony once again and it is indeed a heart warming joy to see the fellowship they have among themselves once again.

I believe the example of Marxism in Grenada illustrates a very important truth that was stated by missionary Bob Brown. “Communism is like an approaching giant ocean wave to people stranded on a desert. There is great excitement about the approaching water, but when it hits, everyone starts to drown and ask to be saved from the oppression.”

West Indian Leaders

During the years of the Institute work in the West Indies it was a great opportunity to have extensive contact with the churches of the Lesser Antilles as a whole. This contact allowed me the opportunity to develop an overview of the churches and their needs in general. It also allowed me the privilege of being acquainted with some of the great leaders of the West Indian churches. What was so encouraging was to see these leaders rise head and shoulders above any problem in order to proclaim Jesus. Many continued faithfully preaching the gospel under some very trying circumstances.

One of the great qualities of the men was to labor year after year with the same group of disciples and in the same environment. Preachers in the States have the opportunity of “changing churches” every few years for one reason or another. But in Third World situations one does not have that privilege. Our hats go off to those men who have labored faithfully and consistently over the years in an area where times are hard and struggles in evangelism are often difficult.

I think it is almost ironic that we consider the great ones among us to be those who go as speakers from lectureship to meetings. But in my judgment the real heroes of the church are those brethren who labor year after year in the same location and with the same people. They have to come up with new lessons to teach every week. They have to deal with the problems of everyone in the group of disciples for which

they minister. They must relate with the same community. They cannot teach the same lessons twice and they cannot run from the problems of the church and community. They simply must labor day and night, year after year, in the same area and with the same people. They often receive no recognition for their labors. They receive no write-ups in the papers. They are simply humble servants whom God knows, and through whom the Holy Spirit works to the glory of God. These are the great ones among us. And these are the men that Martha and I have for years committed ourselves to serve first through the work of the International Bible Institute, and now through the more comprehensive outreach of Africa International Missions.

Preacher Attitudes

The attitude of the preacher always affects the attitude of the church. In fact, it is true that if a preacher stays with one group of people for at least five years, the group assumes the attitude of the preacher. This can happen in both a positive and negative manner. Attitudes in the West Indies and Africa are generally positive. One aspect of the Institute curriculum that I failed to include sufficiently at the beginning of the work were courses on leadership attitudes. There were some general attitudes that gave the West Indian and African churches special problems. One of the most common was the “tribal chief” concept of preaching or leading a church. This was the attitude that the church is run by the preacher in every aspect of work and decision-making. The sole leader makes all decisions for the church. He is the hub of activity, the one-man band.

It is not difficult to determine the roots of this chief-rule practice among West Indian churches. The concept came from African tribal roots. In years past, governing authority among almost all tribal groups of Africa was invested in the chief of any particular tribe. To my knowledge, the concept of democracy did not exist among tribal groups in Africa prior to the arrival of colonial powers. In the West Indies, the one-man rule system may have developed from the “pastoral system” of the denominational world from which many of our preachers were converted. One could be led to believe that the only source of this

problem comes from the denominational background of church leaders except for the fact that the same concept of leadership seems to prevail in government. Even though the governments of the Caribbean islands were patterned mostly after the parliamentary system of England and other mother countries, there was constantly a power struggle going on somewhere within the governments of the Caribbean countries.

It is also possible that this form of one-man rule came from the “king-queen” system which prevailed in the British and Spanish systems of government for centuries during the colonial control of the West Indies. Though England and Spain have long turned to a democratic form of government, the old order of government of the mother countries of the West Indies may still linger in these past subjects.

But again, the concept may have originated from the nature of the environment in which the West Indian church leaders had to function. At the beginning of the churches for which they labored, there were no leaders to make decisions. They were the only leaders. They were the pioneers. If any shots had to be called—and there were many—then they had to call them for the church. You cannot blame them for having to call so many shots and then becoming accustomed to it.

Whatever the origin, there was the definite principle among West Indians that one man should take the lead. This one man should be allowed to be the decision maker for the people. At the time we were there, only a few churches had broken away from this system. I believe this break away caused church growth in those churches that gave up the chief-rule system of decision making. The sharing of responsibility always encourages individuals to grow. And when individual Christians grow, churches grow.

Another attitude with which we began to work was the attitude that the church leader must continue to grow in knowledge of the Word of God. One preacher who had been in the Caribbean for twenty-five years stated, “We’ve got too many Caribbean preachers who went off to school and learned how to quote Acts 2:38, and then thought they were preachers. They received their diplomas and returned home never to study again.”

This was a definite problem when we arrived in the West Indies in

1980. West Indian preachers have a great ability of saying little in much speaking. Some African preachers are also accomplished in saying many words without saying anything. I believe they developed this because of a lack of being challenged to study the word of God. They could deal effectively with denominational doctrines, but that drive to dig into the Word of God for personal development and enrichment was not all that common. When the members saw no growth in the preacher or challenge by the preacher, they often became lethargic themselves. Therefore, what the Caribbean had were many churches that had zero growth because of the zero growth of their leaders. I believe that this one problem was the principle cause for non-growth among many Caribbean churches.

Another basic attitude that was causing problems was a sense of cultural inferiority. This was a common feeling among many West Indians. They looked down on themselves and were quick to respond to any who would look down on them also. It was a cultural situation where they were materially down and not necessarily proud of the fact. They wanted out of the Third World situation, but could not get out. They were stuck on a poor island, and thus could not help their circumstances. This was expressed by Premier Bird of Antigua at a Miami meeting of U.S. officials who were surveying the needs of the West Indies. He said, "People tell us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. What we are asking for in this meeting is that you help us to get some bootstraps."

West Indians generally have few possessions of this world. Of course, there are some advantages to this. However, it is hard to convince the "have nots" of the advantages of their plight. As a result of their material inferiority, many were often ashamed to allow a visiting American to come into their homes. They felt that the American might look down on the few things they had. Some also had the concept that Americans do not have to work all that much for what they have. I remember one time when I was visiting Barbados. I was riding in a car with the manager of a local hotel. We stopped at a crossroads in the countryside and I eagerly put my camera out the window like any tourist to take a picture of some men working in the cane fields. To my surprise,

the men started giving me the once over for taking their picture. Of course, I was puzzled. The hotel manager kindly explained to me that they felt it a disgrace to work in the fields. The workers did not want me taking pictures of them back to the States and showing other people how they had to work so hard in the Caribbean in order to make a living.

It is hard to convince people that there is no reason for having a cultural inferiority complex. No one culture, or economy for that matter, is better than another. One thinks he is “disadvantaged” only when he is led to believe that he does not have enough possessions, or must ride a bicycle instead of a motorcycle, or ride on a motorcycle instead of riding in a vehicle. Possessions do not make genuine people. Only the materialist will flaunt his possessions before others in order to make others feel that he is better because of his possessions. Genuine culture in people is made by how people learn to relate with one another in the circumstances in which they are in. Those whom we would classify as “Third World” generally have better relationships than those who are residents of industrial/business centers of the world. When nothing material is in sight to determine the status of an individual, two individuals feel that they are on common ground.

West Indian Culture

West Indians do not know exactly how to deal with Americans. I suppose their “cultural inferiority,” as they see it, makes them back off. When American campaigners went to the West Indies, the American aggressiveness often intimidated the local brethren. Americans speak loudly; West Indians speak softly. Americans are quick to make decisions; West Indians think it over. Americans walk swiftly; West Indians glide slowly. Americans sanctimoniously obey the strictures of organization; West Indians let things flow according to the needs. Americans work on the front side of the hour; West Indians work on the back side, way back. Americans who go on campaigns in the West Indies would do well to slow themselves down to about first gear, speak softly, and consider relationships more important than time, organization, and getting the job done. The West Indian would say to the American, “Chill out, man.”

I would say that the above differences are characteristic of the culture of the Lesser Antilles and not the Spanish countries of the Greater Antilles. We must not stereotype the Caribbean islands. We must never compare one island culture with another. Each country has its own unique way of life. Though there are many similarities, there are also many differences. Some cultures, such as the Dominican Republic, are very aggressive. On the other hand, there are those island countries as Dominica that are not so aggressive. If you have the opportunity to visit the West Indies, accept each island country as it is. Do not try to compare one with the other. Each country is proud of its culture, and rightly so. This fruit basket of culture is what makes the West Indies such an exciting place to be.

Economically speaking, I believe the best is yet to be in the Caribbean. As the independence movement sweeps across the islands, the people are gaining a sense of pride and self-determination. Countries are wanting to make it on their own. And in a world of freedom, they have that right.

I do believe that the typical West Indian lives in a situation that is more conducive to spiritual growth than his materialistic neighbors to the north who become bored if every minute of every day is not filled with TV or some activity. West Indians are not bogged down in the mire of materialism and “activityism” that has so marred the American culture. There is not the feeling, “Well, the Joneses have it so I must get it.” Or, “That is the ‘in thing,’ and I must get it.” Or, try this one, “We just can’t do without that.”

In an atmosphere where materialistic tensions do not exist so strongly, there is more time to place one’s mind on relationships with people and God. In an environment where one is not trying to entertain himself with activities, there is more time for personal involvement with people. More time can be given to the spiritual aspects of life. This is why I believe the typical West Indian has a greater sense of spiritual matters than his Western counterpart.

Attitudes, therefore, always determine the effectiveness of the work of the church in a particular country. Cultural attitudes must always be considered when building a church. The Caribbean is a melting pot of

culture, and thus a conglomerate of cultural attitudes. That is what makes it so exciting to the cultural anthropologist. Where else in this world can one find a completely transplanted population that is made up of several different cultures of the world. This is the Caribbean. This is the struggle in which these small countries are engaged in order to make their mark on the world.

Chapter 15

TIMES FOR FAITH

Every mission work goes through times of trial. And those times often involve either money, support from back home, personnel, or setbacks in the work one is trying to accomplish. We went through such times in the Institute during 1982. Those were trying times. However, they were also times for faith building. They were times when one must focus on what God is doing through us, not what we are doing within our own strength.

The exciting adventures in 1982 started with the great boat trip. Four of us evangelists decided to take a short fishing trip one day. We were all in a small boat off the southeastern shore of Antigua, beating against the waves of the Atlantic. I sat there soaked to the core and someone asked me if I felt safer in an airplane than in a small boat out there in the ocean. I unequivocally gave my undeniable and assured response that I would feel better in an airplane. There's something about the sea and small boats that do not mix.

I guess I was still suffering from my first unexpected adventure upon the great seas which seven of us experienced only a few months earlier in another boat adventure. We had decided to take a little spear-fishing expedition to a small island about one mile off the southeastern coast of Antigua. We used this small boat for the venture which I am sure was made for cruising in swimming pools. It was about twelve feet long and sat low in the water. Nevertheless, we all jumped in and pattered across the calm waters on the leeward side of a small island of the coast of Antigua.

Our excitement about fishing did not last long. We were heading

in the direction of the spear-fishing location, staying on the leeward side of this long island off to our left. We were out about a half mile from Antigua when we hit the wind and waves as we came around the end of the island that was protecting us from the waves. That little boat filled up like a sponge in about one minute. All of us except one man jumped overboard to keep the boat afloat. Fortunately, it was one of those boats that would not sink completely because of the styrofoam that was built into its structure. But it did sink to about six inches out of the water.

There we were, six men hanging over the side of a half-sunken boat, clinging to it with one arm and paddling like mad with the other. One man stayed in the boat, running the half submerged engine. We were a quarter mile or so from land. I knew that Paul must have felt something like we did somewhere around Malta. I too was wondering why I was there hanging on for dear life. We were not happy campers.

