



A Vision Too Great

*The Biography of
J.C. Choate*

Betty Burton Choate

Printed 2025, World Evangelism Publications

Layout and Cover Design by Betty B. Choate

Order from:

World Evangelism Publications

P.O. Box 72

Winona, MS 38967

Phone: 662-283-1192

E-Mail: choate@WorldEvangelism.org

www.worldevangelismmedia.com

GospelGazette.com

Dedication

Even though he is not here to know it, I have to dedicate this book to J.C., because my entire life would have been so different if he had not come to Winona and preached in those Gospel meetings so many years ago! I thank God for him and for his willingness to bravely go through any door opened in front of him.

And, without J.C. in my life, there would have been no Sheila or Steve or Brad, or Darla by adoption; and so there would have been no Stephanie or Alex or Erin or Jonathan or Savannah or Seth or Arwen or Riley or Jack.... and generations to come!



The Progression of “the Vision”

- * A teenager whose parents were not members of any church.
- * J.C. read the Bible closely enough to realize that the denominational doctrines were not biblical.
- * He recognized the truth when he heard a radio program.
- * He attended a Gospel meeting and was baptized.
- * He did daily school devotionals the last two years of high school.
- * He attended Freed Hardeman College to train to preach.
- * He preached in area Gospel meetings.
- * He preached in Gospel meetings in neighboring states.
- * He traveled to Europe and the Holy Land, being introduced to the needs of the world.
- * He married a Christian girl.
- * He did “local work” in Mississippi, California, and Minnesota.
- * He worked five years in Karachi, Pakistan, establishing the church there.
- * He established the church in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- * He established the church in New Delhi, India.
- * He spent one year in New Delhi, without his family, and also traveled to Nepal and numerous African countries.
- * He began radio programs from Sri Lanka in the major languages of India.
- * He provided printed materials for follow-up work.
- * He gradually changed the radio programs into TV programs.
- * He helped to fund Bible training programs, evangelism training in local congregations, the printing of monthly magazines, Bible courses, and other literature in the local languages.
- * He started the printing of *The Voice of Truth International* in five languages.
- * He began publication of *Global Harvest*, a magazine sharing news of the work of the church throughout the world.

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Before You Read

Greetings to brothers and sisters in the Lord. We may never meet face-to-face in this world, but I look forward to that eternity when we will all be together, doing the work of God in that “new heavens and earth” (2 Peter 7:13)!

A Vision Too Great is being labeled as the biography of my husband, J.C. Choate, but it is more than that. Because his life in the Lord was a life of providential care, with open doors that were too promising not to pass through, this is also a “looking back” to see how God worked through great decisions and small ones to develop and complete a vision that was much greater than any of us who lived it could have imagined. So the book is also a sort of “biography” of the advances in evangelism in our “World Evangelism” program, and in the use of tools of technology by the church during J.C.’s years of working in the kingdom.

In my 84 years on this earth, I have realized an important truth, and have often shared it with others: **“We walk by faith looking forward, but when we look back we can walk by sight, because we can see the many, many times that God’s providence and His providential care shaped our lives.”**

I encourage you to look back in your own life and see what God has done with you and for you, so that your onward walk by faith can be strengthened, enabling you to face with Him whatever challenges life brings to you.

Ultimately, we look toward that goal: We’re going HOME!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty Choate". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue background behind the text.

Chapter One

Childhood and Young Adult

On that February day in 1932, in the middle of the Great Depression, neither the vision nor the expectation for the future was very promising. In spite of the hard times, Jesse and Hollis Choate welcomed the birth of their first son. They followed a passing fad in the local culture, giving him a name of initials only: J.C. Did they wonder, as they looked at the helpless newborn, “What will he do with his life?”

Three brothers — John, James, and Don — were added to the family. Life on a farm in rural northeast Mississippi was good for boys. There were chores to do before and after school — cows to bring in, chickens to feed, eggs to gather, even dishes to do since there were no girls to help Hollis. In the winter there was coal or wood to bring in for the fire to heat the house.

Outside entertainment for country boys was nil. Life centered around home, school, chores, and games they could play among themselves — basketball, marbles, board games. J.C. sometimes went with the other boys to the nearby country store where they sold eggs for a penny apiece, to buy an RC for 5 cents and a moon pie — their treats.

The food was plain but good — and plenty of it, with four energetic boys to be fed. Sunday lunch was always a chuck roast, mashed potatoes, peas and “light” bread, with Mama’s mouth-watering gravy. Sometimes there was even fresh-ground coconut cake for dessert! After-school snacks were governed to some extent by the season: winters brought biscuits with sausage or bacon left over from breakfast; in the spring and fall, corn bread with fresh onion slices was a treat.

The times were more simple then. There was no electricity in the earlier years, so any night work had to be done by lamp



light. An “ice box” loaded with a block of ice, packed in sawdust and a jute sack, provided limited coolness for foods and a refreshing cool drink in the heat. Communication and transportation were limited. Radio, on the big static-plagued battery sets, brought afternoon serials, “The Lone Ranger”, “Chick Carter”, “the Green Hornet” and “The Grand Ole Opry” on Saturday nights, and news. Another favorite was “Lux Presents Hollywood”, in which Cecil B. DeMille aired popular movies on the radio.

Most families owned a car or pickup but school buses also made routes on Saturdays for “town day”. Saturday was the big day for marketing, going to the doctor, and — most important for the young boys in the Choate family — for going to the Pickwick and the Coliseum theaters to see Tex Ritter, Bob Steele, Johnny Mack Brown or Bill Elliott in their latest B-western movies. It was always exciting to get the weekly paper, *The Corinthian*, to see what was scheduled to be on at the movies the following Saturday.

The inevitable question that was asked of kids to make conversation — what do you want to be when you grow up — brought varying answers in J.C.’s thinking as he grew through the years. At one time he dreamed of being a movie star like one of his favorite western heroes. Later he decided he would be an outstanding farmer, so he volunteered to help his uncles make a crop during the summer months out of school. **His ambition was to excel in whatever he did and, even then concerning those childhood goals, he set to work trying to learn how to succeed.**

Later in the summer of his sophomore year, he and his brother John decided to travel by bus to the farm of an acquaintance in Arkansas to see how much money they could make picking cotton. It was hot, heavy work, and by the end of the day J.C. had picked only 100 pounds of the fluffy stuff. The hospitable farmer set the boys down to a hearty meal. They looked with anticipation toward a raisin cake reserved for dessert. When the farmer’s wife reached for it at the end of the meal, to the boys’ shock, all the raisins flew away! They decided to beat a hasty retreat, catching a return bus to Corinth the next day!

Jesse and Hollis were of the generation that was not overly expressive or demonstrative of emotions. There were no deep conversations, few hugs or words of love and praise. Though they were good moral people, good neighbors, and provided a foundation of familial security for the development of their boys, they were not members of any of the local denominations and rarely attended church services. **J.C. had an interest in spiritual things, though, and as a young teenager he began catching church buses to attend the meetings at Hopewell Methodist church and Lakeview Baptist church.**

Perhaps if the right encouragement had been given at that time, he might have joined one of those churches. But they taught such different things concerning baptism and salvation that he couldn't reconcile the doctrines in his own mind. **What impressed him positively were the altar calls they made to the young people to come forward and dedicate their lives to mission work.** A surprising number made the commitment, whether or not they remembered it in subsequent years.

In the midst of a growing involvement, Hollis remembered that a preacher of the church of Christ had once come to her mother's home and preached in meetings to which neighbors were invited. Her mother became a Christian and, even though Hollis had not been baptized at that time, an introduction had been made and not forgotten.

One Saturday morning when J.C. was sixteen, a new radio station began broadcasting in Corinth, WCMA. On the very first day, J.A. Thornton of the West Corinth Church of Christ came on with a 30-minute program. J.C. — ever the radio listener — had eagerly tuned in to hear the full day of broadcasting from the new station. Brother Thornton's message, an introduction to the church and its plea, well documented by Scriptures, made more sense to J.C. than any of the denominational sermons he had heard. A new interest was kindled in studying the Bible, and he eagerly waited from week to week to hear the sermons.

The membership of a little Christian Church in the community had died out and a few members of the church of Christ had begun

meeting in their building. They called the congregation “Jerusalem” and arranged for Marvin Rainey to come each Sunday afternoon to preach. They invited O.D. McKendrick for a Gospel meeting, and J.C. attended it, along with his parents. Already enough Gospel had been heard on the Saturday radio programs to convince J.C. that he had found the church he had read about in the New Testament. He decided to obey the Gospel on Tuesday night. As it happened, brother McKendrick was sick with a cold, so J.A. Thornton filled in for him and baptized J.C. Before the meeting was over, both Jesse and Hollis became Christians.



The Choate family, Left to right: J.C., James, John;
front: Mama Choate, Papa Choate and Don

A sweeping change resulted from their conversion. **Within a short time J.C. had decided that he wanted to become a Gospel preacher.** As with the childhood visions of what he would be when he grew up, he set to work to reach the goal and to prepare himself to fulfill the vision. By nature he was reserved, and he knew he would have to overcome the stage-fright that was a part of every

public speech he had made in school. Reaching his goal would be a daily challenge, but he was determined not to let his own weaknesses defeat him.

He was to be a Junior that fall at Glendale, the small community school where he received his education. One of his first steps, in preparing himself for the life he had chosen, was to go to the principal and ask for permission to give the Scripture reading, devotional, and prayer each day in the auditorium, the customary beginning of the school day. For two years he used that practice to help overcome an inborn stage-fright.

Another tool of preparation was to subscribe to the *Gospel Advocate*, a paper published weekly by Christians. He eagerly awaited its arrival and fed richly on the many articles dealing with various religious points. Through their “report” pages he gradually grew to “know” leading men in the church. He also became aware of the power of the printing press.

J.C. was gratified when, at only 17 years of age, on one occasion, brother Thornton had to be out of town and invited him to fill in on his 30-minute radio broadcast. He prepared a manuscript, wanting to be sure he said the right things. **This was his first experience with radio speaking and the feeling of reaching out to large numbers of people. It was also another increase in his broadness of vision in the Lord’s work.**

Having been president of Glendale’s 4-H Club of America and president of his class the junior and senior years, J.C. finished as valedictorian of the nine-member graduating class. During the summer he made opportunities to preach for small congregations in the community and to discuss the Scriptures with anyone who would talk. To his great disappointment, the girl he had been dating, a staunch Baptist, was firmly set in her thinking. He was equally sure that he could marry no one but a Christian, so they went their separate ways.

In September, Jesse gave J.C. \$25 to help him start his education at Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee. At first he traveled back and forth from Corinth on a small commuter train,

but it soon became evident that he had to have some kind of vehicle of his own if he was to make weekend speaking appointments. When he mentioned to his dad that his money had been spent, Jesse's response was an incredulous, "Already?" Since no other member of the Choate family had aspired to have a college education, the naivete about the cost involved was not surprising. There was no further exchange between them about money, though, and no other exchange of money! Hollis loaned him the \$2100 needed to buy a used DeSoto. Most weekends after that he had speaking appointments, and most of the small congregations paid \$25 per week for his services. On that meager income he paid for the car, bought his gas, and covered college expenses!

Those were exciting days of spiritual and personal growth. He respected and admired his professors — W.C. Hall who taught Spoken English, H.A. Dickson who taught Bible, Robert Darnell, E. Claude Gardner, C. P. Roland — all men of great spiritual stature and respect in the brotherhood.

It was in the early 50's — a period of time in the Lord's church of great outreach and zeal, with Bible scholars who were heroes to be emulated. At Freed-Hardeman, J.C. roomed with a young man named Malcolm George, originally from Michie, Tennessee, just north of Corinth. He also became friends with L.D. Willis, a car-dealer turned preacher-student, from Tupelo, Mississippi. They formed a three-some, going to classes, attending Gospel meetings,



going to each other's weekend preaching appointments, and thoroughly enjoying each other's companionship. Malcolm seemed quiet and low-key, but he was forever telling a joke. L.D., the older of the three and already categorized as a confirmed bachelor, loved to tell in a droll voice about his humorous experiences — such as the time he went for a speaking appointment and wound up with two flat tires. He informed his attentive audience that he just drove it in

to a service station on the rims and then, in all apparent seriousness, asked the bug-eyed service station attendant, "Do you think you can fix these up for me?", gesturing unconcernedly toward the tires that were hanging in ribbons and shreds!

During the summer L.D. bought a small tent and they pitched it in various nearby communities and held Gospel meetings. Though they enjoyed jokes and fun, the preaching of the Gospel was serious business to all of them. It was a wonderful sense of achievement to teach and baptize both young and old who came to their meetings.

There had been problems in the Foote Street congregation in Corinth and some of the members decided to begin meeting separately, calling themselves the East Corinth Church of Christ. The men approached J.C. about working with them. He wanted to accept their offer but, at the same time, he knew that he would be wrong to aid division in the church. He told the men that he would come only if they would meet with the Foote Street elders and reconcile their differences. To his surprise and happiness, both groups of men agreed to meet with him, and the problems were solved. So J.C. began preaching for them, returning to Freed in the fall, keeping an eye open for the "right" girl, and spending weekends with the church in Corinth. **He had become convinced that personal visits and studies in homes were as important a part of a preacher's work as the Sunday preaching and Bible classes, so he had busy weekends.**

After graduating from Freed-Hardeman, Malcolm married Verlin, his home-town sweetheart, and L.D. turned to preaching by appointment in the area around Tupelo where his rather large family worshipped. J.C. prepared to enter David Lipscomb, a four-year college further afield in Nashville, Tennessee. On weekends he preached for the small church in Gladeville.

By the end of his third year in college there had been continuous opportunities to preach on weekends and in Gospel meetings. Many of these, he and Malcolm and L.D. had arranged on their own, but others were by invitation. In the late spring such an invitation had come from a little church in Winona, Mississippi, so he went down the first week of July. There were no elders, but he

was asked to stay in the home of Clyde and Theola Burton, strong leaders in the development of the young congregation. They had three daughters — O’Nirah, Betty Clyde and Benny Jane — and a son, Ted.

Though J.C. was still young in years, he preached with confidence and conviction and arranged personal studies with visitors who came to the meetings. Fourteen were won to Christ that week and, unknown to him, the heart of a very young girl had been won in an entirely different way. Betty was only twelve, and a new Christian — too young for a man of twenty-one to notice. But a crossing of paths had taken place and some special prayers were beginning to be answered.