With great struggle, we limped the half-sunken vessel over to a small island. When we beached, we were completely exhausted, but thankful that we had made land. Our next chore was to dip out the boat and ring out our drenched sandwiches. (Have you ever eaten a salt water saturated sandwich? I was hungry.) A few minutes later, an Antiguan fisherman came along sitting on three logs that he had tied together to make a small boat. He yelled out, "All of you can't get in that boat. It will sink." I have since wondered how he thought we got a half mile off shore to the beach of that small island on which we were stranded. He was not making a prophecy, only an announcement of what we had already learned.

Give Me Air, Not Water

There is something unique about flying over the ocean at night in a small airplane. It's an oblivious feeling that cannot be painted with the metaphors of finite words. It's a tranquility which surpasses any ecstasy of those limited to the confines of earth. I suppose you have to be a pilot to appreciate such experiences of life.

Angella and I once left St. Kitts at nine o'clock Sunday night after a seminar and headed back to Antigua. I had taught a session in Nevis

the night before and that Sunday morning. Angella had taught the children to keep them occupied during my classes. This allowed the mothers an opportunity to pay close attention to my lectures. We flew over to St. Kitts that Sunday afternoon for a session with the church in Basseterre Sunday night. From there, we headed home.

It was a beautiful Sunday night when we left St. Kitts. N5670K left mother earth at ten minutes till nine. The moon had hidden itself, but two lonely stars peered through the blackened haze that soon separated us from the confines of terra firma. I could barely see the towering volcano mountain of Nevis which lay off to our right, piercing through moonlit clouds awaiting any unsuspecting pilot. As the two Lycoming engines of the Travel Air roared us to altitude, I can to this day remember this experience of penetrating the night over the Caribbean Sea. It was an experience of looking into a view of the galaxies when Captain Kirk commanded, “Scotty, give us warp five to”

As we neared five thousand feet on an IFR clearance out of Golden Rock Airport, there was the blackness above, the blackness below, and the blackness ahead which we cautiously penetrated on our way toward our galactic destination. It was as if we were light-years from earth reaching for another galaxy. There was a certain eerie loneliness about the moment, a certain restless challenge of a man and his trusted machine to confidently conquer the established elements of nature that encompassed him with a panorama of infinite darkness. I had all the confidence in the machine and just enough in the man to make the tension enjoyable. Only pilots can understand this. But I assure you that God made us aesthetic beings in order to enjoy such ecstasies.

Challenged To Challenge

Challenging experiences sharpen the gut feelings of any missionary pilot. I have not met a missionary yet who did not have a sense of quest for the unknown and an unending hunger to conquer it. I know Paul was that way. There is that vibrant drive, that unquenched desire to spy out and conquer unknown lands. There is that vision to plan the strategy and thank God for the victories He is about to give. It is always a relentless challenge to put into practice the truth, “**We walk by faith**”

At one time in his travels, the apostle Paul wanted to enter a temple where a crowd of idolatrous worshipers had shouted to themselves for two hours in tribute to a pagan god. As an adventurous and passionate preacher would be, Paul was determined to preach the gospel to this crowd of misguided religionists. But the local brethren physically restrained him from entering the temple. They knew that he would probably be beaten to death if he had entered. Later in his life he stated, *“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”*

Paul was made of the right stuff. And it takes that right stuff to make good foreign evangelists. If one’s life is controlled by fear, he will not make a good foreign evangelist. If one has a low self-esteem or lack of confidence, he should stay home. World evangelism is for the brave. It is for those who have guts, grit and gall to go into very challenging circumstances. If you do not have that, stay home. Those with whom we work are looking for confident leadership in times of tremendous trial. If you waffle, you lose your leadership.

Most evangelists haven’t changed in two thousand years. They are still struggling to enter those dangerous temples, those nations and tribes where Jesus is yet to be preached. There is a certain stamina of faith about these people, a definite courage that makes them go on. It is often misunderstood by those who do not understand. Indifference and retreat are attitudes that are incompatible with the very nature of a good foreign evangelist. Opposition to indifference makes them a restless breed. The opposite of retreat makes them a struggling wonder who are driven to spit in the eye of the Devil while kicking out his teeth. And with God’s help, the Devil will be toothless before the last missionary lays down his sword and stops kicking when the sound of the last trumpet is heard. It is by the power of the gospel that God will send a toothless Devil into everlasting destruction.

Missionary Children

People often asked Martha and me about rearing our children in another culture other than the culture in which we grew up. The nature of the question is an answer to the question. We must remember that

the American culture is only one culture out of thousands in the world today. A better way to answer the question would be to say that it is definitely advantageous to rear your children in more than one culture. Children who have grown up in a situation that allows them to be bilingual and multi-cultural have a definite advantage over those who have not had such privileges.

While in Brazil our children learned Portuguese and the Brazilian culture. Though they have now forgotten much of the language and culture, they still remember Brazil. They still have some Brazilian cultural traits hanging over into their present life. The same was true of Antigua. When our children today talk of going somewhere as a family, it is to Antigua. It was there that they were greatly influenced by good life in a rural atmosphere. The same was true of their learning in Puerto Rico, and the two youngest in South Africa.

Living in a multi-cultural situation broadens a child's mind. One's perspective of life in our international world is greatly aided in growing up in a situation where one is made to recognize other peoples and their ways. One of the greatest lessons one can learn is that the American way is not the only way. And sometimes, it is not the best way. But everyone has these feelings about their own culture. One of the great things about the postmodern generation, which is a worldwide phenomenon, is that our children are exposed to all the world through the Internet. With the click of mouse they are tuned into people on the other side of the world. This is a new generation, a multi-cultural generation. They are members of global family, and thus being monocultural is a great disadvantage for living in the new world.

In reference to multi-cultural environments, Africans have always had an advantage over everyone else. Africans are generally culturally sensitive simply because they grow up in the presence of many cultures. I have found that it is much easier for an African to identify with another culture than it is for the typical American resident who lives within a monocultural environment. Even Europeans have an advantage over Americans since they too live in a multi-cultural environment. But with Africans, multi-cultural adaptation is just natural since they live on a continent of hundreds of different cultural groups.

I have always believed that a child growing up in a multi-cultural situation is blessed with experiences that are worth at least a year or two of university. The education of my children has been aided by growing up outside the United States. And contrary to what many make themselves believe, American schools are not always the best. America has a lot to offer, but it does not offer everything that is offered by the world. It is only one nation of a world of many nations and cultures. I think it best to be a citizen of the world, not just of one country. In this way one has an open mind about learning from the world. One should not live in a cocoon in this new world.

Walking By Faith

In June of 1982 I was again sitting in the Miami Airport. I had been sitting there four hours, waiting for a delayed BWIA flight back to Antigua. I had sad news to take home and knew Martha would be as disappointed as I was concerning the news, for she knew how important the Institute was, both to the Caribbean church and to me.

The news was the total loss of support for the Institute. The work had essentially been supported since its beginning by the generosity of one beloved Christian businessman. But economic recession had hit hard in the States. Because of these conditions, our sole supporter could not carry on with support of the work. Unfortunately, we, as many other good efforts that were supported by this good brother, had to look elsewhere for support. Come September, the last of the monthly support would be sent. I knew, however, that God would provide something. Our mission was then a true mission of faith and I figured that God wanted to exercise our faith muscles to see if we really believed in the work. I have found in my life that God always calls on us to walk by faith. If He did not, then we would never develop total reliance on Him. And in reference to the support of the work, God came through in every way to keep the plane in the air and the seminars in progress. In fact, I would say that there was absolutely no lack of funds to carry on with the work. To all of who were involved in the work, we took it as a sign from God that we were on the right course.

Literature Keeps Coming

Concerned churches in the States poured literature to us by the thousands of pieces. At times we received a box every day. One time we received eight mail bags in one day. The need was so great for literature that at times everything we received was distributed out within two to three weeks after we received it. The West Indian church was hungry for literature, and so we became a courier for thousands of pounds of materials from the States.

We were receiving thousands of tracts. We needed millions, so the thousands went fast. I was hauling out the materials as fast as they came in. The airplane became a literature truck as I hauled out the thousands of pounds of literature. All was going well until the airplane developed propeller problems. As a result, I had to take off one of the propellers and send it to Miami for repair. In the process of shipping, it was lost. I panicked. After about two weeks of phone calls and search, it turned up in the Miami customs house, tagged for public auction. This ordeal put the plane down for about two months. I had to cancel half of our regular trips of the Institute because commercial flying just could not get us to the diversity of locations that was possible by use of the plane. We could only take a fraction of the necessary materials on each trip with commercial flights. The literature, therefore, really began to stack up in the house.

While the airplane was down, most of the literature was stored in Matthew's room, which later became the permanent storeroom. One day I built some shelves in his room by his bed. The shelves reached to the ceiling. The first night he slept on the floor, halfway under his bed. After I found him the next morning sleeping on the floor, I asked him what the problem was. He said that he thought the shelves might fall on him during the night, so he slept on the floor.

Our house increasingly became a warehouse and workshop instead of a house for living. Angella's room became the printing room where printing and copying equipment was located. This was in conjunction with the dining room which also housed a printing machine. Of course, Matthew's room became the main storeroom for most of the literature. The utility room became my office. A bathroom was turned into a

library for books and a darkroom for film development. Martha's and my bedroom became the storeroom for boxes of Bible school literature that we used for Antigua. Everything else went into Cindy's and Lisa's room. The kitchen and living room were spared all intrusions except on occasions of great need. I thanked God that we were able to rent a house with sufficient size to function for our work. I also thank God for a wife who recognizes the value of a work more than the convenience of a "nice" house. Throughout all our years of work as world evangelists, our house has been a place of work, in which we slept at night.

As previously stated, we lived in a rural environment in Antigua. The house was outside the main town of the island. It was on a hillside surrounded by bush. There were goats and cows continually roaming around our house since we were actually located on public pasture land. Most of the open land of Antigua was public pasture land. It was a great place to live, though there were some challenges. At one time Martha kept missing underwear on the clothes line. She could never figure where the clothes were going. She would hang them out, counting them one by one. But upon retrieval the next day, invariably something would go missing. This was a real mystery, one that spooks you to believe that they just walked off. We thought there might be some thief seeking to stock a clothing store.

But the mystery was soon solved. One day she went out to gather the clothes off the line, and there she found this cow just chewing away with the leg of someone's undershorts hanging from her mouth. It was a good chew. The thief had been found. After an intense scolding, the only defense from the thief was, "Mooooooo."

Customs Officials

All of the importation of literature allowed me the opportunity to become acquainted with the customs officials of Antigua and of the other countries of the West Indies. But customs officials have an innate ability not to be friendly. I believe I could pick a customs official out in a crowd of a thousand people. He would be the one with the frown on his face who would be asking everyone he met, "Do you have anything to declare?"

Every airport in the Caribbean had a unique group of custom officials. Most were great guys. Some were not so great. Grenada, for example, was being indoctrinated with anticapitalist, anti-American propaganda back in the days when Bishop had control of the government. It was the only airport tower that would ask me my purpose of visit while I was still in the air on approach. An atmosphere of suspicion was bred throughout that land in those days. But that island is back to normal and things there carry on with the usual Caribbean friendliness.

In April of 1982 the ousted dictator of Grenada, Gary, made a telephone call to the ruling military junta of Grenada and said he was coming back to Grenada to take over the country once again. Well, it happened that two weeks after the anxiety-making telephone call had been made, I was flying in with several boxes of literature to conduct meeting for church leaders. On this particular trip, I had several pieces of anticommunist literature stuffed away in the bottom of the boxes.

When it came to customs, I smiled with an ear-to-ear grin, said, “Good day,” and whistled under my breath as the customs official thumbed through the materials. He never made it to the bottom of the boxes. I went through customs and on my way.

We never received enough literature dealing with Christianity and atheistic communism. What we did receive went into the hands of key church leaders in order to prepare them against the ever infiltrating clutches of this atheistic philosophy of government.

8,000 Feet And Climbing

By the end of 1982 we had extended the work of the Institute into fifteen countries of the Caribbean. We had established about ten churches by working through national leaders. We were at that time adding Haiti and the Dominican Republic to the list of countries. My Spanish abilities increased sufficiently to the point of conducting several seminars in the Dominican Republic. Since Haiti was a French-speaking country, neither my Portuguese nor my Spanish would work. Fortunately, a good brother by the name of Joseph Albert was able to translate my English into French Creole. All in all, the work had expanded far beyond what we had first dreamed.

God always provides in times of need. At one time when we felt the work would be wiped out because of finances, someone left us five thousand dollars in a will. I remember once when we were at the end of the financial line, and a foundation came through with over four thousand dollars. To say the least, our faith increased because we had to walk by faith. We saw God working hardily in our lives to accomplish that which we felt must be done in His kingdom.

I have never really been the type to sit around looking for the dew on the fleece. I just saw it as I passed by. I have always believed that God would work with one in any noble effort to do good in His kingdom and for His glory. I have made my plans based on what God has generally told us to do in His Word. I then pray and ask for His wisdom and work in my life to carry out my feeble plans. I cannot say that He has ever failed to come through with what I should be doing. I can look back and see by faith that He has brought forth fruit to my fallible plans and talents. *“We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Rm 8:28). A great inspired writer once wrote by inspiration, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”* (Gl 6:10). Therefore, let us search out for good to do to all men, and then get after it.

Whether our “good” be to a small struggling group of disciples on some remote island, or the teaching of a neighbor across the backyard fence, we must always press on to accomplish the goal of living evangelistically. We have not yet learned the meaning of the phrase “turn back.” We must always press on, on to the goal that is set before us. To God be all glory for any victory we accomplish on the way to our goals. To Him be all honor, for it is by His providence in our lives that we conquer. It is by His helping hand that we are able to struggle over the cliffs in order to reach the mountain peaks.

Chapter 16

GOING WEST IN THE WEST INDIES

By the first of 1983 the opportunities for work in Haiti and the

Dominican Republic began to really come alive. I had also made a trip to Jamaica where we introduced the outreach of the Institute. The problem, however, was that these locations were a great distance from Antigua to make any regular trips feasible. It was a four and a half hour flight from Cap Haitien, Haiti to Antigua.

Funds for the work at this time were diminishing to the lower half of the bottom. And frankly, I was a little worn out. I had been conducting several seminar trips every month, and my fuel reserve was on low. I needed a rest. Therefore, Martha and I decided to revisit West Monroe, Louisiana the summer of 1983 in order to rest and raise funds. We decided it was time to move of the international base of the Institute from Antigua to one of two different locations.

Santo Domingo Or San Juan?

During our last year in Antigua, Martha and I studied Spanish at the Venezuelan Cultural Center in St. Johns. We knew we would move to a Spanish-speaking country sometime in the future. We had two choices: San Juan, Puerto Rico, the city I said I would never live in, and Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic. At the time, the first choice on the list was, Santo Domingo. Therefore, we loaded up our family in the airplane and went to Santo Domingo for a three-week survey trip of the country.

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Santo Domingo. John and Dulce Cloward showed us tremendous hospitality. At the time, John was an engineer working on a canal project for the government and Dulce was doing her painting. They welcomed us into their home for three weeks and loaned us their car to tour the country. They were really twisting our arms to move to Santo Domingo.

One of the things that impressed us about the Dominican Republic was the outlandishly low prices for food. The cost of living was actually half that of Antigua. We even ate steak, something we never had in Antigua. We ate fresh cucumbers, tomatoes and eggs. Angella, Matthew, Cindy and Lisa were thoroughly impressed with this new land that was so different from Antigua. It was truly a land of milk and honey compared to the Third World environment in which we lived back in Antigua.

It was a hard decision to make between the two cities or countries. Both offered their advantages as a location from which we could do the distance training work of the Institute and distribution of literature. But San Juan won out after a year of deliberation. Cindy once said to me, “Daddy, you don’t ever listen to us. We all wanted to go to Santo Domingo, but we ended up in Puerto Rico.”

One of the principle reasons for moving to San Juan was the advantages we would have in basing the airplane there and operating out of an airport that had good maintenance. I was a little tired of operating an aircraft under conditions as Antigua and wanted to get back into the American system of aviation maintenance. San Juan also offered the ease of moving to the country. No visas were required. It was part of the US, but did not have the full status as a state. The island had all the blessings, but did not have to pay the price of being a part of the United States.

The Last Extension Trip

When we made the decision to move back to Puerto Rico via a short visit to the States the first of 1983, I started shutting down the Institute program in the eastern part of the Caribbean. I made my last visits to almost every teaching point. I was deeply moved by the undeserved gratitude expressed to me by the preachers and church leaders at each teaching point. This caught me by surprise. Most thought they would never see me again. Our affection for one another and mutual understanding had grown beyond what I realized. We had spent a lot of time together in planning and teaching. We had grown close. As it has turned out, I have not seen these good men since I left in 1983. However, we will meet in heaven and recount the great times we had together. The Lesser Antilles of the West Indies form a big soft spot in the hearts of all our family. We had some sweet times in the islands and with the people. It was hard to leave Antigua. But Martha and I knew that we needed to move on to an expanded work. I had also gone too long without a rest from the grinding schedule of distance training trips and course development. And I confess, I had almost exhausted the auxiliary tanks. We thus sold everything we own in Antigua, boarded N5670K, and headed for Puerto Rico via the States.

Teaching And Recruiting

In West Monroe, Louisiana I resumed my efforts of teaching and recruiting missionaries in preparation for our return to the West Indies. I took the opportunity to accomplish a great amount of writing on the *International New Testament Study Commentary*, one of the reasons for going to the States. I had been working on the commentary in Antigua, but had to do my final work on it in the States, from where it would be printed and distributed worldwide.

In West Monroe I joined the computer age. We plunked down the money to buy a CPT word processor. This was one of the greatest decisions I have ever made as a writer. To a writer, a computer is a dream. I never wanted to touch a typewriter again after a few weeks on the computer. The amount of time this marvel of modern technology has saved me is almost the time of a secretary. Every missionary should have a computer. Such a machine will save one countless hours on the field.

As I write these things about a computer, the postmodern generation probably thinks that I am a relic out of the past. Well, in the computer age of this generation, I am. Remember, we started the Institute and printing ministry with a typewriter and a hand operated spirit duplicator. I sat for hours on the typewriter, pounding out courses for the students. We almost became intoxicated with the alcohol of the spirit duplicator as we rolled out copies of materials. And today, we have come a long way. Martha and I now work with seven computers and have a printshop wherein one man can print, cut, fold, box, mail bag and ship 200,000 tracts a day. Let me tell you, there was nothing good about the “good old days” in reference to our work. We have come a long way, for through the work of Africa International Missions we are touching the lives of millions of people.

Breaking A Promise

I once swore off motorcycles. I repented in Antigua. While in the States I bought this brand new Honda 450 down in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and rode it all the way back to West Monroe in forty degree Fahrenheit weather. I almost froze. I had on two pairs of long Johns

and two pairs of pants. I had on three shirts, a sweat shirt, and an old army overcoat. I still froze. I was proud of this little gas saver and was planning to take it to Puerto Rico as I had taken a Honda to Antigua. Motorcycles were handy to use in the tropics and convenient to get where a car could not go.

I cruised around in West Monroe for about three months on this “murdercycle” as someone called them. And then there was that fateful day. I was headed toward the tennis courts. Lisa, our youngest, was on the back with a helmet that joggled around on her head because it was too big for her. We were floating down a main street in West Monroe at about 40^{MPH} when this car pulled right out in front of us. There was no way I could stop without sliding right under the car. I was going too fast to dodge to the right or to the left. It was a time for quick decisions.

This reminds me of the time when my brother, James, almost killed me back on the farm when we were growing up. We were hauling hay to the pasture one day when some unfavorable events occurred. There were two tons of baled Alfalfa hay on this four wheeled hay trailer that was hitched with a ball hitch behind our truck. In order to get into the pasture, we had to go down the slope of a deep ravine that had a very steep incline. As the truck began to enter into the steep incline, the ball hitch of the trailer popped off the back of the truck. The trailer came to a stop right at the top of the incline.

Now we were in a fix. We could not figure out how to hitch the trailer up to the truck since the truck would have to be backed up the slope of the ravine. So my brother decided he would back the truck up the incline and I would stand in front of the trailer on the edge of the incline and hold up the trailer hitch. Well, he put that truck in reverse and came ripping up the hill like a spooked bull out of a barn. I suddenly realized that he did not know where he was going or what was about to transpire. I hurriedly dropped the hitch of the trailer and dashed like mad for the ground. The back end of the truck scissored straight across the front edge of the trailer, slicing the front bails of hay like butter. When the dust settled, brother James came meandering back to see what had happened. I wasn't too Christian in my speech back in those days, so with unrighteous indignation,

I released upon him a hail of words while spitting dirt and leaves out of my mouth. Though I had vented my anger, he never once raised his voice. Since I was the opposite in personality, his easygoing way sometimes irritated me, especially when my life was on the line.

All he said after almost cutting me in half was, “Well, let me drive the truck up a little and you get on the hitch and hold it down with your feet while we go down the incline.” It was like it had never happened. What could I say.

My mother always said I was naive. So, I got up and sat on the front of the trailer, holding the hitch with my feet while he eased the truck forward. I then steadied myself on the front of the trailer, holding the hitch of the trailer onto the ball of the truck with my feet. My brother then started down that ravine again as if he were on a race track. About half way down the slope of the ravine, the trailer hitch again popped off and fell to the ground. As it dug into the ground and bent under the trailer, I was thrown off the front of the trailer right in front of the two tons of hay that were at this time building up some good speed. When I hit the ground, my feet were at least clocking 90^{MPH}. It was one of those times when the instinct of self-preservation comes to the surface and takes control of a body it wants to preserve. You can do remarkable things when your body is fighting for its life. I dived like Superman for a clump of trees to the right, and crashed for safety into the sticks and rocks. My heart was pounding so hard I thought it would jump out of my chest. But I survived.

Now here came my brother James again. “What’s going on back here?” I believe I added a few more words that day to the vocabulary of unrighteous indignation.

Lisa and I were headed for certain disaster that day on that abominable motorcycle. Quick decisions could not deliver us from the calamity that was about to occur. I held the motorcycle straight and headed for the rear end of the car. We hit and the both of us went flying through the air like rag dolls. She hit the pavement on her head and then her side, cracking her arm. If she had not been wearing a helmet, who knows what would have happened. After flying over the car, I hit flat on my back, bounced down the road, smashing three vertebra. I

was in intensive care at the local hospital for five days. I swore off motorcycles again. I knew I had to get out of the States again before I got killed.

This was not a good experience for Martha. She was with a friend on that day when they approached the accident, not knowing that it was her husband and daughter laying on the ground. She and her friend commented to one another about what had happened when they eased by the scene under the direction of a crowd of people who had gathered around. To her horror, she saw that the victims of the accident on the ground were her husband and daughter. You can imagine what went through her mind. Like I said, it was not a good experience for a mother and wife to come upon such a scene.

Ready To Go Home

During the time we were in the States, I was able to make a trip back to the West Indies in order to visit some of the works we had done and were planning to do upon our return. When I returned to West Monroe after the trip, someone asked me, “Isn’t it great to be back home here in West Monroe.” I told the person that I had just gone home and now I was back in a foreign country.

Being an American by birth and passport has always made it hard to explain to Americans that home to me is not America. I would never be totally American after having lived in other cultures for so many years. I left America in 1974 and became a world citizen. Even if I returned to the States and live the rest of my life, I would always be part Brazilian, West Indian, and now, South Africa African. But the Welsh lady was right. Martha and I had given ourselves to a lifetime of world evangelism in a world through which we are only passing. What is also interesting about America is that its culture changes in only a few years. I have noticed that even on trips to the States every two to three years that great change had taken place in the culture since my previous visit. And since the postmodern generation is leading the way to rapid change in the American culture, Martha and I are now truly foreigners to that land.