Chapter Two

The Vision Grows

The wiles of innocent young girls in the 50's! The front seat of J.C.'s DeSoto was certainly wide enough for three, so O'Nirah and Betty took turns sitting "in the middle" (not "beside J.C.!") for the short ride to the church building. The meeting was well attended. How thrilling it was to hear the tires of late-comers crunch on the gravel parking lot and to know that interest and attendance were growing each night! After a very motivating lesson, often from a colorful chart, the strains of "Oh, Why Not Tonight?" or some other invitation song were sung with great spirit by the little congregation. Most nights two or three responded and then there was the happy drive to Grenada, twenty-five miles away, to the building of the nearest congregation with a baptistry. The spiritual excitement generated by the conversions of fourteen people in one week was memorable for everyone involved.

At the end of the week, goodbyes were said and J.C. happily went on his way, returning to Corinth. En route, he had a flat tire and then a blow-out, and was four A.M. getting home. A mission meeting, which paid nothing beyond hearty "Thank you's" didn't do much for old tires and long miles!

In previous months he had submitted several articles and work reports to the *Gospel Advocate* and other brotherhood papers. In response to a small notice offering to hold mission meetings, the church in Sheridan, Wyoming had requested that he come there. In the midst of making preparations for that trip and arranging for two young men from East Corinth to accompany him, he paid scant attention to the polite letter that came from Winona.

The significance had been exactly the opposite for Betty, though. Common sense said that courtesy demanded that a letter of thanks be written to J.C. for his efforts in the Gospel meeting. Since he had stayed in their home, and Clyde was one of the leaders in the church, he was the most logical person to have written. But he never wrote anything to anybody — so somehow, by default, Betty

worded the letter for the church, very carefully, politely friendly, so as not to appear too “forward”. And even though the response she eventually got was a postcard sent from Wyoming, it *was* a response — and he *had* thought about her (them) and he had taken along the address, even on such an exciting western trip!

The wide open spaces of the west were all J.C. had imagined them to be. The trip was made without mishap, and was a further page in his spiritual education. The church in Sheridan was very small, the young preacher and his family living in an apartment at the back of the building. Though interest was good, they were obviously outside the “Bible Belt”!

The remainder of the summer was spent making opportunities to preach for various congregations in the north Mississippi area, and attending the meetings conducted by other preachers. Being very concerned about making contact with people, **J.C. would work up “neighborhood” meetings whenever he could, sometimes under a tree, sometimes in a home.** One such meeting was in a place called Oak Grove. He and a brother Gurley discovered an abandoned building where a Christian Church had died out. They were given permission to use it and had good crowds to attend. Several were baptized, resulting in a new congregation.

On another occasion he preached in an open air meeting out from Booneville, staying in the home of Luther Moorman. People from the neighborhood attended, sitting around on chairs and logs. J.C. relished the opportunities to meet non-Christians in neighborhoods and to study with them. Many were converted through these efforts.

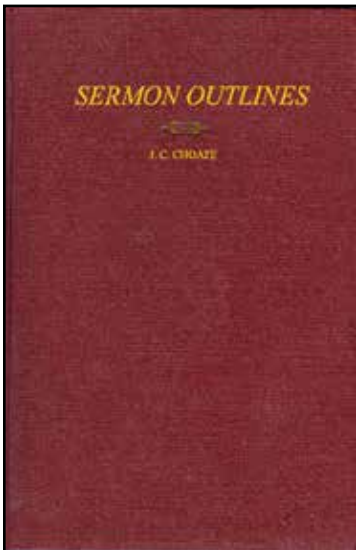
Frank Trollinger and his wife lived out in the country from Rienzi, a few miles from Corinth. J.C. spent some time in their



home, and Frank arranged for funds for a 30-minute radio program each Saturday morning on WBIP in Booneville. **This was J.C.'s first sustained work with a mass media tool.** It was an exciting thing to receive mail from listeners and also to be able to announce the neighborhood meetings and have listeners attend.

The classes at David Lipscomb in the fall were challenging and enjoyable. The church was strong in Davidson County, providing continuous opportunities for attending Gospel meetings and for student preachers to work with small out-lying congregations. J.C. preached at Gladeville, east of Nashville. He also preached in several meetings in the area.

The following summer he was invited back to the Winona area to conduct a meeting for a rural congregation called Red Hill. Part of the days were spent at the Burton home and, naturally, the Burtons drove over for the meetings each night. It was during this visit that J.C. and Betty discovered a mutual interest in poetry and for books in general. J.C. was in the process of printing his first book, simply named **Sermon Outlines**. Betty volunteered to sell whatever number she could among the members of the Winona congregation.



J.C. had again inserted a statement in the *Gospel Advocate*, offering to preach free of charge in Gospel meetings in mission areas. A request came from a congregation in Vancouver, Canada. This suited exactly because he wanted to see more of the country than had been possible up to that time, but he also wanted purpose behind whatever traveling he did. He invited his younger brother, John, to accompany him and they set out, passing through Buffalo, Missouri before turning west and angling through Kansas, Nebraska and Washington, finally

crossing over the border into Canada.

The meeting was actually in Burnaby, in an area where the church did not exist. They met in a public hall and a good number of visitors came. A brother who attended invited J.C. to fly over to Victoria and preach to the church there on Sunday. Always looking for other opportunities to preach, he readily agreed and enjoyed his first plane trip in the process. **His perception of the horizons of the church was ever widening, and it was a satisfying experience to get to know Christians in these distant places.** Canada was certainly a mission field but efforts were being made to spread the truth, and that was positive.

From Vancouver, J.C. and John drove south through Washington, Oregon, California, and finally crossed over into Mexico at Tijuana. They drove through to Mexicali before returning to the state-side of the border and on back to Mississippi, after a three-week absence. Looking back in later years, J.C. had to marvel over that trip — first, because it was before the age of credit cards, and he had very little money. Also, all the roads were two-way, there was no air conditioning in the car, few motels and fast food places, no delicatessens in super markets (well, actually, no super markets yet!) But somehow they ate and slept, kept gas in the tank, and didn't melt into a puddle in Death Valley!

Chapter Three

Additions to the Vision

In January of 1954 J.C.'s finances and school obligations were becoming strained, so he decided to drop out of David Lipscomb for a time. An opportunity opened to move to Gulfport, Mississippi to preach. It turned out to be a disappointing experience so when he learned of a newly-forming congregation in Tupelo, he applied for the job. He was thrilled when the men decided to give a young unmarried preacher the opportunity to work.

The time and the situation were ideal. During the early fifties the Lord's church was the fastest growing religious body in the U.S. Throughout the country families were stable, moral standards were strong, times were good economically, the fear of atomic war was lessening, and there was a general attitude of spirituality. The church itself was important in the lives of the members, and personal outreach on an individual basis was high.

Added to the positive scenario, the Christians at East Tupelo were experiencing the thrill of a new congregation developing. Temporarily they were meeting in an old house, but construction was about to begin on a new building. Excitement was high. Arrangements were made for a radio program, at noon, seven days a week. In an area where many of the people farmed or worked at other jobs that enabled them to be at home during the lunch hour, the timing of the program was perfect. In one week alone, 100 cards and letters were received — a heartening response for a young preacher to experience.

L.D. Willis lived just down the road so J.C. teamed up with him to conduct tent meetings and to set up debates with local preachers. Sometimes J.C. had one-night meetings in the homes of various members of the church. Neighbors responded well to these informal gatherings. At one home where the crowd overflowed the living room and filled the bedrooms as well, J.C. laughed and reminded them, "*Faith comes by hearing...*!" Many were converted through these home studies and the new congregation experienced

rapid growth. **J.C. was convinced that strong preaching, coupled with a busy week of personal classes and studies with individuals were the keys to growth, anywhere, anytime.**

He built close relationships with the families of the congregation, all good Southern “home folks”. Since he was single, there were frequent invitations for meals, but it was also a time when “drop by” visits were welcomed, and he grew to feel like a part of the various families, both with charter members and with those who were being converted from week to week.

Jim Massey, who was teaching at Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, Alabama, encouraged J.C. to take a temporary teaching job in their Middle School in order to continue his college studies at Alabama Christian, gratis as a teacher. The Tupelo brethren agreed to the arrangement. Though the weekdays were spent teaching 8th grade kids and taking classes himself, his heart was in preaching, much more than in studies, so it was thrilling to get back to Tupelo each weekend to the impromptu meetings and personal visits. Usually there were baptisms, so that the question when he returned to Alabama Christian came to be, “How many did you baptize this weekend?” Attendance grew rapidly in short months.

Every two or three months the young church would have a Gospel meeting. L.D. Willis’ brother, Robert, came for one week. Emerson J. Estes, preacher and radio speaker from Memphis, Tennessee was another of the well-known featured speakers. Gus Nichols, one of the South’s most-learned men of the Scriptures also held a meeting, as well as his son, Flavil Nichols. A spirit of excitement pervaded the congregation as more baptisms brought steady growth.

In April of 1955 J.C. made another of his infrequent trips to Winona to visit the Burtons. He and Betty had continued to exchange occasional letters. In anticipation of his visit, Betty had checked out poetry books from the public library. After supper when the rest of the family had gone to bed, they read favorites — “The Raven”, “Home”, and others. Then J.C. read from a notebook of his own poems. The verses on the last page were entitled “My Betty”. A very young heart seemed to stand still at this new revelation.

Light reading of poetry was forgotten, and the conversation turned to a wide-open world of possibilities. What might the future hold? At the least there would be more frequent visits, and after J.C.'s return to Tupelo, daily letters flowed in both directions.

Throughout his college years, J.C. had been looking for the right girl to share his life. He knew she had to be a Christian with a desire for spiritual work. And he knew that now that he was no longer on a college campus, the opportunity to meet young women who might be ideal preachers' wives was very slim. Betty was more than eight years his junior, but she was deeply spiritual, and she had long shown a sincere interest in everything he did. Maybe she was the one he had been praying for.

Chapter Four

Introduction to **THE WORLD!**

Another new experience was also shaping up in J.C.'s life. J.T. Marlin announced in the *Gospel Advocate* a group tour of the "Holy Land" — four weeks in the Middle East and two weeks in Europe, for \$1,500. On a salary of \$75 a week, the trip was far more than J.C. could afford, but he wanted to go badly enough to borrow the money to pay the fare.

Time-off was almost as hard to come by as money because of the Gospel meetings, radio programs, and other planned activities in the church at Tupelo. Finally, with reluctance, the men agreed for him to go.

First time for such a long flight! First time on foreign soil (except for crossing the borders into Canada and Mexico)! First time to visit important sites in history! First time to walk the hills and valleys and streets where Jesus walked and where Christianity had its beginning! What heady days for a young man with a rural Southern background!

On June 5, according to J.C.'s notes of the trip: "A group of members of the church went with me to the airport in Tupelo. Brother Flavil Nichols led them in the hymn, 'Blest Be the Tie'."

The group met in New York, fourteen strong — brother and sister Marlin and their two children, Mid McKnight, Foy Smith, Paul McClung, sister George Benson..... Breakfast at the Belmont Plaza Hotel cost \$1.35, and the charge for J.C.'s room was \$7.00! (How times have changed!)

They flew on a TransWorld Airlines (TWA, a prominent airline, now out of business) to Gander, Newfoundland — the open door to a new world!

The first major stop was in Rome, Italy where they were met by missionaries of the church: Cline Paden, Gerald Paden, and Carl Hecker. They assembled with the church on Wednesday night for Bible study. The days were filled with seeing all the historical places,

brother Gerald Paden doing the guiding. In the Sistine Chapel, besides seeing the famous artwork, they saw an ancient Samaritan Pentateuch, the Gutenberg Bible printed in 1454, scrolls dating to the 7th century, and some “lost” works of Michaelangelo. At the “Church of St. Peter” they saw the famous statue of Peter, and they even saw the current Pope! They were taken to the Maratime Prison where Peter



and Paul were supposed to have been imprisoned. The Roman Forum, the Colisseum and the Catacombs were very special stops in the tour because of the tragic history that early Christians suffered there.

From Rome they flew to Athens, Greece, through old Cenckrea, and on to Corinth. They were told that the population



of Corinth during the days of Paul would have been about 600,000, but modern Corinth's population was only about 3,000! They had a memorable time of worship, being there on the Lord's day and reading from Paul's letter to the church in that great city.

From Corinth they returned to Athens and took a plane to Cairo, Egypt. Seeing the great pyramids in the distance at Giza, the group went inside the largest one of all — the Cheops Pyramid — and saw the sarcophagus in which King Cheops was buried in 2560 B.C. They were then taken to the obelisk at Heliopolis, one of the oldest cities of Egypt and the center of the worship of the sun god, Re. Very little of the original city remains because scavengers used the stones for the construction of medieval Cairo.

The next stop was Beirut, Lebanon where they saw the ruins of the city of Biblos, reputed to be the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world. It was here that the Phoenician alphabet originated. They toured the biblical cities of Sidon and Tyre in Lebanon, and were shown the site reputed to be where Elijah visited the widow, and then to Mount Hermon which is thought to be where the transfiguration of Christ took place.

From there they went to Baalbeck, and on to Damascus. There they were shown the wall where it is said that Paul was let down in a basket to escape those who planned to kill him. Of course, since all of these countries are predominantly Muslim in religion today, there were huge, impressive mosques everywhere.

The next stop was the city of Jerusalem, but on the way they saw the Jordan River, Mount Nebo (from whose heights Moses was allowed by God to view the Promised Land, and where he was buried by angels), the Mount of Temptation, and Elisha's fountain in Jericho.

Jerusalem, of course, was the highlight of the tour, and they were very moved by their privilege to worship God and to partake of the Lord's precious memorial supper at the Garden Tomb, the site that matches so well the description of where our Lord was buried.

The tour in the city that was so central to God's work through the ages included walking under the ancient trees on the Mount of



Olives, and then in the Garden of Gethsemane. They saw the Pool of Siloam, then in a car tour out of the city they went to Ramoth-Gilead, a Levitical city of Refuge, to Bethel, Jacob's Well, Mount Gerazim, and Mount Ebal.