These feelings often make me uncomfortable during visits to

America. It is something that is hard to explain if you have not experienced them yourself. These feelings were laying hard on me in the spring of 1984. I was ready to return to the work in the West Indies. I was revived and ready to go. In August of 1984, therefore, we moved to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Chapter 17

SETTLING INTO PUERTO RICO

Today, our two years of work in Puerto Rico seems so long ago. I must confess that our time there was a tough test of work and family. It was not the best environment in which to rear a family. It was a good place to base the Institute and to work the Greater Antilles. The family in the States which we had recruited to join us could not raise their necessary support, and therefore, could not join us. This changed some of our plans, but this is a common thing in mission work. It is always difficult to raise funds for world evangelism, and thus one's plans as a foreign evangelist must always be ready for change.

When we moved to Puerto Rico, I knew that we were nearing the end of the Institute work in the West Indies. At the time we were in Antigua, and working the Lesser Antilles, there were only about 1.5 million people living on the islands with which we were working. We saturated those islands with what we had to offer. When we moved to the Greater Antilles, there would also be an end of this work with what we had to offer. There was this thought in the back of my head, therefore, that when this work was accomplished, where would we go. I knew my destiny for leadership training and writing. But where to plug these gifts into kingdom business was at the time unknown.

First Trip To Africa

During our first year in Puerto Rico, the White's Ferry Road church sent me, with two other men, Royce Sartain and Paul Kehoe, to Ghana in west Africa. White's Ferry Road had made a commitment to the Ghana Bible College to send a team of teachers over for special seminars three times a year. This was right down my alley. I did not know it at

the time, but this was a trip that would eventually turn my attention to a continent that had great receptivity and great possibilities for the distance training work of the Institute.

One thing that impressed me about the Ghanaian brethren was their intense desire to evangelize their country. There was a spirit of evangelism that permeated every church. At the time of my first visit, they were establishing about three churches a month in the country.

In the 80's I made many teachings trips to Ghana. In 1988 there were well over four hundred churches in the country. And at the time, there seemed to be no end to the growth. Today, the strength of the church is well over 1,500 groups of disciples meeting throughout the country.

Another Long Trip

On August 23, 1984, we were headed back to the West Indies in order to work out of Puerto Rico. All six of my family loaded up in N5670K and left West Monroe bound for San Juan. After a brief stop in New Orleans, we headed across the Gulf of Mexico to St. Petersburg, and then on to Miami. We spent the night in Miami with the Bill Longs, with whom we spent time on almost every trip we made from the West Indies to the States. Their hospitality was tremendous throughout those years.

After a brief stay in Miami, we headed southeast out of Opa Locka Airport. We had flown for about three hours when we approached a line of vicious looking thunderstorms that stretched from one end of the heavens to the other. This line of storms was too high to go over and too low to go under. We couldn't turn back because we didn't have enough fuel to make it to another airport to wait out the storm. The only course we had was to go straight through. Our intended destination was Grand Turk which was just on the other side of this line of goblins.

I had been in a lot of thunderstorms, but this was the worst, not because of its severity, but because of the amount of time we were in there fighting the elements. Lightning was striking everywhere. It was raining so hard that we could not see outside the windows to the wing tips. The noise against the windshield of the airplane was so loud that

we could hardly hear one another when we yelled. We bumped and were thrown against our seat belts time after time. Lisa looked back at Matthew and his eyes were, according to her words, “**big.**” Matthew later said, “I was scared.” One can usually penetrate a thunderstorm and come out on the other side in five or six minutes. We were in this storm bank for thirty minutes. I was totally exhausted when that big monster finally spit us out.

We were about ten minutes from Grand Turk after our escape from this giant goblin of nature. When we landed, we all headed straight for the toilets since we had been in the air for so long. We then regrouped, and were ready for the two and a half hour flight on to Puerto Rico. Thankfully, it was clear and blue all the way. God knew we had had enough.

When we landed in Puerto Rico, I was beyond exhaustion. I had been flying for eight hours, some of that time being in some very strenuous weather. I had fought a demon in the Devil’s Triangle. It was then that we met one of the greatest couples we have encountered in our lifetime, Jorge and Bobby San Pedro. Their hospitality was so needed that night. We stayed with them for several days after our arrival and they ministered to every need we had.

Jorge was a Cuban and a salesman for Kodak. He and his American wife, Bobby, had been converted in the States and had moved to Puerto Rico about a year before we arrived. They were great servants of the Lord and proved to be some of our best friends in the Lord.

Literature To Distribute

While we were in West Monroe, I had put out another plea to churches to send us as much literature as possible for the West Indian churches. We collected over ten tons of literature. We took about half of that to Puerto Rico in a shipping container. The rest was sent to Ghana.

One of my tasks in Puerto Rico, therefore, was to distribute about five tons of literature to West Indian churches. Most of the material was in English, so we could use only a small portion of it in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Spanish was the predominant

language of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, though in Puerto Rico most people spoke English. French Creole was the language of Haiti.

I suppose there is another advantage to the hundreds of boxes of literature that we have shipped throughout the world. For example, when we moved to San Juan, we had a twenty-foot shipping container that was at least half full of boxes of literature that we would eventually distribute. The problem was where we would store the boxes until they were distributed. We rented a small house, and thus had to come up with some ingenious ideas, which we did. We had no furniture upon arrival, so the boxes were stacked in the house in the form of chairs and beds. In the living room we stacked the boxes to form a sofa and a couple chairs. We placed covers over them, and they looked pretty good. For our beds, we bought mattresses and laid them on the boxes. They made good beds. I suppose we could have called this “boxed furniture.” It worked, and as the literature went out over the next year and a half, we replaced the “boxed furniture” with proper furniture, which I must confess, was a little softer.

As I look back over this, never a word of complaint came from either Martha or the children. It was all an exciting adventure. To Martha it was simply something that had to be done in order to get on with the work. Throughout our world roaming, it is only in Africa that she has been able to set up a “proper” house for living. She has earned the right.

Establishing A Church Of Disciples

Before we went to Puerto Rico, we had planned to start a church somewhere in San Juan. Jorge and Bobby had the same vision. As our friendship grew, we decided to start a church together. Therefore, in January, 1985 we began in their home what was later referred to as the Rio Piedras church. This house church was later aided in growth by the arrival of five workers from Miami. Octavio de Armas led this group and did a great job in leading the church in reaching out to the city.

House Office

In Puerto Rico, we searched diligently for a house for about six

months because there were few houses to rent. Renting was not the Puerto Rican way. Because it was a custom to buy, there were few houses for rent, so we went in search of a house that would be used for living, offices and literature storage. We went throughout San Juan looking for a house. I can remember that we spent a least a day out of each week driving around, trying to find a house that would meet the needs of the Institute. We met a lot of people and really learned San Juan.

We needed a large house for literature and office space. And as always, God delivered. We eventually purchased a house that would serve all our needs. It had a large garage which I converted into a large office. The house and office needed some work, so I learned how to lay cement blocks and tile in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Settling In

After a few months in San Juan, we were settled in and working. God continued to watch over us. We needed Him daily. The social environment of San Juan was much different than anything we had experienced before. Crime was high because of the drug trade. I believe San Juan is a good example of a culture that has given itself over to the proliferation of drugs. In this city, the good folks are kept behind bars in their homes and the bad guys roam the streets pushing and using drugs.

San Juan is a city of drug gangs and crime. A nineteen year old Christian young man once came up from St. Vincent to receive training at the Park Gardens church in San Juan. After he had been there for two weeks, he was walking down a street alone in the late evening. Someone just came along and shot him in the head. He was killed instantly. No one was able to determine why he was shot. It was just one of several senseless killings that took place in San Juan every week. One of the requirements for joining some gangs in San Juan was to commit murder. Everyone theorized, therefore, that our young brother was killed for someone's initiation murder into some gang.

I would never vote to legalize drugs such as marijuana. The use of such leads to theft by those who must support their habit, which habit

progresses to hard drugs. In the schools of San Juan most of the students were using some type of drugs. Many were in the business of buying and selling drugs.

This was a very difficult environment for our children. It was difficult for the young people of the churches of San Juan. Few of the San Juan churches had many young people in the teenage years because most had been drawn away into the drug culture.

Regardless of the hardships of the environment, we were determined to serve the Lord. We had planned to reach out to the Dominican Republic and Haiti. There were at the time about sixty-five churches in the Dominican Republic and about forty in Haiti. North Haiti was showing signs of real growth, and thus it presented the need for leadership training. Several denominational churches had been converted there, which presented the need for seminars on fundamental biblical teaching. Most of the leaders who were converted did not even know the books of the Bible. They were religiously sincere men, but they knew little of the Bible.

Chapter 18

A GOOD WORD FOR A GOOD LAND

I made my first trip to Haiti in June of 1983. I made many trips after that time for numerous reasons. What can one say about Haiti? It is shocking. It is backward. It is romantic. It is poor, very poor. Westerners have a hard time understanding it because of its great poverty. It is a country of extremes, both politically and economically. It does not have a history of stability, but one of political turmoil. It is a country that was given birth by colonial powers before she could fully develop those essentials that are necessary for a politically mature country. Nevertheless, Haiti has survived its history.

Papa And Baby Doc

Haiti's political history has been everything Westerners do not understand about politics. In 1957 Francois Duvalier (Papa Doc, they called him) decided that he wanted to own a country. He was initially

elected, but in 1964 he set himself up as the “president for life.” His life ended in 1971 and his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier (Baby Doc), was “elected” to the presidency. It wasn’t long after that, however, that Jean-Claude decided he like the royal palace as a permanent home. So, he declared himself the “president for life.” That declaration lasted until 1986 when the people finally decided that they had enough of the dictatorial Docs. They sent Jean-Claude on a hurried excursion to the French Riviera without a return ticket. Haiti has struggled ever since with attempts to establish a democratic society. For now, however, there seems to be peace, at least peace until the next political ordeal comes along.

Haitian Economics

In 1982 I had one of those opportunities that I never dreamed I would have. I was invited to go on a cruise of the Caribbean as a guest speaker of the Caribbean Christian Cruise Lectureship. Darrel Frazier, who carried the tradition as director of the cruise after the untimely death of his father, Hal Frazier, invited me to accompany them on this particular cruise. I was elated, but Martha was a little despondent about the matter because she could not go. However, the following year, her dream was also realize when she was able to go on the cruise.

This particular cruise had a scheduled stop in Haiti. In those days the cruise ships stopped in Haiti because the people on the cruises liked to visit Haiti. I think they liked it because Haiti reminded them of how blessed they were in the cocoon of their First World.

It is hard to understand poverty. You can see it on television and read about it in newspapers and magazines. But none of these media adequately communicate the desperation of the Third World in poverty. This was evident when the cruise group landed in Cap Haitien, Haiti for an all-day visit with the church and culture. Most of the American cruisers were aghast at the sights of the poverty-stricken. Many cried that night when they again boarded the ship of our protected world for the elite and blessed.

Jesus said, “*The poor are always with you.*” Saki said, “The poor have us always with them.” As we approach a decade where three in

five inhabitants of this planet live in what we would classify as underdeveloped nations, we must be continually grateful to God for His blessings.

I want to make one thing perfectly clear. Poverty does not necessarily infer unhappiness. I have been with some of the most poor brethren in the world, and they are happy. However, among unbelievers there is a certain fatalism in poverty stricken cultures. There is often a desperation for survival when one's daily purpose is to find enough food in order to make it another day in a miserable life. But, if Haiti is any indication of the most poor of the world, there are those among them who are very happy. They do not use their poverty as an excuse for inactivity. They are hard working. They have never used past colonialism as an excuse for being "previously disadvantaged."