From Jerusalem the group traveled to Hebron, and saw the Cave of Machpelah which is the world's most ancient Jewish-owned site. The cave and the adjoining field were purchased by Abraham from Ephron the Hittite some 3700 years ago. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah were all buried there. Rachel was buried near Bethlehem where she died giving birth to Joseph. Joseph was buried in Shechem when the Israelites left Egypt.

On the return to Jerusalem and then to nearby Bethlehem, the group visited the Church of Nativity, the supposed birthplace of Christ, the Shepherd's Field, and where Joseph was told in a dream to flee to Egypt to escape the murderous plans of Herod.

The group was blessed to be at the shores of the Sea of Galilee on the following Sunday, so they had another very moving period of worship. J.C. was privileged to lead in offering the Lord's Supper. It was amazing to him how deeply those familiar acts of worship reached into his heart when he was actually in the land in which the very foundation of Christianity was laid! The centuries seemed to

fade away and he was almost there when the Lord first gave the bread and the fruit of the vine to His disciples and told them to ***“do this in remembrance of Me.”***



Of course the group saw the ancient synagogue in Capernaum, built probably on the foundation of the synagogue in which Christ would have met with the disciples on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. From there they traveled to Nazareth, to the site of the synagogue where Jesus read the Scripture from Isaiah 61:1,2, and pronounced, ***“This day, in your hearing, this Scripture is fulfilled,”*** and on to Cana where the Lord performed His first miracle, the changing of water into wine.

Their guide took them to Mount Carmel where Elijah taunted the prophets of Baal, challenging them to get Baal to rain down fire on their sacrifices. When they failed, Elijah offered his sacrifice to God. Fire from heaven burned up not only the sacrifice but even the altar and the water around it!

The following day the group drove to Caesarea and then to Jaffa, reaching what was then the capital of Israel — Tel Aviv — in the evening, ending their tour of the Bible lands. Their return flight

to New York was by way of Istanbul, Turkey, Rome, Paris, London, and then to the USA.

What an eye-opening adventure this had been for the young preacher from a small town in the South! The world was open, churches of Christ existed in many cities in Europe but, still, countless souls of the current era had never had opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Seeds were planted in all of these experiences. Rather than feeling “culture shock”, J.C. went open-eyed into each new situation, accepting it for what it was, and without judging pro or con. His greater interest was in whether or not the church existed in a particular place. It was sad to realize that there were only two congregations of the Lord’s church in Israel, one in Jerusalem and one in Nazareth. They did worship with brethren in Brussels, Rome, and France. “Famous” missionaries lived in each place: Cline and Harold Paden in Rome, Italy, Hilton Terry in Brussels, Belgium, and Owen Aiken in Paris, France.

These meetings created a deeper awareness of foreign evangelism than J.C. had known before. To see the preaching brethren “on site”, living and working to spread the Gospel among people of a foreign language, religion and culture, opened up a new reality. On the other hand, the names of countries that had previously seemed so foreign were now familiar and welcoming. His perception of the world outside of the U.S. was changing.

The return to Tupelo was filled with a range of emotions: his new awareness of the rest of the world, joy to be home again with the anticipation of immersing himself in the work, and the excitement of sharing his travel experiences with his parents and other loved ones and friends. Even though he had made a movie of the trip and used it to help bring to life all the exciting things he and the group had done during their six weeks’ adventure, he soon realized that there is no adequate way to share experiences with those who haven’t had them.

Chapter Five

Great Changes!

What a weekend! J.C. went to Winona to visit Betty and her family. On Thursday night he asked Betty to marry him. Her answer was, “I’ll tell you in the morning.” The night was filled with many prayers for God’s guidance in the shaping of their lives, and in the morning she said, “Yes!”

Since Betty was only fifteen years old, it was necessary for her parents to go with her and J.C. to the court house to sign for the marriage license. That done, a friend drove Betty to a nearby town to purchase a “wedding dress” — a lovely blue thing that could be worn for any “dress up” occasion. On Saturday afternoon, August 6, 1955, the

Burttons accompanied J.C. and Betty to the home of J.A. Thornton — the preacher who had baptized J.C. — where the ceremony was performed in their living room. J.C. offered brother Thornton \$5.00 for his services but, knowing that young preachers didn’t have much money, he magnanimously refused the payment. So, even though the marriage lasted for 52 years (and continues, still, for Betty), the monetary investment was nil!



On Sunday, J.C. introduced his new bride to the East Tupelo church, and on Monday he took her to Corinth to meet his mother. The addition to the family was a complete surprise to everyone!

The East Main church had built a new meeting house and had grown from about 90 for Sunday morning attendance to 140 on the last Sunday J.C. served as their minister. Deep relationships had been formed that continued through the years. Following his resignation, the Choates worked for a year with the small Mississippi Delta congregation in Belzoni. Even though the work went well and the church grew, J.C. was drawn to a far-west invitation to move to Shafter, California in 1957.

The church in Shafter grew too, but one Sunday J.C.'s sermon was from Matthew 19. Afterwards, one of the elders came to him and said, "One sister in the church here is divorced, and we don't want to offend her, so you are not to preach on that subject again." No explanation was made about the scripturalness or unscripturalness of the divorce. J.C.'s response was, "If I can't preach the whole word of God, then I can't work here," so he resigned.

The fact that only one person, in a congregation of about two hundred in attendance on Sundays, was divorced is testimony to the great changes that have taken place in the American family since the late 50's. The number of broken homes, even in the Lord's church, has sky-rocketed since then, the result in great part of the lack of biblical teaching on the subject during these decades, "so that no one will be offended." What a tragic price has been paid!

During the time in California, **one day J.C. said to Betty, "I really want to do foreign mission work!" Her response: "Where?"**

"In India. It's the largest democracy in the world without any congregations of the Lord's church."

But before launching into "mission work" on foreign soil, J.C. felt that they should work for two years in a mission field in the States. They learned that the Central church in Minneapolis, Minnesota was in need of a preacher, so he applied for the job. In 1958, he and Betty moved into an apartment in the largest city in which they had lived. The following two years saw further experience in

radio preaching, personal studies with non-Christians, restorations of unfaithful members, baptisms, and general growth in the church.

There was sadness in the church and in the Choates' hearts as the summer of 1960 drew near, when J.C. had told the brethren he would be leaving in order to begin raising funds toward the cost of moving to India to plant the church. With prayers and hugs and farewells, he and Betty departed for Winona, MS.

“Home” now became a bedroom in the home of Betty’s parents in Winona, Mississippi. From there, J.C. wrote letters of appeal to churches he had known in surrounding states, setting up appointments and driving wherever and whenever to tell of the proposed work. In the meantime, they applied for visas for India, only to learn that even though visas had been granted to “Christian missionaries” during the time the British controlled India, and those workers could have replacements, no new churches would be recognized. The Church of Christ had no allotment, so the door was closed!

What to do? They applied for visas to Burma but they were not granted either. While waiting to hear from the various applications, it was suggested that J.C. enroll in the Harding Graduate School in Memphis, TN to work on a Master’s degree in missions. For a year he spent Thursdays and Fridays on that project while going to appointments on weekends. Gradually, monthly support was being raised, and finally a sponsoring church came on board: the Central Church of Christ in Ada, Oklahoma.

In September of that year, baby Sheila Lynn was born. What a welcome addition to the family!

The Gordon Hogans had traveled with a group across Europe and



had settled in Lahore, Pakistan, just on the Indian border. J.C. reasoned that Pakistan and India had been one country before the partition in 1947, and if the Hogans could get permission to work there, maybe he could too, so the application for a missionary visa was made. It was with a feeling of tremendous victory that the passports were returned with 4-year visas stamped in them! J.C. didn't know at the time that Gordon's visa was as an agent of Dun and Bradstreet, not as a missionary! But what a victory, surely made possible through our Lord's oversight!

The date for departure was set for February of 1962, but of course the remaining financial support had to be raised before they could leave the country. J.C. spent the months from the middle of 1960 to the end of 1961 visiting churches, "begging" individuals and congregations to make commitments for monthly support. In time, he changed his attitude about raising funds: the missionary is not a "beggar", he is an "enabler"! Why? Because the work of evangelizing the world was given to *Christians*. Not all Christians can "go" physically, but they can "go" through their support of those who do go! **An "enabler" can make his appeal for help with the pride of a faithful Christian helping others to obey the Lord's command!**

A Little Girl

J.C. Choate

**I know a little girl,
She's so sweet and gentle:
When I am around her
Life is so sentimental.**

**This little girl loves me
And I am so glad,
I just hope trough life
I will never make her sad.**

**I love this little girl
And I forever will;
Her sweet disposition
Helps me over the hill.**

**On through life
And to the end
Our true love
Will ever blend.**

**Between us two
There'll be no strife
Because, you see,
She's my loving wife!**

(J.C. wrote many poems in his early adult years. The date for this one was June 10, 1956, almost a year after our marriage, August 6, 1955. I was 15!)

Chapter Six

Into the Brave New World!

Last visits with J.C.'s family and with Betty's ended with the drive to the small airport in Greenwood, MS on February 19. The commitment by J.C. and Betty was to spend four years in Pakistan, so the goodbyes on that day with Betty's parents and brothers were filled with agonizing tears in anticipation of the long separation.

The small plane took them to Memphis where they boarded an American Airlines flight to New York City. Because Betty had never been out of the country, J.C. felt it would help her to make the transition to the extremely different culture of Pakistan from the States if she could be eased into it by making stops in Europe and the Middle East along the way. The crowning point of the trip would be a visit to the biblical sites in Jordan, Israel, and Egypt. They had sold their car and had applied that money to help cover the cost of the tickets.

There were several stops in Europe — London, Paris, Geneva, Rome, Athens (the Colisseum, the Catacombs, Mars' Hill, all the biblical places) and on to the Middle East and the Bible lands!

The flight from Athens to Cairo, Egypt was late arriving, so it was nearly midnight when they reached the airport and disembarked. Everything was closed, even the money-exchange



office and the travel agency. No representative was there to meet them so they went alone to the Shepherd Hotel where they were supposed to have reservations. The management had no record of them — What to do? Because it was the tourist season, there seemed

to be no vacancies anywhere. Finally, they were directed to a hotel across the Nile, in an area not usually frequented by tourists.

It was 2:30 in the morning by the time they reached the Longchamp Hotel and J.C. had no local currency to pay the rather large taxi fare. As he was getting out of the car to go to the hotel office and either to get some exchange or to ask that the charge for the fare be paid and added to his bill, a man walked up and asked what the problem was. J.C. explained that he had no local currency, so the stranger inquired of the amount and paid the driver. Assuming that the hotel manager was the one responsible for the “rescue”, J.C. took his tired family inside and they settled in for some rest after a very long day. Amazingly, when they checked out of the hotel, the manager knew nothing about anyone paying the taxi fare, and no charge had been added to the bill. **Who was the stranger, in the middle of the night on the non-touristy side of the Nile, who had money to pay someone else’s large taxi fare.....?** (Hebrews 1:14)

The little trip out to the Giza Pyramids and the Sphinx the next day was made by donkey and then by camel, a new experience, to say the least! The climb inside the Khufu pyramid to the top of the inner chamber was exhilarating but also very hot. It was a relief to get back to ground level and finally back to the hotel. The day had been one of adventure, but it was also the Lord’s day, so J.C. and Betty read the account of Mary and Joseph tak-



ing Jesus into Egypt to escape the death threatened by Herod. They also read the first chapters of Exodus, when the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, and of their departure for the Promised Land.



The next stop was in Damascus, Syria where they were taken to “The Street Called Straight” and to the supposed house of the disciple, Ananias, who baptized Paul, followed by a visit to the city wall where he was let down in a basket to escape those who wanted to kill him. Whether the places were the actual sites, or not, being in the city seemed to give new life to the biblical accounts.

From Syria, they crossed over into Jordan and then to Israel and spent a week touring Jericho, Bethany, Jerusalem, the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, Mount Carmel, Caesarea and down along the sea coast to Tel Aviv (Israel did not regain control of many of those areas from Jordan until the “Six Day War” which took place five years later.). Since J.C. had already made the tour of the Holy Land, and since they were avid students of the Scriptures, the sites seemed almost like going home! What a blessing it was to re-read the Scriptures concerning what happened in each place, and to walk where Jesus and His disciples walked.

Before ending the introductory trip to “foreign” lands and reaching their destination in Pakistan, J.C. and Betty flew to India, to New Delhi where they had first wanted to live. The city appealed to them greatly, and they stored up in their hearts the commitment to someday find a way to begin the Lord’s church there.

However, in their search to learn more about India, they had discovered that the church actually *already existed* in Shillong, As-

sam, in the far north-eastern corner of the country! How had that happened? Surely, it was through God's providence: In decades past, members of the World Council of Churches had met in England, trying to decide how they could obey the Lord's command to evangelize the world. Concerned that their division would alienate pagans, they discussed ways to be united, even considering coming together in one body and calling themselves "churches of Christ". But instead of following the Scriptures, they decided to *divide the world* and to send missionaries of one group to one area, members of another denomination to another area, etc. The Presbyterians got Assam; the Baptists were awarded Nagaland, etc. But, ultimately, some members of the group in Shillong studied the Scriptures closely enough that they left the Presbyterian faith, and determined to follow only what they read in the New Testament.

Prem Pradam Kharlukhi was a leader in this group. One day, he was looking over materials in the local library (It is amazing that there was one!), and he found a bulletin from a church of Christ in Texas! Reading it, he felt that their faith was the same, so he wrote to the address on the bulletin. Ultimately, brethren from that congregation came to Shillong to check them out, and they agreed that they were "one in Christ Jesus"! What a victory for truth!

Learning of the existence of Christians in Assam, the Choates had appealed to the brethren there for help in getting a visa. As a result, they had applied to the government so the Choates could come there and work with them, but the visas were denied. Not to be outdone, J.C. and Betty flew to the area, to Guwahati, and then went by jeep the remaining 60 miles to Shillong. The trip was over wild, mountainous country on a one-way road and took 3 hours. Meeting on-coming vehicles meant that one or the other had to move to the edge of the mountain, to let the other vehicle pass. What a relief it was to get to their destination and to locate the brethren!

Brother Prem Kharlukhi was not only a leader in the church but was also a government worker, well educated and capable. The church operated the Mawlai Christian School! It was such a blessing to be with a well-established congregation of the Lord's church in such an unex-

pected out-of-the-way place. Sunday worship was a special experience, followed by the baptism of two young people in a mountain stream.



The Choates' days spent with the brethren in Shillong further confirmed the fact that this was simply the Lord's church, and they were doing a great work, evangelizing their own people, and training up a young generation of Christians in their school.

Time to leave! Brother Kharlukhi, along with ten others of the church, crowded into the jeep that took the Choates down that winding mountain road to Guwahati where they prayed together and said goodbye.

From Guwahati they flew back to New Delhi, anticipating flying to Lahore. Problem: all flights were full for the next three days, so J.C. got tickets to go on **The Frontier Mail**, a coal-driven train to Amritsar, India, just across the border from Lahore, Pakistan. The 300-mile journey consumed 15 1/2 hours! By the time they arrived, J.C. was nauseated from the food they had eaten, so Betty had to take the lead in checking them through customs and getting them loaded into a taxi. Next stop: 28A Warris Road, the home of the Gordon Hogans!

Chapter Seven

Pakistan – the New life

On March 30, 1962, life began for the Choates in Pakistan – Lahore, first, with Gordon and Jane Hogan, so that they could learn whatever possible from settled missionaries before shifting to Karachi, 800 miles to the south on the Arabian Sea.

The Hogans had a group of Christians meeting in their home for Bible study and worship, and they also went to neighboring villages for meetings. One of these was Saraii. J.C. wrote in his diary: “We drove out to the village of Saraii for a meeting with the church. After the meeting I said a few words of encouragement. Two young men requested baptism, so Zubair (the Christian who did translation from English into Urdu, the local language) talked with them some and, after driving to the canal, he baptized them. As soon as they were baptized they were called on to pray, and both of them did. On the way back to the village, we sang a hymn.”



A Gospel meeting was planned, which gave J.C. opportunity not only to focus more closely on the lessons that would be needed for people with such different backgrounds and access to Bible knowledge from those with an American background, but there was also the new experience of having his messages translated. Speaking a sentence and then waiting for it to be delivered into another

language required patience, and also resulted in admiration! Hearing a profound biblical statement made, and then for the translator to immediately put it into an entirely different language requires a quick mind and extensive comprehension of both languages. It was amazing, too, that in the years the Choates worked with brethren in Pakistan (and Sri Lanka and India), no one seemed to be stymied by stage fright! They are natural speakers.

Having translation also meant that the services would exceed the usual one-hour American time, or else the sermons would have to be cut in half. That did not appear possible for J.C. who loved extended studies in the Scriptures! The good thing was that Pakistanis seemed not to pay close attention to the clock, so if the meeting stretched to two hours, it was no problem for anyone!

Because village housing was small, the meetings often took place in the lane in front of the mud/thatched-roof hut, which also meant that anyone within hearing distance had the opportunity to learn the Gospel.

(Asghar Ali was converted from Islam during the first year the Hogans were in Lahore, and he became one of the dependable translators for worship services. The wonderful thing is that even now, in 2024, Asghar is still a faithful Christian. He has provided leadership for the church in Lahore, and now his son-in-law, Obed, is doing much of the preaching. We were thankful to be able to help raise funds for the



meeting house which they constructed for the church. They needed \$26,000. When I -- Betty -- wrote our supporters, asking for help, my brother, Curtis Burton, said he would match anything up to \$13,000! I emailed supporters again, telling of his offer and within 30 minutes a dear sister from New Zealand -- Juricz Blackman -- volunteered \$13,000! A wonderful part of this exciting history!

The weeks with the Hogans in Lahore were spent doing many things: writing reports for the Choates' sponsoring church to send to supporters back home, writing personal letters to supporters, developing lessons to be printed as a Bible correspondence course, preaching in Gospel meetings in Lahore and surrounding villages, debating willing denominational preachers on their erroneous doctrines, having personal studies with individuals — and dealing with the stomach upsets and other minor sicknesses that often develop when moving into a new environment with new food, water, and new microbes in the air. There was also the extreme heat (110-115 degrees), dry air, dust storms to deal with, and no air conditioning! Life isn't always easy for missionaries!

In J.C.'s diary, he wrote: “Yesterday there was an Editorial in the paper on ‘The Spread of Christianity’. Then today there was an article about steps being taken to curb the activities of the missionaries. The article even said that a bill will be introduced in Parliament to ban mission work. So who knows what will happen?”

On to Karachi

On June 10, 1962, the Choates, along with brother Hogan, took a plane to Karachi, landing at 2:00 AM and checking into the Central Hotel. The following morning, J.C. and Gordon took a rickshaw to the Post Office to rent a box (Box 3103, PECHS, Block 6, Karachi 29, Pakistan) — that mail connection with home is the first necessity! — then to the Police Station to register, then to the American Express office so that J.C. could establish an account and a relationship with the company through which they would funnel their money, then to register at the American Embassy — then to begin the hunt for a “bungalow” to live in. A busy first day!

The next day Gordon returned to Lahore, and J.C. wrote: “We are on our own now.” This was a new and sometimes frightening feeling in that very “foreign” land, but the decision to spend the three months in Lahore with the Hogans had been a wise one. So much had been learned from them.

The following days were filled with settling on a house to rent: 145Q, Block 2, PECHS, Karachi! Then furniture had to be ordered and built (there were no stores at that time with “ready-made” furniture); dishes, pots and pans, and the many other odds and ends had to be bought. Bori Bazaar offered an endless array of everything — not necessarily what they had been used to in America, but reasonable substitutes. They rented a refrigerator and then went to Empress Market and bought food. The house had a two-burner gas stove, and they bought a “box oven” that could be put over the burners for baking. They had a home at last!

That first day, when they came home from the market, they discovered that the meat they had bought was missing. They were sick at heart, because of the looming concern that no one could be trusted. To their surprise and relief, the coolie who had helped at the market (There were no “buggies”, grocery bags or any other convenient means of wagging purchases from the meat market, to the vegetable market, to the fruit market, to the dry goods market, to a taxi, etc., so a helper -- “coolie” -- had to tag along and carry all the stuff in baskets on his head and in his hands, earning the always-necessary tip.) came to the house soon after the Choates got home, bringing the “lost” items. Akram, our coolie’s advice: “Don’t trust anybody — not even me!”

During the years in Pakistan, they learned that Akram had not exaggerated. Almost everyone made at least the initial effort to take advantage of the “gullible” foreigner. Printers overcharged for their work, taxi and rickshaw drivers demanded more than their meter registered (if they had a working meter), even some who were “converted” proved often to be untrustworthy. The contribution plate had to be watched carefully after it was discovered that money had been stolen one Sunday, and on and on....

It took months and many negative lessons to change a life-time-mindset of trust into one of continual skepticism. And after the Choates' return to the States, they discovered that it took time to go back to an attitude of trusting, first, and doubting later. Why was the general attitude about lying so different in Pakistan from that of America? Because Pakistanis are 98% Muslim, and one of the basic tenants of Islam is that it is permissible to lie if that is to your advantage!

But Back to the Story...

On the first Sunday in Karachi, J.C. wrote, "We had the Lord's Supper, sang praises to the Lord, and had Bible Study. Then we had a "business meeting" (J.C. and Betty!) discussing plans for beginning the church. We studied Acts 2. We also had Bible study, singing, and prayer for Sheila (1 1/2 years old)."

Getting acquainted with their new city, J.C. wrote: "We took a rickshaw and rode over town. Today is Asura (a day of remembrance of the death of Husayn, a grandson of Mohammad, and his family and supporters at the Battle of Karbala) and we wanted to see the procession so we went to downtown Karachi. We took pictures of the huge crowds and of the men going down the street in the procession, slinging knives over their naked backs and slashing them. The blood was running down and other men kept throwing water on their backs. They do this to share in the suffering of Husayne." Life in a Muslim-dominated country would be very different for the young Americans!

Many things had to be done in order to make a start toward outreach and conversions. Ads, inviting readers to attend worship services were



placed in the Dawn Newspaper, in spite of the fact that articles continued to appear denouncing the evangelistic activities of missionaries. J.C. was talking with everyone he met casually and in the many business transactions that were a part of getting the house and office set up. He then sent out letters of invitation to those who had responded to the newspaper ads for the planned Bible study and worship services, including a tract he had printed, **“Are You Looking for the Truth?”** A Bible correspondence course was written and printed, and the first issue of a monthly magazine — *The Voice of Truth* — was prepared and turned over to the printer.

By July 15, J.C. recorded in his diary that 15 were present for worship! He was visiting various denominational meetings, in order to make contacts and to set up personal studies with anyone who was interested.

The first Gospel meeting in Karachi began on August 19, 1962. J.C. wrote: “We were surprised tonight to have 25 present for our first service. **Some came because of the newspaper ad, some because of pamphlets we had given out, some because of the invitations by mail and in person.** It was a wonderful time and study together, **‘Why I Believe There Is a God’.**”

A baptistery was built at the back of the house, in anticipation of the conversions that would result from the on-going studies with contacts who were attending the worship services and studying the Bible course. The first to be baptized was Waheed Rehman on September 23!

Tragedy

On November 10, a Catholic priest in the neighborhood knocked on the Choates’ door, to say that they had a phone call from the States. J.C. rushed to learn what emergency had taken place. Betty’s 17 year-old brother, Ted, had been killed in a car wreck! In the midst of the horror, they decided they had to go home to be with the family.



In order to leave the country, J.C. knew he had to get income tax clearance. He learned the address of the agent who could give the proper papers, and went to his home. He was not there, and his wife was very uncooperative, practically slamming the door in his face. In spite of the set-back, all the other necessary arrangements were completed, and they went to the airport to catch the evening flight home, believing that someone there could surely give clearance, in the light of the emergency, but sadly, no one had that authority. What to do??? Finally, only a short time before their flight was to be boarded, the one man in Karachi who could free them to leave the country walked into the airport, located J.C., and signed the paper! They wondered ever after at God's intervention; it was so unlike a Muslim government official to *travel the distance* out to the airport on *a Saturday night at 10:00 PM* in response to a foreigner's needs, to be able *to locate him by name* in a busy airport, and *to sign the required form....* In their hearts, J.C. and Betty always believed that Hebrews 1:14 was the answer.

The Burtons met J.C., Betty, and Sheila at the Memphis airport the evening of the 11th, everyone gaining strength from being able to hug each other and share their tears. The funeral was on the 12th. The following two weeks were vital to the healing process, and there was heartfelt thankfulness that all the family was able to be together.

Karachi Again

On February 6, 1963 J.C. celebrated his 31st birthday, excited to be involved in the most important spiritual work he had ever done. The first year in Pakistan was now history, with three more to go.

What tools were available for outreach during those years? **Primarily, personal contact and visits, and printed materials — tracts, Bible correspondence courses, ads in the local newspaper, and Gospel meetings.** J.C. used all of these. In response to ads for the monthly magazine, *The Voice of Truth*, in a very short time they were mailing out 1,000 copies.

Four teaching ads per week were placed in the Dawn newspaper, after a contract was signed. From the beginning, the editor

didn't want to use Christian religious ads, and ultimately they were stopped on the grounds that they were "objectionable". But, by then, many contacts had been made and the work continued.

Frequent Gospel meetings were also tools for outreach, and tents were erected in the Choates' front yard, calling further attention to the gathering that would take place each evening. Often J.C. and Gordon would spend a week or ten days in each other's place, preaching in meetings. On other



occasions, missionaries from various parts of Asia on their way over or back home would stop in Karachi and stay over to do the preaching. Invariably, when the Hogans and Choates got together, or when visiting missionaries stopped by, there were late-night talks till one or two o'clock. Sharing experiences and learning from each other was much more important than sleep!

Meeting people from various villages surrounding the main city, J.C. began to work with them to start the church in those locations. One page in his diary during the early days said:

"Sunday, February 24: Morning, Karachi (10 present); Sermon: 'Counting the Cost'.

"Had a good meeting, then I went after the mail. Had dinner and rested awhile, left for Mahmoodabad; (40 present); Sermon: 'Personal Work'. Then I preached at the Methodist church to about 200. Wanted me to come back next Sunday so they could ask questions.

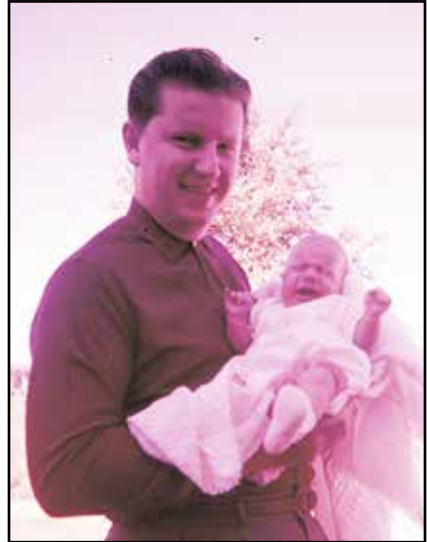
"Evening; Karachi (33 present); Slide show of 'The Conversion of the Chief of Sinners'. Munowar and Nazir translated for me."

Chapter Eight

The Following Years

A welcome addition to the Choate family came on April 1, 1963: Steven Burton Choate! (Steve often wondered why April 1 was chosen as his day of birth; Not because he was “an April Fool’s joke”, but because the day fell on Monday, which allowed ‘recovery’ time before Betty’s preacher-wife responsibilities resumed by the end of the week.)

The doctor at the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital charged nothing for his services, and the hospital charge itself for Monday-Friday was only a little over Rupees 100 —\$37.50! What an unexpected surprise! Steve was introduced to the church the following Sunday, and life seemed to return to normal, with the exception of a lot more laundry to do, and nights of interrupted sleep! But those were the blessings of having a new baby!



When Steve was about six weeks old, Betty looked at him one day, thinking, “This poor baby is going to have to admit that his mother has only a ninth-grade education!” How embarrassing! Since she was only fifteen when she and J.C. married, she had enrolled in a high-school correspondence course with the University of Nebraska, but she had felt so busy with the work of a preacher’s wife that she finished only a small beginning. Now the five years allowed for the study had ended. Repentant, she wrote to the college and asked if they would allow a little more time, to which they agreed. Leaving her books always open, and working whenever she found a few minutes, in six weeks Betty finished what had not seemed possible in five years! And she made all As, except for one B in Geography.