Most Haitians are just above desperation to appreciate the real values of life. This cannot be said for many poverty areas of the world. It seems that the Haitians are not concerned by the deception of acquiring happiness through things and events. Haitians concentrate more on individuals and relationships. After all, poverty can never take away relationships. In fact, relationships are often enhanced by a common spirit for survival in an environment of struggle. I think the Haitians are an example of a people who are content, but seeking to do better. I never heard a Haitian complain about his lot in life. I think this is one of the great assets of the Haitian culture.

Church Growth In Haiti

In June of 1977, Joseph and Denise Albert knew that God wanted the church started in the northern part of Haiti. Joseph was previously a school teacher who taught French, English and Spanish. He was contacted and converted by Wesner Pierre in Port au Prince, Haiti. In July 1977, Joseph and Denise moved to Cap Haitien to start the church.

The beginning has hard. Joseph once told me, "I knew that God wanted me in Cap Haitien." But for the first two months he was in Cap Haitien, he could find no place to rent for an assembly. He and Denise worshiped alone with their four children in their home. By September of 1977, a small room was eventually rented in order to invite people to

come together for Bible study and praise. It was a small room about three meters square, or about ten feet by ten feet. He said, “Roger, I invited everyone I contacted to come and meet with us in our newly rented room.”

The first Sunday came and the little room was packed from wall to wall, with people standing on the outside. Joseph told me that he preached hard on the restoration of the New Testament church and simple Christianity in north Haiti. He said he concluded his lesson and greeted everyone. It was a great meeting.

After the assembly was concluded, everyone went their way. Joseph said that he was so excited about the next Sunday. If this was the beginning, then great things were to come. So he waited a week in anticipation for an even greater assembly of people the following Sunday. On the following Sunday morning, Joseph said that he and his family arose from bed, dressed and went very early to the little room. He and Denise, and their children, sat on the benches and waited for the great multitude to come. They waited and waited, but not a soul came. Joseph told me later, “I guess they didn’t want to hear anymore about the restoration of simple Christianity.”

So times were hard for Joseph as he worked alone in northern Haiti in those days. Satan continued to work against him in so many different ways. Nevertheless, the work did begin to grow. In fact, it began to grow so well that the religious leaders of the community become somewhat agitated. Joseph was biting into their religious business. So the religious leaders launched all sorts of slanderous attacks against him. In Haiti at that time, one had to have a certificate from the government in order to preach. But Joseph was preaching without such a certificate. So the denominational preachers continually reported him to the authorities for preaching without authority. Joseph said that he was called before the courts seven times for preaching the gospel in northern Haiti in those early days. On the seventh visit before the courts, he experienced the work of God in his life. But before we get to the seventh court appearance, some life-changing things happened in Joseph’s life.

In 1979, Denise died of cancer, leaving Joseph with four small

children from three to eight years of age. Nevertheless, he struggled on.

In the early years of his work in north Haiti, Joseph was receiving some support from the church in Port au Prince. However, because the church in Port au Prince was made up of very poor members, they had to discontinue their support. Joseph's uncle then paid his rent and provided some food in order for he and his children to survive and continue. But Joseph struggled alone to support himself the best he could while he continued to preach and teach. He was not a presumptuous man, and thus did not have his hand out to others in order to be, as he said, "paid to preach." He was a Christian going about doing what Christians are supposed to be doing, that is, preaching the gospel to the world where they are. Neither recognition nor money was his motivation for doing what he was supposed to do as a Christian.

The White's Ferry Road church of Christ sent Russell Dupont to Cap Haitien the first part of 1979 with the intention of starting the church in the city. No one knew that Joseph was there. During the first part of his visit, brother Dupont was walking down a street in Cap Haitien. He noticed a sign which read, "The church of Christ." He stopped and talked at length with this pioneer named Joseph Albert. To brother Dupont's surprise, he discovered that Joseph was preaching the simple message of the gospel.

As a result of that meeting, World Radio financed a radio broadcast, and Joseph was in 1980 the first speaker to preach the gospel on the air in north Haiti. After a few weeks of broadcasting, Satan was once again after Joseph. A delegation of supposed religious leaders of the community sent letters to the Minister of Religious Affairs in Port au Prince to get Joseph off the air. Their members were listening to him, and because he preached the Bible only, they were worried about the enthusiasm of the members to listen to Joseph's lessons. As a result, Joseph was called before the courts the seventh time, but this time he had to go to the capital to explain himself and what he was preaching.

On this seventh time Joseph was called before the court, he had to go to Port au Prince, the capital, in order to go before the supreme court of the land. He later told me, "Roger, I was scared. I did not know

what was going to happen. If I was thrown in prison, as some were, who would have taken care of my children?" So he showed up in court on what he thought would be the end of his preaching in north Haiti and possible imprisonment.

Now this interesting. Joseph told me that he came into the courtroom and looked up at the judge. Keep in mind that Joseph had previously worked for the government in Port au Prince, and thus had many old friends in the government. Well, Joseph said that when he entered the court room and looked up at the judge, he recognized the judge. He recognized the judge to be one of his old friends from years past in government work. The judge also recognized him, and said, "Joseph, what are you doing here?" Joseph said he replied, "These denominational preachers up in Cap Haitien want to stop me from preaching. But the real reason is that I do not charge fifty cents for one to partake of the Lord's Supper and I do not charge two dollars for one to be baptized. I am hurting their religious business."

Joseph said that the judge then took a piece of paper and a pencil, and wrote, "From now on Joseph Albert has the right to preach the gospel in Cap Haitien, Haiti, and let no one hinder him." And that was that, the end of the accusations and trials. God still works mightily in the lives of His servants.

Joseph had sold his house and car in Port au Prince in order to move to Cap Haitien. He dared to dream of a church there, so God worked with him because of his faith. He purchased land to accomplish the dream of establishing a Medical Clinic to administer to the physical needs of his people. In 1982, he purchased a few cement blocks and laid a symbolic foundation for the center. When I visited Joseph for the first time back in those days and saw those few blocks, I doubted his dream.

July 1987 marked the tenth year of Joseph's work in north Haiti. As a result of God working through this man, and many others like him, there were eleven churches in north Haiti in July of that year. Ten of them were in their own buildings. There were six Christian schools being conducted in the buildings of these churches. The Medical Clinic building was completed, having been staffed since 1984 and directed

at that time by Jerry Myhan. A program to train people in job skills was introduced in 1984 by Jim Stradley.

God used a humble man to begin a great work. He dared to dream big because of his great faith, and as a result God used him greatly in order to bring glory to His name in north Haiti. I think the greatest of Joseph Albert was in the fact that he did what he could do with what he had at the time. Through great sacrifice God was able to use him for His glory.

Perilous Politics

In January 1987 I was in Haiti for a two-week stay with Joseph. The purpose of my visit was to conduct a Bible study seminar for about sixty church leaders at a camp we had rented on the northern coast of the country. About two months before, there was a massacre of about thirty-five people at a voting station in Port au Prince. This stopped the elections which the country was going to have after thirty years of governmental dictatorship. The ruling military leaders were blamed for the atrocity. They did not want the elections to continue because they would be voted out of power.

The atmosphere was thus tense at the time I was there. No one was making any future plans. No one wanted to make any commitments because of the instability of the political situation. I must confess that all of us were very apprehensive at this time. Nevertheless, we were determined to have the leadership seminar and fellowship.

Fortunately, it was not long after that the political events settled down and life continued on as normal. The people were still poor. The political system was still dictatorial. Everything was again normal in Haiti.

The Best Is Yet To Be

I believe that God has many thousands in Haiti. But these thousands will be brought to Him only by the dedicated and sacrificial labors of men who follow in the steps of men like Joseph Albert. He dared to dream. His dream cost him great personal sacrifice. But God was faithful. Joseph has since passed on to his reward, but his legacy

continues. The sacrificial dedication of those who follow in his steps is resulting in the salvation of many precious souls in north Haiti. We will have more conversions when we have more sacrificial commitments as Joseph. The frontiers of the kingdom call for pioneers who are willing to construct a rescue house within a foot of the gates of hell. That was Joseph Albert, a man of God who was willing to sacrifice it all for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He was a man in my life for whom I had great admiration for his commitment to suffer for Jesus.

Chapter 19

WAITING ON GOD

In January 1986, I felt like everything was going against what I had planned for the next several years. I think my problem was that because of my self-sufficiency, I was doing all the planning. I was marginalizing God because of my plans. I had come to a stop on the *International New Testament Study Commentary* because I was in the stage of the development of the project that could be completed only in the States where it would be printed and from where it would be distributed worldwide. We had to get the final copy written and typeset. We then had to raise funds for printing and actually getting it printed.

We had been working with the Institute and trying to start a church at the same time. Again, this became a strain on my family and me. Do not believe the person who says that missionaries can go on forever. They can't. They are people just like anyone else. But when they have to do the work of the preacher, the elders, the deacons, the director, and the janitor, they get tired and frustrated.

So it was a time in 1986 that we take an extended change from the work in the West Indies in order to regroup for the future. An extensive amount of time needed to be put into the commentary project. We needed to finish this project, as well as relocate the institute for further development. Our goals had been accomplished in the West Indies. It was time to move on to greater challenges. I had a dream for greater development and outreach in distance training. The West Indies as too small and isolated from the world in order to accomplish this dream. I

had some ideas about leadership training that demanded a greater field of operation. As I said before, I am a dreamer, and thus one who thrives on the challenge of allowing God to bring dreams into reality for His glory.

When my brother James and I lived on the farm, we had this questionable dream about building something for fun.

I remember when I was growing up on the farm, that it appeared that my brother James used me for a guinea pig in order to bring our dreams of inventions into reality. I recall the time we went to a county fair and had a ride on a Ferris Wheel. We went home and decided to construct one for ourselves. So we did. It stood about eight feet high. We made a handle to crank it around. It looked like a pretty good miniature replica of the real thing, though the real thing was about one hundred feet high.

After we finished constructing this contraption, I was persuaded by my brother to be the first to test it out. I sat down on one of the one inch by four inch board seats that was at the bottom of the wheel. He then began to crank me up to the top. Everything went well during the initial stages of my ascent, but we had forgotten one minor detail in the engineering. When I was finally at the top of this rickety monster, there was nothing to hang on to for the board seats were attached to the outer circumference of the wheel. Well, brother James started to gently lower me down backwards, after I yelled a few words at him. The crank broke. Disaster followed. I headed down backwards and slammed to the ground on my back like a sack of potatoes. I bounced. My entire back was skinned and I was in a daze for ten minutes. I guess I'll never learn. We scrapped the Dickson Farris wheel.

Back To West Monroe

Puerto Rico was the most difficult place we had lived, but that challenge stimulated me to trust more in God and less in myself. One's God does not have to be big when he lives within the sound of church and chapel bell. But on the cutting edge of the kingdom, there is a great need for trusting in one's God.

In looking back, the move from Puerto Rico was in the providence

of God. We were at that stage in the development of the Institute where we were struggling to figure out how we could reach a greater audience with the program. It is sometimes difficult to discover something when you have no models, and thus are laying the groundwork for new concepts and works. When it came to the development of the Institute, we were pioneering a work with which little had been done in church missions. New ideas are often hard to development when you have no models. So it was a time in our lives that we had to trust in God to open the doors.

All of the Bible correspondence work of which we knew in the church were based on first principle courses. We had many correspondence courses, but all of these said essentially the same thing in a different way. The system of correspondence was familiar. However, no one had developed a program for preacher and leadership training **in the Third World** that would be totally by correspondence. That is where we are now, but it took us time to move in this direction.

When we felt the frustration of not being able to reach the need, we started looking for a better way to expand beyond our personal contact. When it comes to preacher and leadership training, the need for such had outgrown our systems of fulfilling the needs. It seems that the church always grows beyond our systems. In the area of preacher and leadership training, the resident school system often became a bottle neck since only a few preachers and leaders could be trained in such systems. Those who were trained in these systems were usually young and single. If an older and married brother in a Third World economy wanted to study he was often out of luck in reference to attending a resident school. He had a family and job, and thus could not go to a resident school. In a Third World context, when one has a job, he does not quit. It is difficult to acquire a job, and thus when you have one, you keep it.

Now we began to realize that the distance training system we were using in the West Indies was also a bottle neck, since we could reach only a few, though that “few” was 450 preachers at one time. But when dealing with the work of God, we must always remember that He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we dream or think. We

must assume, therefore, that the needs of the work are always bigger than our dreams and plans. We began to realize this in reference to the work of the Institute in the early part of 1986. So it was time to move on from the West Indies.

Martha and I are thoroughly dedicated to helping preachers and church leaders in Third World economies and environments. They are generally a very dedicated people who have not been spoiled by possessions and self-oriented activities. The Institute exists because of these men and women. Therefore, we were on our way back to West Monroe to regroup in order to expand the Institute to greater horizons, though at the time we did not know those horizons to which we should look.

Latin Living

I have traveled and lived in several areas of the world. There are great things in each country and culture. However, there are some things about Latin America that seem to cling to one's behavior the rest of his or her life. Little cultural traits that were common in Brazil and Puerto Rico seemed to have stayed with Martha and me since our years of living in these Latin counties. One of these cultural traits centered around the Panaderia stores, or corner shops. This is not the type of corner store that exists in Africa or the States. These are little homes away from home in Latin American culture where one can go to have coffee and engage in communal talk with those who commonly assemble there.

These little shops usually make all sorts of goodies one should do without. One of the common products of these stores is fresh bread that is baked every day. And then there is the coffee. Every country claims to have the best coffee, but I do not think anyone competes with Brazilian coffee. There is an acidity in the Brazilian soil that produces the best coffee bean in the world. At least that is the opinion of myself and the rest of Brazil.

I am not a very good coffee drinker unless I am in Peru or Mexico or Brazil where they make it right. Good coffee is made with as little water as possible. Latins will add a great deal of sugar to their coffee

which must synthesize with the coffee somehow to hide the bitterness of the caffeine. The result is an awesome flavor of the coffee. It is nothing like American made coffee which is very watered down. I have traveled throughout Africa, even in Ethiopia where coffee was first brewed, but I have not yet tasted coffee as I did in Brazil. The coffee of Brazil is probably the best of Latin America. I can smell it right now.

One of the great customs of Brazil was the coffee that was served throughout the day and night in Panaderias. One Brazilian official was right when he said, “Brazilians are coffee.” On Friday and Saturday night the Panaderia becomes the local community where Brazilians prove that they are coffee by their consumption of coffee.

One of the greatest foods of Latin America is bread. When we lived there, no preservatives were added because it was made and eaten in the same day. It was fresh and something into which one could sink his teeth when it came right out of the oven. It was much better than the American “cotton bread.”

When we were in the Caribbean, the typical West Indian consumed little coffee. The reason for this was more of an economic inability to afford it. Coffee was just one of the luxuries one could do without. There is, however, one drink in the West Indies and Brazil that really grew on me. It tastes like sour carbonated prune juice and is usually produced in any country that grows sugar cane. It is called **malta**. No, it’s not alcoholic. However, it will sure put a bite into you the first time you drink it. Martha said it was awful and never wanted to try it a second time. I guess I can understand what she meant. The first time I tried a malta I took one drink and walked away from it. I wrote the following in *Caribbean Missionary Pilot* about my first encounter with a strange drink:

My first drink of malta reminded me of a drink I took when I was about ten years old on the farm. My oldest brother Orlyn was working one day on a truck in front of our farm house. He was working on the engine, trying to get it started. He had a coke bottle beside him that was about half full. That looked innocent enough to me on a hot summer day.

So I went running up to him and asked, “Can I have a drink?” He looked at me a little puzzled. But with a grin on his face, he said, “Well ... yes.” I grabbed that coke bottle and took one big gulp. When the contents of the bottle had not yet passed to my throat, I started spitting all over Stafford country. He rolled his head back and rolled in laughter. How was I to know that the coke bottle was half full of diesel fuel which he was using to get that truck engine started. Well, it was tough growing up on the farm as the youngest of four children. Like I said, my mother said I was naive.

Leaving The Field

As I said before, leaving Puerto Rico was not easy. However, we knew that we had to in order to move the Institute and to complete some projects. I must confess that our move was the smoothest international move that we had made to that date. I look back and can only believe that God made the mechanics of the move easy. I believe He knew we needed to move on to a greater work. And I believe He knew that the Institute had a greater part to play in international leadership training. After all, we had accomplished a great deal in the West Indies since we first started to focus our efforts there in 1980.

Before we left San Juan, we had a garage sale to liquidate most of our possessions. It was an interesting sale for our children. Our fourteen-year-old daughter, Lisa, was one day not performing according to her present-day skills in business marketing. One day during the garage sale the rest of us had to be gone for a few hours. Lisa was left to tend the store until we returned. When we returned to the house, a lady had come to the sale while we were gone. She had loaded this large six hundred dollar console TV into her pickup truck and was about to give Lisa one hundred dollars for it. We had a smaller TV that was actually selling for one hundred dollars. Somehow, the lady had convinced Lisa that the console TV was the one hundred dollar TV, and so, a fourteen-year-old young girl thought, “Good deal.” Needless to say, Lisa did not mind the store alone again.

In August of 1986, we climbed once again into N5670K and left for the States on our way to another country. We left behind some great

friends and some fantastic memories in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, we were on our way to another continent, a continent at that time we had not yet considered as a base for the Institute and our work with literature. We simply trusted that God would open a door, though we at the time could not see the door. I have always made a move in order to do something greater. However, on this move, neither Martha nor I could see much of the greater. We just knew that our mission in the West Indies for the time had been completed, and it was time to move on to greater works. Not only was a chapter closed in Latin America, that book was finished.

Chapter 20

THE ROVING EVANGELIST

After a few months in the States, I was one frustrated world evangelist. My body had moved back to the States, but my heart was still south of the border. I had left the American culture in 1974, and since then, it has always been hard to stay any period of time in the States. I think both of us had changed. I had become world oriented, and the States that Martha and I left in 1974 would never exist again. One can never go home.

So don't let anyone ever tell you that reentry shock to your native culture is easier than moving to a foreign culture after you have been out of your native culture for many years. I suffered greatly those first few months in the States from reentry shock. Our whole family felt alone. No one could understand what we were going through as a family. We looked like Americans to them, but the Americans did not understand that we were foreigners by culture. It was a time as a family that we had to find solutions alone and with our God. And looking back today, we can see that He again delivered for our needs. We continually praise Him for taking care of us in times as those.

Our family has moved to many cultures throughout the world. When our children were young, there were times when it was only our family with whom they could interact together. Not long ago, our oldest daughter, Angella, made a statement about all four of the siblings.

Throughout the years since they left home, married and established their own lives, they always take time off from their regular lives to fly across America just to be together. Angella said that regardless of being removed from one another, they always get together and have fun. On several occasions during their childhood they had only themselves and their parents for fun in some area of the world. Subsequently, they have never lost the desire just to be kids together and make fun for themselves. I have always thought that this was something unique about the four of them, a uniqueness that was surely developed in them during their younger years as we moved around the world.

When we were living in West Monroe, Matthew came home from school one day a little distraught. After some urging, he finally related to us what had happened in school that day. He said, "In class today, the teacher asked everyone where they were from. She asked me and I couldn't tell her where I was from. Where am I from?" So his mother sat down with him and they began to write down all the places where he had lived, and the number of years he lived there. Then the two of them determined how long he had lived in each place. When Matthew saw that he had lived in Brazil for four years, then he at that time in his life determined that he was from Brazil. He then felt more secure. And so goes the life of the child of a world evangelist. I suppose I would add to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:5 when he asked the Corinthians, "Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife *and children*"

During our first months back in the States in 1986, we had to function as a close family unit in going through all the business of reentry acculturation. But on top of this challenge was the frustration of trying to convince a church that was consumed with itself to realize the tremendous need of preaching the gospel throughout the world. The hardest people to convince that we must assume this task are Stateside preachers who seem to have a hard time getting their minds outside a fifteen mile radius around the churches for which they preach. Preachers are victims of their own culture just like anyone else. And in a materialistic society, to some extent one cannot help becoming materialistic. I have been there and have a few T-shirts.

It is hard for someone who lives in a world of luxury to understand

the predicament of our fellow evangelists who are struggling in adverse circumstances to evangelize their own people in Third World situations. I have always admired poor preachers in poor areas of the world. They are some of the most dedicated people one would ever want to meet. They carry on as if nothing hindered them. They seem to get the job done without all the things we feel are so necessary for world evangelism.

Good Bye To N5670K

One of the added sad notes of our history took place in October of 1986. We sold N5670K. After having her six years, it was hard to let go. Nevertheless, she had served her purpose in the work.

In October, and after putting an annual inspection on our flying baby, I flew her to Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and on to Nevis. A man in Nevis had purchased the plane, so I delivered our adopted machine to him. After I picked the new owner up in Nevis, both of us went over to the neighboring island of St. Kitts in order that I might catch a commercial flight back to the States.

Now this was hard. A chapter was about to close in my life, and I was feeling the full impact of turning from some great years of work and experience. It was back in St. Kitts in 1979 where I first landed in order to plan the establishment of the Institute in the West Indies. After I made the initial commitment to establish the Institute in the West Indies, I could still remember flying out of St. Kitts on a LIAT flight back to the States, wondering what it would be like flying down in these islands in our own plane. Now I was back in St. Kitts for a final good bye.

I stood on the St. Kitts International Airport runway that October day and saw our family flying machine lifting herself off the runway and into the blue with someone else behind the yoke. I just stood there remembering the good times we had together. I reminisced the exciting work we had in the West Indies for the past several years. I remembered the joys of victory and those seminars where we studied with great evangelists. It was a sad moment for me. A lump came in my throat and tear to my eye. I stood there and thanked God for the great work that He had accomplished through us. I thanked Him for the airplane,

without which, we could not have accomplished a fraction of what we did. But there she went as I watched our “flying ship” sail out of eyesight into the canopy of the West Indian sky. I would never experience such flights again the rest of my life. I knew that, and thus, there was finality in experiencing the moment.

Staying Busy

We did not go back to the States to sit idle. The States was only a transition to another world destination, and thus we had to thoroughly prepare for the reestablishment of the Institute, and what would later develop into the ministry of Africa International Missions. 1987 was thus one of my busiest years in international preacher and leadership training. In fact, I made about three trips to the West Indies, plus two teaching trips to Ghana in Africa. But above all, I was able to finish a dream of eight long years of work. Ten thousand copies of the *International New Testament Study Commentary* were printed in October 1987. Copies were mailed to over fifty countries of the world. A second printing of 5,000 copies was planned for 1988, which printing saw the commentary in the late 80’s going to more countries.

This was the beginning of the *Biblical Research Library Commentary* that was later entitled the *Dickson Teacher’s New Testament*. The first editions were the aforementioned 15,000 copies. A revised printing of 3,000 copies came out in 2000 with the inclusion of the *New King James Version* and *American Standard Version* texts. The single volume went from one thousand pages to two volumes of 2,300 pages. The formatting changed again in 2007 with the printing of the *Dickson Teacher’s New Testament* in a single volume. The *21st Century Revised King James Version* replaced the *New King James* and *American Standard* versions. This was a printing of 5,000 copies which has been distributed worldwide. In 2007 I was well on my way to producing the *Dickson Teacher’s Bible* which is planned to be completed after 2010. It is planned that this version will be a complete commentary of both Old and New Testaments and include the entire text of the *21st Century Revised King James Bible*.