She never could understand that, since their travels had afforded her more knowledge about the world than she had ever had!

At the beginning of their time in Karachi, J.C. bought a bicycle so that he could get around without having to use a taxi or a rickshaw, but he was always on the watch for a good used car since the price for new vehicles was like buying the moon. Finally, he found what seemed to be a reasonable solution and the purchase was made. Subsequent entries in his diaries told the story:

“Had the usual morning class with Akbar and Charles, then I started down town. Had trouble with my car. The starter has burned out again. I had Inyat to push, and away I went!

“Went by the bank to pay a bill, then to the Dawn Newspaper office to see about running some teaching ads, then to see my printer but the door was locked. Every time I stopped I had to have a push...”

“This morning I had Inyat to push the car off and I took it to the garage to have it overhauled, painted, etc.”

The joke among anyone who visited the Choates was that they had a “push car”. Throughout diary entries till their return to the States, every few days there was car trouble — but what do you do when you must have a way to go and you don’t have the money for a dependable vehicle? Those were some of the “missionary learning lessons” that also taught patience and endurance.

Of course, relief from the negatives was necessary, and the intention was to have at least a part of Mondays as family day. Often in J.C.’s diary he mentioned going on picnics, driving to other



cities (even over some very poor roads — that was part of the experience too!) to see what those areas of Pakistan were like, going to the beach to see the huge sea turtles that were big enough to sit on, going to theaters to see such English films as “Gone with the Wind”, “The Bridge on the River Kwai”, “King of Kings” and other such well-known films. Having home-made ice cream was also part of the therapy, as was background American music on Radio Ceylon.

Familiar Scenes in Karachi and Neighboring Villages





There were other experiences too: frequent power outages that could last for hours or sometimes days, rationed water and shortages, and frequent fever and colds and stomach upsets.

But the work itself brought many gratifying things: Attendance for the worship services in Karachi (conducted in the Chotes' home) increased to a crowded average of 45-50 each Sunday as

more contacts were made, and gradually congregations were started in the nearby villages of Mehmoodabad, Drigh Colony, Tebella, and Kalapul. Translation, and ultimately some of the preaching was done by the young men who had been converted and were daily students in the tiny “Karachi Christian College” — only two or three students, but it did provide opportunity to equip them to take responsibility in the work. Children’s classes were added to the adult Bible classes, and a young peoples’ meeting became a weekly event.

A “get-together” in the Choates’ home of any who could come from all of the congregations also became a weekly affair. The entry in the diary for September 29, 1963 said, “This afternoon I went out and picked up some more cookies, cakes, Seven-ups, and ice. Got ready for our get-together. People began to come in around 5:00. Had 42 tonight. We had singing, prayer, refreshments, and a Bible question-and-answer time. I took two car-loads home. The men walked.”

The Choates finished their first years of overseas work on November 28, 1965. Among the Karachi congregation and those in the suburbs around, 164 had obeyed the Gospel.

J.C. wrote in his diary: “Morning worship, Karachi: 45. After the meeting I talked with Charles, Alexander, and brother Johnson about the future, planning to return to be with them during the latter half of 1966. One hundred were present for the evening worship service. After the main meeting, I said goodbye to the wonderful crowd. We had a singing in English and then in Urdu. I talked awhile and we had refreshments. It was both a sad and a happy occasion. The Johnsons garlanded us with a lei of flowers.”

[Don and Sylvia Petty, with their children, had come to Pakistan to work with the church in Lahore, but because of a short “war” between Pakistan and India that was primarily concentrated on the border between Lahore and Amritsar, the Pettys had temporarily shifted to Karachi. They were there when it came time for the Choates to return to the States. Later, after the F.M. Perrys moved to Lahore, Don and Sylvia would settle for some time with the church in Teheran, Iran, until the de-throning of the Shah forced their return to the States. Don wrote a book about their work in Teheran, entitled



Rising Heat in Tehran. [Call us at 662-283-1192 if you would like a copy. It is a fascinating read.]

“After going home, I worked hard until midnight trying to finish up with everything. A little after midnight brother Don Petty, Alexander, and Charles took some of our suitcases to the airport. We then worked like mad while they were gone. I quit and Betty got Sheila and Steve ready, Don came in and we hugged and said good-bye to Sylvia, then we loaded into the car and went to the airport. As we were leaving, Don hollered, ‘Winona or bust!’ As the plane left the ground, Betty and I had tears in our eyes.”

Those were the infant days of the development of the church in many nations of the world. They were also the days of more American missionaries than had been the case, before or since. Christian men deployed in World War II had opened the eyes of the church to the fact that there was not one congregation of the Lord’s church in many countries, especially in Europe and Asia, so a massive new outreach was begun. By the time the Choates moved to Pakistan, the number of full-time missionaries was said to be above 300 — still not enough, but more than there had been for centuries, and far more than there are now.

Another tool that was developed, and that greatly helped the missionaries-in-training, was “**missionary workshops**”. These were held annually in rotating countries, and usually 20-30 were able to participate. The program consisted of sharing reports by each of the men on the progress of the work being done, and delving into the various methods used to increase outreach and effectiveness. The workshops were, in effect, week-long intensive training schools for the men who were relatively new to the field and wanted to learn all they could from each other.

Chapter Nine

Home—and Back Again

The trip back to Mississippi from “the other side of the world” offered an opportunity to stop with missionaries in various countries along the way, an enlightening experience for the family. From Karachi the Choates flew to New Delhi, then to Kolkata, India, and to Yangon, Myanmar. Next came Bangkok, Thailand where they participated in a Gospel meeting with the Bob Buchannans, Parker Hendersons, Ray Mullinexes, Bill Becks, and Bob Davidsons. They took an all-night train up the mountains to Chaingmai, Thailand, where the Dorsey Traaws worked for many years. Ken Rideout translated for a lesson J.C. taught on “The Importance of Faith”.



In Seremban, Malaysia, till 3:00 AM, they enjoyed a visit with Stanley Shipp, the Judd Whitefields, and the Richard Matlocks. Missionaries can't waste time sleeping when there is so much to talk about! The next evening, they attended a meeting with the Singapore congregation in which Brother Shipp preached, with 94 present. Brother A.L. Harbin spoke the following evening.

From Singapore they flew to Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, then to Manila, Philippines where the Douglas Gunselmans were working. Philippine Bible College was located in Baguio City, under the leadership of Bob Buchannan and Ray Bryant. J.C. was given the opportunity to speak at both of the Sunday services, directing his lessons primarily to the young Bible students.

Time was spent with the Clancy Kings in Hong Kong. In Taipei, Taiwan they were with the Roy Mullinexes, then on to Okinawa where the Joe Cannons worked. That Sunday J.C. spoke to about 200 Americans stationed there. The subject was “Be Thou an Example”.

In Tokyo, Japan, the Choates were met by L.T. Gurganus and his family. J.C. went with brother Gurganus by train (an interesting ride on the well-developed Japanese rail system, a stark contrast to the Pakistan and Indian Railways) to Ibaraki Christian College. The Billy Smiths and Joe Betts gave them a tour also of the Childrens’ Home and the Old Folks’ Home.

Next stop: Honolulu, then California, and home, December 23, 1965! Papa Choate and Papa Burton were at the airport for the long-awaited reunion with J.C., Betty, Sheila, and Steve. (Steve’s — 2 1/2 years old — interaction had been primarily with brown-skinned people, so his response to any of those “white” folks reaching for him was to break out in wails of fear!)

Those Busy Months in 1966

Even though J.C. planned to return to Karachi during the latter half of 1966, much work had to be done during the first six months. First, a vehicle had to be purchased so that the many miles could be made in visiting supporting churches to show them, via slides, what had been done with their funds. Through stringent plans to save while in Pakistan, enough had accumulated to cover the cost of the station wagon J.C. chose, “home” to the family over many thousands of miles. On the trips during the following months, whenever it was possible they stayed in homes of members of the congregations to which he was reporting, both to save on expenses and to get better acquainted. J.C.’s philosophy was, “You can’t make friends with motel walls!”



During the latter months in Karachi, Betty had been drawing floor plans for a house they hoped to build in Winona. They applied for a loan and it was granted, so they bought a plot of land from Betty's Dad and began cutting trees and leveling the ground so that construction could begin. The city cut a road around the property and eventually graveled it. Betty's father and grandfather did carpentry/brick-masonry work, so it was decided that they, with Betty's involvement, would build the house while J.C. was in Pakistan. In the meantime, the family settled again into the one bedroom of the Burton house.

It was also during those early months at home that Betty's niece, Darla, came to live with Betty's parents, because of family problems. She was only 1 1/2 years older than Sheila, and a good sister-relationship developed. The Choates adopted Darla in 1967.



J.C. (sometimes with the family, but often alone) was constantly on the road. Looking back in his diaries, these are the cities

(churches, elderships) J.C. drove to, presented slides/lessons about his work or promoting the needs of others in finding sponsoring churches. This was between January 5 and June 28. A little busy, wasn't he?

Senatobia, MS	Stuart, OK	Portland, MS
Ada, OK	Allen, OK	Goodlettsville, TN
Cherokee, AL	Kiowa, OK	Hamilton, AL
Rogersville, AL	Coolgate, OK	Moulton, AL
Sheffield, AL	Monticello, AR	Winfield, AL
Pinellas Park, FL	Sheffield, AL	Fayette, AL
Tupelo, MS	Tuscumbia, AL	Booneville, MS
Ripley, MS	Burnsville, MS	Belzoni, MS
Dennis, MS	Clinton, TN	McKenzie, TN
Decatur, AL	Karns, TN	Greenfield, TN
Grenada, MS	Maryville, TN	Yazoo City, MS
Camden, AR	Cullman, AL	Kensett, AR
Delight, AR	Fulton, MS	Batesville, AR
Fort Worth, TX	Henderson, TN	Sulphur Rock, AR
Dallas, TX	Wiggins, MS	Camden, AR
Oklahoma City, OK	Warrington, FL	El Dorado, AR
Haskell, OK	Killen, AL	Amory, MS
Pleasant Valley, OK	Corinth, MS	Ripley, MS
Supulpa, OK	Huntingdon, TN	Brownsville, TN
Rogersville, AL	Milan, TN	Sharon, TN
Muscle Shoals, AL	Booneville, MS	Amory, MS
Acton, TN	Memphis, TN	Jasper, AL
Strickland, TN	Dennis, MS	Westport, TN
Selmer, TN	Humboldt, TN	Florence, AL
Corinth, MS	Benton, KY	Cloverdale, AL
Glen, MS	Corinth, MS	Corinth, MS
Florence, AL	Atwood, TN	Dallas, TX
Middleton, TN	Clarksburg, TN	Lawton, OK
Waynesboro, TN	Marietta, MS	Bridgeport, TX
Huntingdon, TN	Booneville, MS	Winona, MS
Bastrop, LA	Gadsden, AL	Dennis, MS
Stonewall, OK	Killen, AL	Florence, AL
Eufaula, OK	Paden, MS	Corinth, MS

These were in the early days of men trying to raise funds for foreign mission work. Many of these visits were with congregations giving a small portion of the monthly support necessary for the work. Many were with congregations J.C. hoped to motivate to become involved.

The elders of the Central church in Ada, Oklahoma that had sponsored the work had decided to take on a local Bible training school, so the elders of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi assumed responsibility for the Choates' work. (Their sup-

port and sponsorship has continued through the decades, to the present time in 2024.) The location of the church being so much closer to “home”, J.C. was able to make frequent visits, keeping the elders and the church fully informed about everything involving raising sup-

port for the work, and also what the brethren were reporting in frequent letters from Karachi.



Chapter Ten

The Last Half of 1966

Fulfilling his promise to return to Pakistan, J.C. wrote in his diary, “It was hard to say goodbye to Betty, the kids, and the Burtons. I don’t think I have ever hated to say goodbye as much as this time. May God bless them till we can meet again.”

Pakistan and India are on the exact opposite side of the world. Coming home, the Choates had stopped with missionaries in the numerous countries in Asia, seeing their work and learning of their methods of outreach. On the way back to Pakistan, J.C. flew through Europe, stopping again with the missionaries who were on his route of travel.

In Paris, he stayed with the Don Hindsley family. Don had recently visited missionaries in the Cameroons in West Africa, and he showed J.C. slides of the work there. On Sunday, J.C. spoke to the American Christians, then afterwards there was a service for French-speaking Christians.

The Phil Slates were working in London at the time, the Bill Collins in Glasgow. J.C. spoke for the Wednesday evening service, and he met with brother Collins, Jim Howie and some of the local men to discuss the work in Glasgow and Scotland. Their meeting continued until midnight. Sunday was spent in Copenhagen, Denmark where the Bob Eubanks worked. Bob Burgess and Wallace Mays spoke during the worship hour, and J.C. was asked to teach the Bible class. In the evening, there was a time of fellowship with a devotional and prayers in four languages!

In Oslo, Norway, the Nilsons invited J.C. to stay with them. He taught a class on Romans for the Wednesday evening study to a very small group. From there he flew to Helsinki, Finland, and met with the Eddie Duns and the Harold Hays. Worship was in the afternoon, with only nine present. From East Berlin, J.C. crossed over to West Berlin. He wrote, “I am really impressed with W. Berlin. It is a wonderful city with lots to see and do, and good food. The American

radio station is good for music and news.” He attended Wednesday evening Bible study and was able to share information about the work in Pakistan.

In Prague, Czechoslovakia J.C. was not able to locate anyone of the church, but he did meet a man who was a “pastor” of a 3000-member Presbyterian church. They had a youth meeting to which J.C. was invited and asked to speak. Five nationalities were present, and the lesson was translated into Czech and German. J.C. wrote, “The meeting last night was wonderful. There were lots of questions and I had an excellent opportunity to present the truth and to share some tracts.”

After Budapest, Hungary, J.C. flew to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, then to Bucharest, Romania. Though there were no congregations in these cities, he had gotten the names and addresses of denominational groups and met with priests/preachers and talked with them, discussing the Scriptures and giving them tracts about the one true church of the Bible.