The initial reception of the commentary was beyond our dreams.

We received requests for it from around the world. I felt good about the struggles that had been made to bring it into existence. I felt good about the tens of thousands of people throughout the world who continue to receive teaching from this one book alone. The effect of the book could be seen in the statement of a preacher in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa who once said, “Brother Dickson, we had some brethren trying to divide the church on the head covering issue. We showed them what was said in your commentary and that was the end of the issue.”

That was meant to be a compliment, but it was also a scary statement. I always tried to tell people that anything I write is the work of only one man, and he is not inspired. His writings should never become the authority for any teaching. Only the Bible is the inspired word of God, and thus any man’s interpretations or presentations of the Bible should not become a standard of authority. Unfortunately, such publications as the commentary are usually the only research materials that church leaders have in Third World situations, and thus the leaders place great emphasis on what is taught in the few books they have. But I would caution my readers about putting too much emphasis on the writings of men. Only one printed volume of history is inspired. We must never challenge the authority of the Bible by exalting the works of men.

Looking To Surinam

While in the States, we began looking for the right country in which to establish an International Center for the Institute in its new worldwide outreach. This was a very difficult search. At that time we listed seventeen locations that would be possible locations for the establishment of an international ministry as the Institute. We had guidelines by which we went in order to determine the most suitable country, and then, the selected city from which to send courses throughout the world from that country. We were planning to relocate the international center of our work sometime in 1989.

While we were in the States, I took every opportunity to be where I wanted to be. So in 1988 I had the privilege of preaching a campaign in the country Guyana, a small country on the northeastern coast of

South America. This was an opportunity to visit both Guyana and Surinam in order to survey them as possibilities for the establishment of the Institute. At the time, we were looking for a possible Latin American location as a base of the Institute, since Latin America was within our cultural experience. We spoke both Portuguese and Spanish, so relocating to a Latin country was definitely within the possibilities of our relocation.

Our thinking had not yet turned to a continent in the direction of the sunrise. Remember, we were Latin and West Indian in culture, and thus we simply gravitated to any southern hemisphere location, as long as it was in Latin America. We spoke the two Latin languages, and obviously, we would relocate to countries that spoke these languages. But that was not to be. God had other plans.

By 1988, a small work had been sparked in the country of Surinam. It was a small country on the northeastern coast of South America and bordered Guyana. Don and Marian Starks had a list of Bible correspondence course students in Surinam, most of whom were located in either Paramaribo, the capital, or New Nickerie, a small border town on the western side of the country. Both the Starks and I wanted to make contact with these students in order to see what would be the possibilities of starting a church in Surinam, for at that time there was no church in the country.

So in 1988 I went with several American campaigners to Guyana with the purpose of surveying the country, as well as seeing what could be done to start the church in the neighboring country of Surinam.

Upon arrival in Guyana, I immediately started working on a visa to get into Surinam. Getting a visa to enter the country had proven to be very difficult in the past. Civil war within the country had blocked the entrance of most Americans at the time. The reason for this, as I was told, was that there were a few American mercenaries in the country on the wrong side of the conflict. Brother Starks had tried for seven months to get a visa. He was finally granted one, but because of ill health, he was unable to go when he and Marian were to conduct the campaign in April, 1988. Others had tried to get visas while in Guyana as late as February, 1988, but were unsuccessful.

A civilian government was finally voted in by November of 1988, so I was optimistic about getting into the country. Things had settled down. Therefore, when I went down on the campaign in April I figured that it was time to try again. I wanted to see if I could by chance get a visa in order to contact the Bible correspondence course students in the country.

When I arrived in Guyana on Tuesday, I went straight to the Surinam Embassy the next day. I remember when I laid my passport on the secretary's desk with the application for a visa, she said, "They won't give you a visa." I shrugged my shoulders and said, "I must try."

When I returned to the embassy the following Monday, I walked in the door and the secretary said, "They gave you a visa!" She couldn't believe it, and neither could I. I told the secretary at the Surinam Embassy, "I guess God is with me." She replied, "I guess He is." I believe God was saying that it was time to do something with this country for His kingdom. At the time, I knew of no church in the country. I had heard of attempts to start the church, but was not sure of any successful effort.

Now I had a problem. I did not know how to go overland to Surinam. I had no map and no directions. So I went to the library on Monday afternoon to at least find a map. There were no maps. All I could find was an encyclopedia that had a very brief map of the country and the main road that went from Georgetown, Guyana to the border of Surinam. I wrote down the principle towns along the way, and then headed back to the hotel. I asked if anyone had a backpack that I could use for extra clothes and some food for the journey. So while campaign efforts continued in Georgetown, I left for New Nickerie, Surinam at 5:00^{AM} on Tuesday.

The sun had not yet awoken when I arrived at the bus station on that morning. The first leg of the journey was a three-hour legacy packed in a sardine can minibus that ended up at the bank of the Berbice River. It was too late to catch the ferry across, so I traveled up the river to take a "launch" that carried plantation workers across the mile-wide river. I then landed in New Amsterdam, and it was back into a sardine can bus for a two-hour bounce across the northeastern part of Guyana to the

border city of Coriverton. The ferry that was scheduled to come across the Corentyne River from Surinam to pick us up had caught on fire in Surinam and was delayed for three hours. It finally arrived late that afternoon. Some of the prospective passengers had heard of the fire and thus decided not to make the trip in this questionable death trap. Admittedly, when it arrived, it looked like the resurrected African Queen.

It took about thirty minutes to pump out the water that had seeped into the bottom of the boat on the trip over. So against all good judgment, about one hundred of us who were determined to finish our journey, boarded for Surinam. We cramped into this small sea vessel that we thought Humprey Bogart blew up in East Africa. With what the South Africans say, “God’s traveling mercies,” we arrived in New Nickerie, Surinam after a rough trip across the six-mile wide Corentyne River. After an hour or so hassle through customs and immigrations, I was in a mosquito infested hotel, and by this time wondering what I was doing there.

I had planned to go on the following day to Paramaribo, the capital. But hassles with money exchange, immigrations and whatever, caused me to miss the bus by thirty minutes. Therefore, I determined to stay in New Nickerie for the next day and a half since there was no possible way to go to Paramaribo and return to New Nickerie by Thursday night, the time I had to go back to Guyana in order to catch my flight back to the States.

On Wednesday I made contact with one correspondence course student who had claimed to be a doctor in his communication with His stateside teacher. He wasn’t. He was only a doctor’s gardener. However, I was able to share the gospel with him and spend almost the entire afternoon with a Hindu family to whom he introduced me. I was dined and entertained until 10:00^{PM} after the tradition of good Surinam hospitality.

Unfortunately, on Thursday a national strike started in Paramaribo which later reached throughout the country. I needed to return to Guyana by Friday morning in order to catch the once-a-week flight back to the States. If I did not make that flight, I would lose my tickets. I did not have enough money with me to buy another ticket. So I was a little

concerned about this strike which affected all government workers, including immigration and custom officials.

All day Thursday I visited and dealt with documentation. I was supposed to meet with a group of Christians that night we were told was meeting in New Nickerie. But for some reason, this phantom church did not exist or it just did not meet. However, we were able to place an ad for free Bible correspondence courses in the newspaper and also make arrangements with a local radio station to get on the air with World Radio broadcasts out of West Monroe. These two initial mass media efforts would later result in the establishment of the church in Surinam.

On Friday morning I gathered at the docks with about one hundred other hopefuls in order to take the “African Queen” back to Guyana. At 7:30^{AM} the dock workers, custom and immigration officials, received a phone call from Paramaribo. The unions there called on them to also go on strike. That which I had feared, happened. They just packed up their papers and brief cases right before us and walked out. We were all stranded. To say the least, there were no few frustrated people there. No flights or ferries were going to leave Surinam. No one knew how long the strike would last. I was stuck and desperation set in. However, I knew that there was probably more than one way to make this motorcycle fly.

My mind was going in a flurry, wondering what I could do in order not to miss that Friday flight from Georgetown back to the States. So I wandered off from the frustrated crowd at customs and went toward the central market that was up the river a short distance from the docks. I thought about every possible means of transportation to get back into Guyana. I walked by some small boats on the river, and thought, “Why not?”

“Do you know of anyone who is taking people over to Guyana today?” I inquisitively asked.

“Sure,” a local fisherman instantly responded. “Just wait here.”

He rounded up a friend, who rounded up another friend, who rented a taxi. In thirty minutes we were on our way back into the bush to a small “fishing” village on the east bank of the Corentyne River. They

dipped about ten gallons of water out of this small boat which could not have been over ten feet long. They found a motor, cranked it up, and I was on my way across the six-mile wide Corentyne River to Guyana with four other desperate wetbacks.

We concluded the campaign in Georgetown with fifty-seven conversions and twenty-seven restorations. During the twelve days of study with Bible correspondence course students, we met with over five hundred different people in about 1,700 different classes. And in Surinam today, the church exists. Throughout the months of radio broadcasting and newspaper ads that followed my visit, several responded and many contacts were made. Don and Marian Starks made several campaign trips to Surinam in follow-up efforts, and many obeyed the gospel. It is amazing to see the fruit that God brings forth from what we may consider small and insignificant efforts.

Unfortunately at the time, we often fail to see God working in our lives to accomplish these small pieces in His greater picture. I can now see that many of those insignificant efforts that I made to do His will, which efforts at the time seemed quite frustrating, but later proved to be key pieces in God's work to bring the gospel to a particular area.

Chapter 21

CHANGING COURSE TOWARD AFRICA

By 1991 the Institute had been in development twelve years from the time of its conception in 1979. We first established the operation of the Institute in Antigua in 1980. From its inception in 1980, we have developed it into the present system of operation as the parent institute to an international group of independent institutes that are accredited with the International Association of Bible Institutes. Though our philosophy of operation has somewhat changed, our purpose has stayed the same. Our efforts to bring advanced Bible studies to local church leaders has always remained the same. In order to accomplish this goal, we have made constant changes throughout the years as to how to perfect the concept and system. Growth necessitates changes that come with new information. With the present use of the *Biblical Research*

Library Curriculum which we developed for more than twenty years in the operation of the Institute, local brethren have the opportunity to conduct their own institutes by using the curriculum.

God Brings Dreams Into Reality

We were dreaming big in the latter 70's in reference to international leadership training. In the original charting of the program, I mapped out a worldwide diagram of extension centers throughout the world. From these centers, courses would be sent to students. The centers would generally be established on all the continents of the world. These centers would be operated by someone who would work all students of that particular continent.

With some changes, little did I know that God would bring this dream into reality almost twenty-five years later. We are presently working in a partnership program with local Bible institutes throughout Africa. The *Biblical Research Library Curriculum* has become the backbone and link of these independent institutes who work together as the IABI. Africa International Missions produces the curriculum which is distributed from Cape Town, South Africa. Local leaders are doing great works in training local evangelists with the curriculum.

Present Purpose

The purpose of the Institute has remained unchanged since its inception. That purpose has been to train national church leaders to evangelize their own people. This purpose was originally based on the assumption that the Western church would never be able to send out enough missionaries to evangelize the world. It might even be stated that world evangelism is not necessarily the responsibility of the American church alone. In view of these two thoughts, we must depend on God's army that already exists throughout the world in order to evangelize the world. This is a great and powerful army of faithful men. It is growing stronger every day.

This army which is on the field is generally in Third World environments. Our goal has been to make available advanced Bible studies to hundreds and thousands of preachers, prospective preachers,

and church leaders. Since these leaders are generally in economically challenged areas, this means that they usually cannot attend resident schools in order to receive the teaching that will help them to become more effective workers. Actually, the church's determination to concentrate exclusively on resident schools in the past in order to train preachers and church leaders in the Third World has to some extent held back church growth. The problem is that we cannot train enough preachers through such schools alone in order to meet the needs of the receptivity of the people.