In the middle east, the Carl Mathenys were working in Beirut, Lebanon, along with the Bob Douglas family. J.C. was asked to speak to the church on the Lord’s day. A young man who was a member of the church did the translation, with only nine people present. In the afternoon, they crossed over the border and drove to Damascus, Syria. J.C. wrote, “We went to the home of some contacts, and picked up others, including one that had been baptized in a camp at Damascus. At 6:00 PM we conducted the first worship service in Damascus in modern times. Ten were present. Bob taught the lesson and I led the closing prayer. Then we engaged in a question-and-answer session.”

Sadly, though there were more American missionaries in Europe in the ‘60s than now, the congregations were small and struggling.

“Home” Again in Pakistan!

August 17, 1966 back in Karachi! J.C. wrote: “Arrived at 145/Q/Block 2 and everything looked good. I went to the back and found Charles (convert/preacher, left in charge while J.C. was gone)

and his wife. We greeted each other with a hug. Opened the house and we began to put everything in place. Sent Charles to the Post Office for the mail and had some letters from Betty. We cranked the car with no trouble and went to the Police to register but I was told to come back tomorrow. Got back to the house and brother F.M. Perry, who had moved to Lahore to join the Hogans in the work there, walked up! Had a good visit.”

Getting settled into the routine of being with Christians in the congregations established in “suburbs” around Karachi — Drigh Colony, Mahmoodabad, Malir, Kalapul — , J.C. also visited a family in a new place called “Jutlands”. His impression of life there was far from positive: “I am telling you, that is the dirtiest, filthiest, stinkiest place in the world. I don’t see how they stand it. They are living like animals.”

Besides getting back into the visitations and studies with contacts in Karachi, dealing with Bible course students, preparing materials for the monthly magazine and other printing [preparing his own meals, cleaning the kitchen, washing clothes, keeping the dust under control in the house, and countless other jobs], J.C. continued to interact with the Gordon Hogans who had returned to Lahore.

Mid-September, he flew to Lahore to be with the Hogans and the church there. Gordon met him at the airport, took him home on his motor cycle, and they stayed up most of the night talking. About what? Among other things, Gordon told J.C. about his problems, and J.C. told Gordon about his.

The following Sunday, J.C. was asked to preach. The lesson for the English service was “**The Victorious Kingdom**”, and for the Urdu service for which the lesson had to be translated, “**Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today, and Forever**”. Four were baptized after the meeting.

For the meeting in the suburb, Murfpur, in the afternoon, a large crowd was present to hear the lesson, “**That Worthy Name**”. Afterwards, Gordon and J.C. visited a member of the church in Shah Jamal, then came back to Lahore for the evening meeting. Everyone spoke English, so the lesson on “**Blessing and Responsibility**” was

not translated. Afterwards, J.C. wrote, “We had cheese sandwiches for supper and then home-made ice cream. Sat around and talked for a long time and finally went to bed.”

Because missionaries worked in virtual isolation from peers with whom they could discuss their work, whenever there was opportunity to get together, much more time was spent talking and sharing than sleeping!

While in Lahore, J.C. and Gordon flew to Kabul, Afghanistan where Bob and Nina Stewart had worked with a university and had converted one family to Christ — Aziz Amri.

They worshiped with him, met his family, and also learned of his efforts to obtain visas to live in the States because of the danger of living as a Christian in that Muslim country.



A New Chapter on Afghanistan in 2021:

Through studies supplied by Katheryn Haddad, a **World English Institute** teacher, “John Mark” was taught and converted to Christ from Islam in 2011. The following information has been supplied by sister Haddad:

“Baptized John Mark, February 23, 2011 in his home town in Afghanistan. He and his wife baptized each other. Children were small. When his oldest son reached 17, he baptized him. When his next son reached 17, he baptized him. When his daughter reached 17, he baptized her. He was 39 at the time.

“Began ‘preaching’ to all his friends. One turned out to be an enemy and threatened him and his family. He sent his wife and

children into hiding in another province, then went to yet another province to draw attention away from them. He sold many of his possessions and fled with his family to India. There he met Sunny David, longtime minister of the church of Christ in New Delhi, and worshipped with the church. Mike Hale in Texas, a WEI teacher, sent him some private money to live on in India through minister, Prabhu Kumar who Mike was supporting.

“A month later, because of his wife’s unhappiness at living in a ‘new world’ so different from what she had known all her life, and unable to speak the language of everyone around her, John Mark returned with his family to Afghanistan and went to work in disguise until his enemies gave up looking for him. As ‘*Nutrition and Protection Officer*’ with *Save the Children*, he traveled around his country explaining to villagers how to feed their children nutritionally and how to keep them safe from diseases and kidnapping by the Taliban — everywhere in Afghanistan.

“He also obtained a certificate in nursing in Iran, then a bachelor’s degree in nursing in his home town. Everywhere he went with *Save the Children*, he continued talking to people about Christianity. He says 85% of all Afghans (especially the young people) hate Islam. But so far, most are afraid to become Christians.

“Eventually, he received a threatening phone call. This time he sent his family away (the Taliban kidnaps children for ransom) and hid in the mountains for several weeks. He threw his phone away and they did not call back. By this, he knew they did not know anyone in his family they could get his new number from.

“Finally *Save the Children* pulled out of his part of Afghanistan. He went a year without a job. He never asked for help. He did continue to pray for his brothers and sisters in America who he never met. He supported his family on borrowed money. A handful of us who know him sent him a few funds. And he continued to evangelize among friends.

“He received another threatening phone call. He sent his family away and returned to the mountains. Only this time, he got bolder. When they called him up there, he hung up on them! They

never called him back. He came down from the mountains and continued to “preach” to friends where ever he was. He continually says, ‘I WILL NOT STOP UNTIL THEY KILL ME.’

“With the help of Betty Choate’s contact, he obtained a job with *Aga Khan Foundation* in Mazar e-Sharif which provides services and funds for medical, nutritional, and scholarship needs worldwide. [Mazar e-Sharif is northern Afghanistan.]

“Service organizations in Afghanistan employed people on a year-to-year contract. His job with Aga Khan ended. He was out of work another year. But again, never asked for help. A few of us who know him again sent him a few funds. During this time he continued telling people he met about Jesus. God continued to protect him.

“By now, he noticed a stranger watching his house. He took his family away and rented a room in Kabul. Neighbors continued to report that the house was still being watched. So he sold it and moved his family to one room of a house he rented for them in Kabul. His family of nine continues to stay in that one small room so he can have sufficient money to buy a ‘church-house’ in Kabul.

“With his degree in nursing and the fact that he knows the Iranian dialect, he obtained a job with the Afghan-Iran Border Ministry doing health screening. Soon after, the COVID plague hit and he was hired to stay on another year. He now encourages the Christians in Kabul and his home town by long-distance phone. And he decided to buy a house in Kabul.

“But most houses were \$75,000 and up and banks only provide mortgages for five years. With money from his house in his home town, he bought a lot in Kabul and had a large basement dug. Now his grown sons go there everyday to work on it. He has been paying cash as he goes. It is a church building disguised as a house and very near completion. Once again, he never asked for help from American churches or anyone else.

“Recently his oldest son married and baptized his bride. She and John Mark’s daughter now teach Christianity in secret to ladies in their neighborhood in Kabul.

“Including children, there are SEVENTEEN MEMBERS of the secret KABUL CHURCH OF CHRIST.

“ELEVEN YEARS HAVE PASSED and the CHURCH OF CHRIST in Afghanistan STILL STRUGGLES ALONE. “John Mark” is now fifty years old and gray is appearing at his temples. His current job will end May 2021. Hopefully the nice church-house that he is building and paying for will be completed by then. Afghans are becoming more and more bold to take the big step and become Christians.”

DICK ADY, founder of WEI, says, ““John Mark’ is the Apostle Paul of Afghanistan!” He continues to amaze everyone at World English Institute.

THE WIFE OF AFGHANISTAN’S PRESIDENT IS “CHRISTIAN” and the Taliban are much weaker now.

DERWIN JACKSON who was stationed in Afghanistan and encouraged the converts by phone says, “That ‘John Mark’ knows no fear. He’ll go anywhere and talk to anyone.”

2024: This brother and his family are currently in hiding in Pakistan, waiting to see what the Lord will do next. We included his story so that American Christians can be aware of the threats and challenges facing God’s people in other parts of the world.

Since “John Mark” may some day be able to check out things in Iran, let me share an

Amazing Story Concerning Iran!

(Toward the end of our time in Karachi, when we returned as a family in 1967, this soul-stirring thing happened, as recorded by J.C.)

“Recently a man stopped at our gate here in Karachi, and stood looking up at the sign ‘Church of Christ’. After a few minutes

he came inside the gate and rang the door bell. We invited him in, and an amazing conversation followed.

“Dr. A.S. Khan is originally from Iran. He said he was checking out the sign which identified us as the church of Christ, wondering if he would feel able to fellowship us. We had never been under such an investigation, so we were very interested in what Dr. Khan had to say. His first astounding statement was that there are approximately 750,000 people of the Azerbaijan, and extending on up into Russia, in a very mountainous region along the common border of the two countries, who claim to be just Christians!

“My wife and I have had subsequent meetings with this gentleman and have been even more thrilled with what we have heard. This past week we sat with Dr. Khan for some time and questioned him extensively concerning this group and their practices. We were amazed at the answers he gave. We deliberately did not tell him what we believed until we had the opportunity to hear his answers. On the basis of what was discussed, it appears that we are very close indeed.

“Dr. Khan talked at length to give us the background of which he is still a part. He said that this group of people dates back to the birth of Christ. The ‘Wise Men’, from what has now come to be called Iran, saw the star and followed it, ultimately finding the baby King. They stayed for a while and then returned to Iran by a different route.

Heard Peter at Pentecost

“About twenty-five years later, when the child would have become a man, a group of twenty-five men made a trip to Israel to see what had become of the one they had worshiped as the new King of Israel. They remained for several years and were present on the day of Pentecost to hear Peter’s sermon. After that they came home.

“Later, another group made a trip to that part of the world. They also spent several years, with the last part of the time being in Antioch. When they returned home, they brought with them a book containing ‘The Sayings of Christ’, which Dr. Kahn says corresponds closely with the writings in the present day New Testament.

“Dr. Kahn explained that the faith of these people has been

handed down from father to son through the years, and that they have not changed. He said that although he has traveled a great deal and has searched for others with like faith, he has not changed from his original beliefs.

Persecution Hindered Evangelism

“As to being evangelistic, they have not been, other than to teach the truths to their own children, because of persecution. First they were persecuted by the Catholics, then by the Armenians, then by the Muslims. So they have remained to themselves through the centuries, living in a mountainous area. Although they call themselves Christians, they are known by the government as ‘the Nazarenes’.

They Are “Christians Only”

“This body of people, according to Dr. Khan, believes that Christ established the church and that all other churches or denominations are the anti-Christ. They look to Christ as the Head of the church, with no earthly head or headquarters. They are Christians only. They meet each Sunday for worship, having the Lord’s Supper, prayer, Bible study, singing (vocal music only), and giving.

“When asked how many come together for worship in his home congregation, he said 5,000. He said that there are numerous assemblies with two or three hundred to two to five thousand meeting for worship.

“Each congregation is independent and has its own elders. They also have a program for education of their children, providing three hours a week of Bible training in addition to what they receive on Sunday. The women do not preach or teach publicly, but do teach the children and other women.

“Dr. Khan told us that although they believe in immersion (for adults only) they immerse three times, once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit. They recognize Easter and Christmas, but both at the same time, on March 4. They believe that Christ was born and resurrected on the same date. On that date they have a gathering and a sermon about His resurrection.

“With the exception of these points, we found no other differences. There probably are others, but it is amazing to run across someone in this part of the world with such a background. We concluded that there must be something to his story for he knows a very pure New Testament Christianity, and in every way speaks as the oracles of God without denominational jargon. In these years of living on this side of the world, we have never talked or studied with anyone who, from the beginning, had such a clear understanding of the Truth.

“Being cautious, we asked ourselves what he had to gain if he was trying to deceive us. He never asked for any money, and he offered to go with me to his home in Iran. I was eager to do this, and we discussed potential timing. As it turned out, he was out of Karachi at the only time that I could work such a trip into my schedule, so I decided to visit brethren who were stationed in Teheran in the American military, and to go from there alone into the part of the country where these Christians were supposed to be living.

“I did that, traveling by car as far as was possible. From that point, the way into the mountains was only by horseback, and I decided I could not make that trip alone. It was a great disappointment that I was not able to trace the story to a proven conclusion. However, the people with whom I talked at the stopping point did tell me that there used to be many Christians in that area, but that because of persecution, they had moved back into the mountains, which was also what Dr. Khan had said.

“Perhaps someday, conditions in Iran will again be such that someone can investigate this story fully. Knowing how many scams there are in the world, my skeptical human nature listened in doubt. But every time I recall the detailed biblical truths Dr. Khan spoke in those visits, and the fact that he never asked for anything, I am convinced all over again that there must have been truth in his story.”

And if it becomes possible for “John Mark” to travel to Iran, maybe he can learn more about this astounding possibility of there being many thousands of Christians along the mountainous border between Iran and Russia!

Chapter Eleven

Back to the Work in Pakistan in 1966

Returning from the visit with the Gordon Hogans in Lahore, J. C. wrote, “Took a taxi to the house and Charles opened the door for me. He said one was baptized while I was gone. In the kitchen, I found that a few little things were missing. This part of the world is notorious for petty thievery. Went after the mail. Had 13 letters from Betty and also letters from our folks. After reading that good mail, I went to the market, also picked up some pictures, got my hair cut, and got a flat fixed. Came in and cooked hamburgers for supper, cleaned up, went to see one of the church members, came home and worked till 1:00.

The next afternoon, he wrote, “I went to the Post Office, from there I went to visit Alexander’s folks, then to see Winnie Masih, Sister Masih, the Bashir Akhtars, and the Pattersons. Came home and worked in the office till 11:00 PM.”

The next afternoon, he wrote, “Charles and I went out visiting a little before 4:00 PM. Went by sister Benjamin’s, went to the Johnsons at Kalapul, and then visited another family, and plans were made for a meeting next week.”

Brother J.W Roberts was scheduled to come to Karachi. He spoke at the various Sunday meetings. After the last evening service, J.C. took Charles to the house, and then he and brother Roberts went to the Intercontinental hotel/restaurant for supper. “The car played up and brother Roberts had to push me some. Made it home.”