The purpose of distance training, therefore, is to offer preacher and leadership training to those who desire such but who do not have the finances to attend a resident school. I suppose this need could be emphasized by the response to an announcement I once made to a group of seventy-five Malawian preachers in Rumphu, Malawi. When I explained that the purpose of the Institute was to give men the textbook material through extension studies that they would never receive in a two-year full-time school or a four-year Bible major program in a Christian college, they applauded. This is what the International Bible Institute is all about. It is an effort to help preachers and church leaders in isolated areas and Third World environments to evangelize their own people. It is an effort to get into the hands of church leaders Bible research material that they can use in edifying those who obey the gospel. In this way, we have partnered the dreams of leaders who have wanted to do the same in their own countries. Faithful and dedicated brethren are more than capable of doing the work of leadership training in any country of the world. The problem is that they cannot afford the expensive textbooks that are needed for advanced Bible training. This is where the American brethren must be commended for their willingness to work with those who want to conduct their own Bible institutes.

Changing Operation

The system of operation of the Institute has somewhat changed since the inception of the program in 1980. While we were in Brazil in the early 70's, distance training was introduced to us by Ed Matthews, who at that time was traveling throughout the world in order to introduce

the concept to world evangelists and church leaders. Brother Matthews taught that an effective program was conducted by regular visits of the instructor to the student every two weeks. The purpose of these visits was to re-enforce and encourage the student, as well as cover the difficult areas of the courses. Most distance training programs at that time used programmed materials with the two-week visit of the missionary. Since then, however, distance training has become a science with many different systems of outreach.

In the West Indies, we varied the system by going to the student for all-day, once-a-month visits. Out of necessity and logistics, we could make only one visit a month. We simply could not make the two-week visits because of time and distance. However, even with the expanded approach and use of the airplane, we still could not meet the need that was prevalent in the West Indies. It seemed that the leaders wanted more material, as well as there were more leaders than we could reach with the system we were using at the time.

While in the West Indies, we came to the conclusion that there was another obstacle in fulfilling the world need of leadership training in mission areas. That conclusion was that there are not enough teachers who felt called to work in training leadership through distance training. All evangelists know the need for leadership training. Unfortunately, some are locked into resident programs that service only a limited number of students. Though these programs are quite expensive, they are fulfilling a need, usually among the young and single. However, many evangelists do not have the time, equipment or funds to work in the area of preacher and leadership training on a broad basis, even though there is a tremendous need for such. All evangelists know this. And most are frustrated with trying to fulfill it while doing all the other tasks that are placed on them as evangelists.

The West Indian experience proved one point. That point is that the growth of the church often outgrows our means or system of training leaders. Essentially, we have assumed that the church leader is already self-motivated enough to study the word and do his work. This is true, but there are thousands of preachers and teachers out there who are struggling to find materials they can use on a regular basis for their

own preaching and teaching. Therefore, if we can deliver the materials to them in a format that is usable, they have the ability to decipher it into their local cultural and religious needs. In supplying them with the material, we can greatly increase their effectiveness in evangelistic outreach and church edification.

Most of the leaders we have worked with throughout the years have maintained a job while preaching to the lost and teaching the saved. The average age of the Institute student in the latter 90's was thirty-six years old. These were thus middle aged men with families who were employed or farming while preaching and teaching. Such leaders do not have a lot of time for Bible study. When a distance training program serves these leaders with preaching and teaching material, they become very effective in their work.

The independent denominational preacher has the same problem as our men. These zealous, but often misguided religious leaders, are searching for material to study on an advanced level. In a distance training outreach, we can search for and find these independent preachers who want to learn more. Preachers preach and teach what they are studying. If a religious leader is studying our material, then our material is being preached to others. We have thus made the commitment to send what we print to anyone who will study and teach it to others. It is the word of God that is sharper than any two-edged sword, not the messenger who presents it. The power is in the word, not the man. I think this is what one preacher was referring to when he wrote,

*Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not with pure motives, supposing to add distress to my chains. What then? **Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.** And in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice (Ph 1:15-18).*

Our present system, therefore, is to send out the courses from our international distribution center of Africa International Missions to preachers and church leaders throughout the world. In Africa in the

mid 90's I was conducting about twenty-five international seminars a year. But I have come to the conclusion that one can reach more people by printing and sending the material to thousands of church leaders throughout the world instead of having those leaders sit in a classroom, even though that classroom is a brief seminar that is periodic. The need for a vast number of men to be trained and fed advanced studies is far greater than the ability of those same men to come together into classrooms.

Directed Off Course

While in the States for an extended furlough, we were frustrated in finding the next location in the world where we would plant the Institute. Finding this was not easy. We kept going through places, one after another. The frustration level grew so high that I finally decided that God was working my case to let Him do the deciding. We knew what we wanted to do, but we were waiting on God to open the door.

So in West Monroe, we were a little disoriented as to where we were going. We originally planned to return to the Latin American scene, with which we were acquainted. We were so convinced that this was where God wanted us to move that I bought another airplane for the work, a Piper Twin Comanche with a Robertson STOL on it for short field landing and take off.

But at the time, another continent entered into the equation of my thinking. I had by the late 80's made several trips to Ghana. I was overwhelmed with the tremendous receptivity of Ghana. The Ghana preachers were very evangelistic, and subsequently, the church was growing rapidly. If this part of Ghana was this receptive, then what about the rest of the continent? It was then that Martha and I started turning our thinking toward Africa.

We looked for every possible places in Africa from which to work. We considered Nairobi, Kenya, Ghana, and several other possible locations. On one of my trips to Ghana, I extended by trip on to Malawi and South Africa. At the time, South Africa was emerging from years of apartheid, and thus was not at the top of the list for establishing an international evangelistic program, since the international community

had little to do with South Africa. We needed a location that was international, and thus had an international airport from which materials could go out from a distance training program. At that time, we also had on the table the use of an airplane for seminars to introduce the program to brethren in the region to which we would eventually go. This meant that we needed a location with good aircraft maintenance.

At the time we had a limited vision of what we were doing. We were thinking only of going to a specific nation, and then working with the leaders in that nation. Little did we know that God had greater plans in store for us. Our location in a nation, according to His plan that we now know, was only to live in a particular nation, but from there reach out to the world with distance training and literature distribution.

God Chooses Our Destiny

In 1988 our destiny was chosen. Three former students of mine at the White's Ferry Road School of Biblical Studies in the mid 1980s, Denville Willie, Allan Martin and Peter Ford, who were from Cape Town, South Africa, returned to their hometown after graduation. In those days there was an annual lectureship in Cape Town that was conducted between Christmas Day and New Years, an odd time of the year for a lectureship. I was invited to go on this lectureship as a guest speaker. So against our Latin American culture to be with family and friends during this time of the year, I headed out for South Africa. In the back of our mind we thought this would be a possible location to base the work of what would later be referred to as Africa International Missions. But South Africa was way down on the list of possibilities.

I can still remember my feelings when thinking about Africa, and specifically, South Africa. It was a long, long away from where we lived and worked in North and South America. Cape Town was not only on the other side of the world, it was on the bottom side of the hemisphere. The thought of flying there, much less moving there, was not that appealing to either Martha or me who yearned for the coffee of Latin America. Nevertheless, I packed my bags, stuffing my carry-on with most of the clothes I needed, and literature in the two seventy

pound suitcases we were allowed back in those days. I was on my way to South Africa.

Take my word for it, it was a long flight to South Africa. When I flew out of the States, I flew to Europe on Pan Am Flight 102. You know what happened a week later to Pan Am 103.

When I arrived in Cape Town, my two seventy pound bags of literature did not make it. Those suitcases just disappeared, never to be seen again. Because they did not arrive, South African Airways paid me \$500. I thought that was nice of them. But I have always wondered where those two suitcases went.

I was greatly impressed with the city of Cape Town. Sometimes cities just catch your attention, and this city did. I suppose I was comparing the city with the usual city of South America. South American cities were big, crowded, dirty and ridden with crime. Cape Town was clean and tame in reference to where Martha and I had come, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

In Cape Town I stayed with Allan Martin and experienced the great hospitality that South Africans always seem to offer. The lectureship was encouraging because I had a chance to meet many of the disciples in Cape Town, as well as those who had driven over from Port Elizabeth.

So people always ask, “How did you end up in Cape Town?” The only “logical” answer to the question is that God wanted the Institute there. Here is how it all started to work out. During the first part of the lectureship, I mentioned in one of my lessons that we were looking for another place to base the International Bible Institute. A doctor by the name of Des Stumpf was sitting in the audience at the time. I no longer finished my speech and stepped off the podium, and this big doctor met me and said, “You **MUST** move here!” From that time during the lectureship, he took me to the Bellville church elders, Oscar de Vries, Hamish Grant and Achim Beyer. We talked and discussed the possibility of moving to Cape Town. I remember that Des even took me out to the Fisantekraal Airport and said this is where you can base your airplane. He and the elders said that the Bellville church building could be used for offices and storage. (One of the conditions for moving to any location was that we could not get involved in starting a church or building a

facility for the work. Since the Bellville building was sufficient at that time for the Institute, we decided that this was a very attractive offer.)

When the Fords, Willies, Martins, and now Dr. Des Stumpf, were finished with me, I was overwhelmed with Cape Town. I said to myself, “Hang on. I am so excited that I need to cool down upon my return to the States, lest I make this decision because I have been oversold on Cape Town.” I promised myself that I would not say much about Cape Town for two weeks after returning home. I wanted to get over the hype and see things rationally and practically.

Well, that didn’t work.

By the end of a fund-raising and preparation year, we landed in Johannesburg, South Africa December 17, 1989, Martha’s birthday. What a birthday present!



The Dickson Mission Team getting ready to go to Brazil. From right to left: Angella, Martha, Lisa, Cindy, Matthew, Roger



We have always been of literature, knowing that when we are long gone, the literature continues to teach. Carl Henderson flew this plane out of Sao Paulo, Brazil. At the time, I was only a passenger.



Though we were joined by others throughout the mission efforts in and out of Antigua in those years, the heart of the West Indies Mission Team consisted of the Allens, Longs, Crisps, Joneses, Dicksons, with all their tribe of children.



WEST INDIES SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES: This was the teaching team who flew out of Antigua almost every week (From left to right: Roger Dickson, Jim Crisp, Leslie Jones). During the operation of the distance training school by focusing on a few very dedicated preachers, we were able to teach thousands throughout the West Indies. It was because of the success of this system of leadership training that Martha and I started to look toward greater fields.



The Dickson children had a “hands on” part in the ministry out of Antigua. They often helped in waxing the airplane. It was good family and character building time ... wax on, wax off.



Our children grew up sorting literature and medical supplies that were sent to the West Indies to be delivered to preachers throughout the island. Matthew (left) and Lisa (right) sort literature.



One time I went to the airport in Dominica and the airplane battery was dead flat. Thanks to the nearby firetruck, I received a jump start and we was off to another seminars.



Angella, our oldest, takes Bible school supplies to a classroom to teach the Bible. We met in the old union hall (right) in the village of All Saints, Antigua.



When teaching leadership seminars, the success is in the “trickle down effect.” The seminar is only for a few hours. But when literature is left in reference to what is studied, the leaders have months of study material after the teachers are gone. It was very important, therefore, that we leave a great amount of literature for the leaders at every seminar. This was the key to the success of the seminars that we conducted in the West Indies, and now in Africa.



Joseph Albert initiated the preaching of the gospel in the northern part of Haiti. We was a successfully businessman in the capitol of the country. But he left his business when his wife died and took his four small children and moved to Cap Haitian, Haiti. After several years of hard work, this was the result when I met with the leaders of north Haiti for a gospel workshop.

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