The next morning, “I got up at 3:30 AM and tried to crank the car to go to the airport to meet Gordon, who had decided to come down while brother Roberts was here. By pushing the car, I made it and drove out to Drigh Road, and it took out on me. After awhile, I pushed it and cranked it. This time I made it to the railroad bridge and it took out on me again. I pushed and pushed but it wouldn’t crank. The battery is down and it is heating up. So aggravating.

“I saw the night coach plane come in, so I decided I had to get a taxi to go to the airport and meet Gordon, so I locked the car and left it there. A taxi came by and it finally stopped, and there Gordon was!

“Gordon and I went downtown when shops opened and got a battery, and took it to the car. It cranked, and we put on a new cable, then took it to International Motors and had the radiator pumped out.

“Came home and got brother Roberts, checked on his air ticket to Mumbai tomorrow, sent off a telegram to Bombay, then had dinner at Shezan’s. Then we drove up to Thatta so he could see a little of south Pakistan, came back and drove around over Karachi, had a flat on the way, changed the tire and drove home, had a bath (there’s always so much dust in the air), wrote Betty and had a meeting with Charles.

After sending Gordon on his way back to Lahore, J. C. went to the Income Tax office to get clearance, anticipating his upcoming trip to India. “I was put through the torture chamber again. It was utterly amazing. He said it would take a long time, and I told him I would have to settle it today. He said I would have to fill out a form, but I showed him I owed no taxes. Finally I filled out the form and got the clearance some three hours later. Should have taken no more than five minutes...”

“Joseph and I went over to the other side of the railroad tracks and met with a good group of people and had a service. I preached on ‘Who Is a Christian?’ Had a very good meeting, followed by the customary Pakistani hot tea. We took a taxi home and I graded Bible course lessons until late.”

“Had to push my car off and then I drove to the Patterson home for a visit. Had a good evening service, and brother and sister Johnson brought a family from Kalopal. Also, the Pattersons came.

“We then headed back for Malir. On the way the car took out, so I sent Charles, Lily and Joseph on. Got the car started and I turned back. It quit again so I left it at a service station and took a rickshaw back.”

No one should ever think that doing God’s work on the other side of the world, in a different and often corrupt culture is an easy thing! There are always problems; often entire days are filled with them.

From Pakistan, Back to India, Late 1966

The weeks were filled with work, but there was the continual consciousness of the need to help with the spreading of the Gospel in other countries. Always interested in India, J.C. got a visa the middle of October and flew to Mumbai where the B.D. Carters and the George Bryans were living, working at secular jobs. Joshua Gootam, from Kakinada on the eastern shore of India, joined them for two weeks of Gospel meetings which were conducted in rented halls in suburbs of Mumbai. Some years later, Craig Philips moved to Mumbai and he, along with others, developed numerous “home” churches in those areas.



Craig Philips

During the time the Choates had struggled to get visas to India, it was learned that because India and Canada were coupled in a pact with Britain, Canadians could live in India without visas,

so brother J.C. Bailey was the first to go, followed by the Jim Johnsons and the Carl Mahenys. In 1963, on his way to India, brother Bailey had stopped in Karachi and had spent a few days with the Choates. From there he went first to the northeastern states, but ultimately settled in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh. He had good success starting the church there, and the work spread throughout the state. One of the early converts was the father of Joshua Gootam, a powerful preacher whose sons — Ricky, Robin,



Joshua Gootam

and Ronnie — continue that work. “World Evangelism” has provided funds for their radio/TV programs with follow-up literature since 1975. Because of their dedication, even today the Lord’s church is stronger in Andhra Pradesh state, along with the state of Tamil Nadu, than anywhere else in India.

Leaving Mumbai, J.C. flew to Kochin, then on to meet with Carl Johnson who was working to establish the church in the Ooty area, in Mount Zion.

Being so near Sri Lanka, J.C. took a flight to Colombo, the capital. No congregations existed in that island nation, just to the southern tip of India. His “tourist tour” took him to Negombo first, then to Anuradhapura, and on the way he saw canals, palms, the Indian Ocean, tea estates, cocoa and rubber plantations, elephants working in the fields, and many other unusual sights. Ceylon was primarily Buddhist, so there were numerous temples and points of interest. One was “the oldest tree living, the one under which Buddha meditated and reached ‘Buddhahood’.”

The drive took them through Sigiriya, Kandy, and back to Colombo. There he had a talk with a Seventh-Day Adventist missionary, went to the Ceylon Bible Society and had a lengthy study with the secretary, “Then I went to see one of my Bible correspondence students (a Muslim) and a crowd gathered, so I preached to them.”

Returning to Chennai (Madras), J.C. made a brief tour of the important site, St. Thomas Mount. It is believed that in AD 52 the apostle Thomas introduced Christianity to the subcontinent of India, before being martyred at the area now called St Thomas Mount in AD 72. The Church of St. Thomas has many followers in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, and Thomas’ tomb is there, evidence that he did evangelize in India and made many converts. As with much of the true church, though, with the passing of decades, apostasy corrupted the congregations begun by Thomas, and today it is similar to the Catholic church, called “Mar Thoma Christians” swamy.jpg.

Moving on, J.C. spent Sunday with brother P.R. Swamy in Bangalore and spoke to the church there. “Tonight I preached at the

Theosophical Hall. At 6:00 hardly anyone was there, but true to Indian habits of lateness (We call it ‘Indian Standard Time’! Ha!), by 6:30 the people were coming in, and around 100 were eventually there to hear my lesson on ‘Unity’. I spoke 1 1/2 hours (with translation) and the lesson was well received. An ad with my picture appeared in the Deccan Chronicle paper and handbills had been distributed.”



P.R. Swamy

The next stop was Hyderabad and then Warangal where the church had already been established. One-night meetings were held in six different halls, and J.C. spoke 16 times during the three days he was there. A total of 21 obeyed the Gospel.

A Gospel meeting at the Y.M.C.A. hall in Kolkata (Calcutta) was next on the schedule. “On Sunday evening, 20 were present. I spoke on ‘Scriptural Teaching’. Before the service I talked at length with a young man named Philip and he said he wanted to obey the Gospel. After the service, we went to the River Ganges and brother McCui of baptized him.”

In Kolkata, “We went to visit the Kali Hindu Temple. It was a horrible sight. Goats were being offered as sacrifices and blood was being put on the foreheads of those making the offerings. There were some vulgar things going on too. Beggars were everywhere and there were brothels. From there we went to the ‘burning ghats’. A small baby was being cremated.”

During the four years since the Choates had first visited Shilong, Assam, India, before back-tracking to settle in Pakistan, Canadian missionaries had moved there to help with the work: Donald Perry and his family, and David Hallett. J.C. marked fourteen days on his calendar for meetings with the church there, and in outlying areas. The meetings were beneficial for everyone and a number of



conversions were made. About 10:00 PM a young man who had attended one of the closing meetings came to the Perrys' home, saying he couldn't sleep and the song "Oh, Why Not Tonight?" that J.C. had read in his sermon was bothering him. They were thrilled to baptize him into Christ.

For the record, the meetings and conversions from the trip to India and Sri Lanka were these:

Mumbai meetings, 12 days; Hyderabad, 2 baptisms; Warangal, 21 baptisms; Kolkata, 3 baptisms; Shillong, 5 baptisms.

While in Sri Lanka and India, J.C. placed ads for Bible correspondence course students in the primary newspapers. The result was that he had about 1,000 signed up for studies even before beginning any on-site work in those countries!

Still wanting to be able to work in New Delhi and to begin the church there, on Sunday J.C. made visits to two denominational groups. He wrote in his diary: "I took a taxi to Old Delhi and finally located the Methodist church where about a hundred had gathered. They were having Sunday school. I went in and was invited to speak to the congregation during their worship hour. It was translated into Hindi. Made some very good contacts.

“Went home with one of the members, and we took a taxi to the meeting house of the Pentecostal Church of God in New Delhi. They invited me to speak at the evening service. I spoke to about 20 on ‘Scriptural Teaching’. Made some good contacts.”

Next stop: back to Karachi and preparations to return to the States.

Since J.C. was alone, he had the usual ‘wifely’ duties to perform: house cleaning, cooking, washing of clothes, etc. but of course the important work was preparation for worship meetings in the main Karachi congregation and in the congregations that had been begun in the village areas. Much of the preaching had been turned over to Charles and Alexander, who were being trained in his very small ‘Karachi Christian College’. Lengthy discussions were had concerning work ethics, attitudes, spiritual growth, and countless additional topics in which they needed training. Knowing that the entire responsibility for the future of the congregations depended on the dedication of young Christians weighed heavily on J.C.’s heart.

Even though Pakistan was 98 percent Muslim, it was possible to place ads — even teaching ads — in the papers. J.C. took advantage of that privilege: “I arranged for ads concerning the church in the Karachi Morning News, 15 insertions, beginning Saturday and every other week. Also arranged for ads in the Dacca edition of the Morning News, and additional ads concerning our Bible correspondence courses.”

Knowing that he would be leaving for the States in a few weeks, J.C. wrote letters for Charles to present to the local legal authorities, authorizing a burial area for members of the church, and also authorizing Charles to be able to perform marriages.

Happily, during J.C.’s last week in Karachi, three correspondence course students were baptized. Tearful goodbyes were said on his final Sunday with the church, January 7, 1967. Final packing had been done, and the following Tuesday J.C. began the journey back to family and the States.

Chapter Twelve

The First Half of 1967

J.C. returned to the US early in February, after spending six months immersed in the work in Pakistan and India. He wrote, “I flew American Airlines and arrived in Memphis at 6:00 AM. It was so wonderful to see Betty, Sheila, Steve, and Darla again, and the Burtons. I am so thankful to God for a safe return.”

While he was away, Betty and her family were busy in Winona. Her Mother was keeping the children, preparing meals for the family, getting Sheila and Darla back and forth to school, and growing a garden to keep the freezer filled with tasty home-grown vegetables.

Betty and her Dad were building a house for the Choates: 708 Burton Drive! They hired the wiring and plumbing done, but the carpenter work, brick masonry, sheet-rocking, papering, tiling, and painting were done by their little team. Betty often remarked that, by working in a construction project with her Dad, she had gotten to know him in a very different and wonderful way. No matter what complications developed, his answer was always, “We can fix that!” And he could!

The days, weeks, and months after J.C.’s return to Winona, February 4, were packed to overflowing with MANY things. J.C.’s di-



ary: “From the airport, we drove to Winona and went to our new house and I was shown around. Oh, how I love it!” Of course, furniture had to be bought, so there was shopping around at “discount” furniture stores (stores that handled “not quite perfect” goods, but that was OK and a lot cheaper); grading the front and back “yards”, and sowing grass....

But the real work was writing reports, making appointments to update supporting congregations and to find additional support. **Because J.C. had seen the great need for American workers in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, he was continually talking with preaching brethren about the possibility of leaving the security of the US and becoming a missionary in one of those foreign cities where no congregation of the Lord’s church existed, and he was also on the lookout for possible supporting churches for the men who showed an interest in doing foreign work.** There were appointments Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and often other nights throughout the week, whenever and wherever he could get brethren to agree to let him come and show his slides and talk about the work. Appointments ranged from congregations near Winona to Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, the Carolinas, and as far away as Indiana. Whenever possible, there was a drive home after the meetings, arriving at some late hours. One diary entry said, “Got home at 6:30 AM.”

During those months, a replacement family was found for the work in Karachi, and another family volunteered to begin raising support to move to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to help start the church there.

The Burtons had thought that, with the building of their house in Winona, and the location of a replacement family for the work in Karachi, the Choates’ foreign mission work had come to a close; they would now be spending their time recruiting others to go overseas.

But that was not how the continuing story developed. In June, the announcement was made to the family that there was more work for the Choates to do overseas, and that they would return to Pakistan in July! While they would be away, the Burtons would move temporarily into the new home. What was deemed a “temporary” move at first turned out to be nine years! A lot of history had to unfold....

Chapter Thirteen

To Karachi, Pakistan, To Colombo, Sri Lanka, and, finally, to New Delhi, India

Randal Harley and his family lived in Colombo for a year in 1967, as Randal worked with a secular government program designed to help the deaf and the blind. They were Christians and wanted a missionary family to come to Sri Lanka during their stay for the purpose of beginning the church in that yet unevangelized country. The commitment was made by the John Wheelers, but by the time they could raise their support, the Harleys' year would have ended.

The Choates had returned to Karachi in August and resumed responsibility for the on-going work there. The August 26th entry in J.C.'s diary recorded: "Morning: Karachi (33 present). Had a good meeting and it was so good to see everyone. Among the congregations in the area, there were 23 baptisms while we were gone."

The replacement family for Karachi arrived in early September and word also came that the Wheelers were in the process of raising funds to move to Colombo to begin the work there. Everything seemed in place for the Choates to make their move to New Delhi, India. They anticipated going on a three-month tourist visa, since that seemed to be all they could hope for. In a visit with the Christians on the US Military Base in Teheran, Iran (a different relationship existed between the US and Iran at that time!), J.C. got his Indian tourist visa, and anticipated no problem for his family to get theirs when he returned to Karachi.

Knowing of the needs in the two places, they were praying for God to overrule in their decision of whether to go to India first

or to Sri Lanka, to be there before the Harleys finished up their contract, and while the Wheelers were making preparations to come. Because India was the much larger country, and no work had been done in the entire northern half, they felt that they should go there. But to their utter shock, when they went to the Indian Embassy and made the application, the representative told them rudely, “I would not give you even twenty-four hours in my country!”

Never before or after was an official at an embassy so outspokenly rude. The Choates could only conclude that this was an emphatic answer to their prayers: In no uncertain terms, they were to go to Colombo! Surely, God, **in His greater vision of souls and time**, was ruling that they should postpone the fulfillment of their dream for India. With seemingly no choice, they applied for visas for Ceylon. They were granted without any problem! A closed door and an open door...

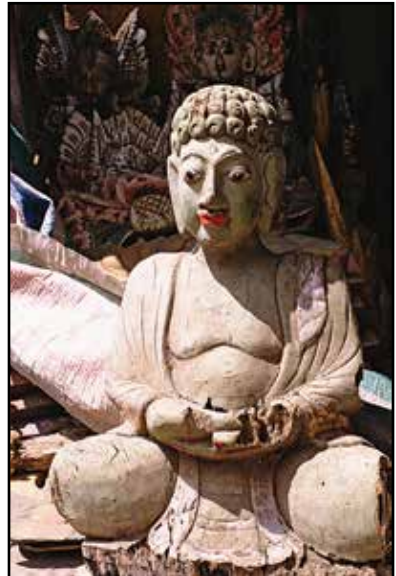
On to Colombo:

The move was made to Colombo in December of 1967, and a new world of opportunity opened!

Ceylon, as it was called in 1967, was far different from Pakistan. Though part of the population was Muslim and part Hindu, the majority were Buddhist, and there was more left-over British influence in this smaller country than in Pakistan and India.

Living the first weeks with the hospitable Harleys, the Choates rented a house in January — 28A Asoka Gardens — and began having furniture built, bought a refrigerator and a gas stove, and then moved in, gradually making a “house” a “home”.

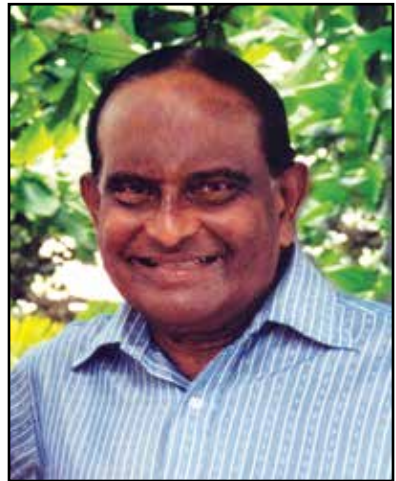
J.C., Randal, and brother



Clyde Fiscus, who was also in Colombo with a secular job, visited various denominational churches and began to collect addresses of people who seemed interested in studying the Gospel. Within a very short time, letters of invitation were sent to forty contacts, encouraging them to meetings that would be conducted at the Choates' new "home" and worship place.

How to begin? J.C. decided to conduct a two-week Bible school and advertised it in the local newspaper. Three men enrolled for the study. One was Reggie Gnanasundaram, a Tamil "Christian" who was temporarily between jobs and reasoned that this would be a good way to spend his time. Before the study ended, Reggie was baptized into Christ and began a long and fruitful journey in the faith. **How strongly the evidence of God's vision and providence has been seen through the decades since that beginning!**

Reggie was well-educated and owned his own very nice home and a car, unlike the majority of the "middle class" people of Colombo. From the beginning of his studies, he volunteered to take J.C. in his vehicle to meet various believers in Christ whom he knew. In time he assumed much of the responsibility for leadership among the young converts, leading the worship services when no missionaries were there.



Jumping ahead, a little: After the arrival of the Wheelers, and allowing time for them to adjust to life and work in a new world, the Choates made their move to India in October of 1968, but J.C. often returned to Colombo for Gospel meetings and to renew his Indian visa.

During one such visit, two years after Reggie's baptism, Reggie learned that his seven-year-old daughter, Lilani, had a serious heart defect, and that she would be dead within months if she

did not have corrective surgery. Through the obvious **overruling providence of God**, just days prior to the crisis, Reggie had seen an article in the *Reader's Digest* about Dr. Denton Cooley of Houston, Texas who was being heralded as the foremost pediatric heart surgeon in the world. Reggie wrote to Dr. Cooley, sending the papers of Lilani's diagnosis. Amazingly, Dr. Cooley answered, volunteering to do the surgery free of charge, and saying that the St. Luke's Children's Hospital with which he worked would cut their charges in half! What a promise!

This happened in 1970, when J.C. was in and out of India for a year, so when Betty received Reggie's letter telling of Lilani's crisis and of the urgent need to raise money to cover the cost of their travel to the States and the hospital charges, her first response was to break into tears. How could \$30,000 or \$40,000 be raised with no way to do it except through letters? Again, **God took care of the challenge**. She and sisters in the Winona church wrote to forty congregations — and the recipients copied the letters and sent them to others. The last responses came from Washington state, quite a little distance from Mississippi! \$30,000 was actually raised, of which \$20,000 was ultimately required for Lilani's bill, and the remaining \$10,000 was invested in the evangelistic work in Sri Lanka! God knows how to deal with figures, and to do more than we ask or think!!!

Open heart surgery was in its earliest days, and most attempts were unsuccessful. When Dr. Cooley examined Lilani, he found that she actually had five heart defects, and he was not sure he could correct all of them in one surgery. To everyone's great relief and thankfulness, Lilani survived and has had no further problems with her heart.

But what has happened in the years between 1970 and 2024? The time the Gnanasundarams spent in the States enabled them to meet brethren in various congregations who supported the work. The Deer Park Church of Christ was deeply involved during the time the Gnanasundarams were in Houston, and afterwards. Eventually, funds were raised, through the leadership of the Pine Hill Church of Christ in the Florence, AL area, to construct a permanent meeting

place for the church in Colombo, and Reggie gave up secular work to devote his life to evangelism.

As Lilani reached adulthood, a young man by the name of Harold Thomas began attending the assemblies and studying with Reggie. After a year, he was converted and became a strong advocate for the truth. Ultimately, he and Lilani were married and, so, began **another chapter of God's providential work in Sri Lanka.**



When Reggie died in 2007, Harold became one of the leading men in the church. Though he did secular work for a living, he was mature in his knowledge of the Scriptures and did most of the preaching in Colombo. He and Lilani were also strong supporters of brethren in other congregations.

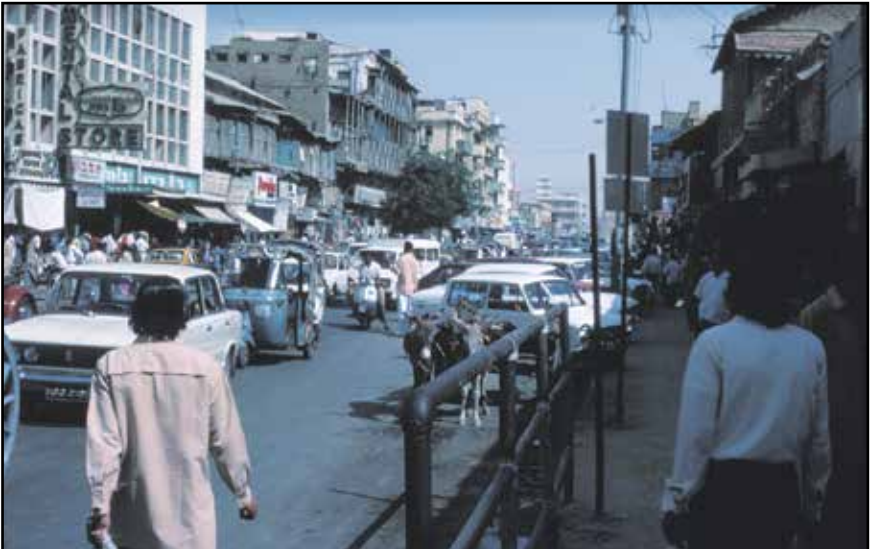
Recently, Harold had a call from a man in the northern part of the island. Through the **Internet**, this man had enrolled in a **World Video Bible School** course. Through them, he had learned, to his surprise, that the church of Christ actually existed in Sri Lanka! He arranged to come to Colombo and to study with Harold. He obeyed the Gospel and is now wanting Harold to come to his area to study with his contacts so that a new congregation can be started there! And Harold has contacts with whom he has been studying in the city of Jaffna, so he and Lilani plan to visit both of those places to begin the Lord's church in two new areas!

From that unplanned beginning in 1968, **God's providence** — working through the Harleys, the Gnanasundaram family, Harold and Lilani, and fellow Christians — **has been evident every step of the way.** In a later chapter you will read about the expansion of the preaching of the Gospel throughout the Indian sub-continent via radio from Radio Ceylon — “The Giant of Asia”. It was Reggie's presence in Colombo that made this vital part of the work possible from the beginning. Again, **God's vision!**

***Finally,* to New Delhi, India:**

After ten months in Colombo, converts had been made and had grown in their knowledge of the Scriptures, and a lot of literature in the form of tracts, books, and a monthly magazine had been printed. There were Bible course contacts all over the country, creating the expectation that baptisms and congregations would soon result. The John Wheelers had raised their support and the Choates had overstayed the Wheelers' arrival by five months so that they could have time to adjust to their new home and the developing church. By early October J.C. felt it was time to move on to India, at last!

They arrived in New Delhi on October 25, 1968 and checked into the Central Court Hotel where they had stayed in previous visits. It was old, showing its age, but less expensive than most and was located in downtown Delhi. Standing on the balcony, looking down on the people coming and going on the crowded street below, they could not help but wonder, "How can we possibly have any effect on such masses?" It was an overwhelming thought, haunted by the realization that they had only three-month visas.



In response to a newspaper ad, they found a house in the area of the city known as Greater Kailash.

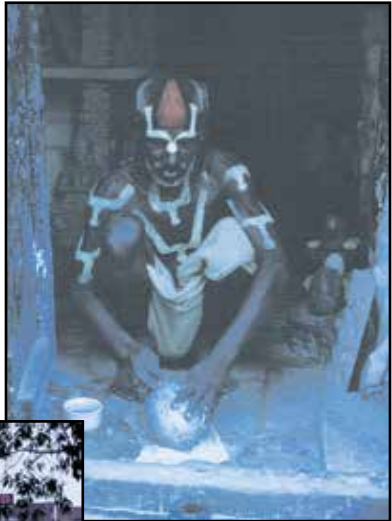


Veggie market

With an address, ads were placed concerning worship services and study materials. The printing of



Delhi Gate



A “holy” man

tracts and Bible correspondence courses was begun. The first issue of a monthly magazine, *The Bible Teacher*, was printed



with 1,000 requests for it already on hand! (In 2024, it is now in its **54th** year of printing, 12 issues every year!)

J.C. visited denominational churches, **depending on God's providence to bring him in contact with those who were looking for the truth.** He talked with anybody who would talk and set up personal studies. Kumar Malick was the first one to be baptized on December 19th. Shortly thereafter, going to a "Bible Bookstore", he met a young clerk named Sunny David, a member of the Brethren church. Naturally, he invited him to come to the worship services and for personal studies. Sunny came and within two weeks (February 9) he wanted to be baptized.



This is how he describes his conversion: "In 1968 I was working in a religious book shop, being operated by the Brethren church in New Delhi, where I first met J.C. Choate. He had come to the book store to buy a Bible. Actually, he later told me that he was trying to visit places where he could find denominational people whom he could invite for Bible study. During the visit he asked me about my religious background, and introduced himself as a member of the church of Christ. He told me where he was living in Delhi and that a group of people is meeting in his house as a church of Christ. He invited me to come and worship with the church on Sunday.

"On Sunday after the worship was over and all visitors were dispersed, J.C. requested me to stay back for a while so that we could talk some more. As we sat, he asked me where was I worshipping on Sundays and how was I saved? I was a member of the Brethren church at that time. I told him that we believed that when one receives Christ as the personal savior, one is saved at the moment, and that is how I was saved, and later I was baptized (immersed) to

show or to declare what Christ had worked in me, that is He saved me when I had believed in Him.

“J.C. then began to show me from the Bible what it says how one is saved. He showed me Mark 16:16 where it says salvation comes *after* one is baptized and not *before* one is baptized. Also he asked me to read Acts 2:38, where it says one is baptized for the remission of sins, that the remission or the forgiveness of sins comes after and not before baptism. There were many other passages which were pointed out to me, such as Acts 22:16, Romans 6:3-4 and Galatians 3:27, to convince me that I was wrong in believing that one is saved by accepting Jesus as my personal savior. I also learned that when one is baptized scripturally, the Lord Himself adds that individual to His church (Acts 2:47), which He had promised to build (Matthew 16:18). After a good Bible study, it did not take me long to admit that I was wrong in my belief so far. So I readily accepted to be baptized scripturally. I left the Brethren church and all my former denominational beliefs. I am happy to be a member of the Lord’s church.”

A month later someone was present for worship who couldn’t speak English, so J.C. asked Sunny if he would translate the lesson. His reply was, “I’ve never done that, but I’ll try.”

Knowing that their extended visas were due to expire early in June, J.C. was concerned about the continuation of the work in Delhi. Sunny was proving to be a sincere convert and a willing helper in everything that needed to be done, so J.C. asked him early in April if he would consider leaving his work at the bookstore and becoming a full-time evangelist for Christ. It had not been J.C.’s practice to “hire” people in any of the places where he had worked, but **he knew that something different had to be done in Delhi because there was no hope of a foreign missionary being allowed to replace him.** Within a few days, Sunny came with a positive answer, saying, “I really had a round with my boss about leaving!”

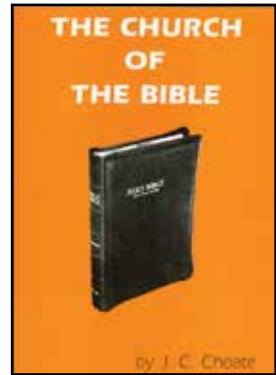
In April, P.A. Chatterjee was baptized in Old Delhi and meetings were begun on a regular basis in his home, in addition to those in New Delhi. Sundays were very busy with worship in the

morning at the Choates' home and in the evening on the other side of that very large city, New/Old Delhi. Because of the horrendous traffic, the short time the Choates could expect to be in India, and the cost of a vehicle, all travel was done by taxi, auto rickshaw, or on Sunny's motorscooter if only he and J.C. were making the trip.

During those early months in India, Mack Lyon, who had worked in Australia, preached in a Gospel meeting in January. Bob Davidson, missionary to Thailand, came through Delhi on his way home and preached in another meeting. Life was very busy, souls were being taught and, slowly, conversions were taking place.

In addition, **J.C. was continuing with advertising, grading Bible courses, writing several books on mission work, addressing the monthly magazine and preparing it for mailing, and having personal studies with any contacts that were made. Bedtime for him and for Betty ranged from midnight to whenever...**

J.C. had also decided to print, in book form, 5,000 copies of the Bible course he had written while in Sri Lanka: **The Church of the Bible**. (Into 2024, this little book has been translated into more than 50 languages, and in excess of 200,000 copies have been printed and distributed in many countries of the world; the book for which we at **World Evangelism** in Winona, MS get more orders than for any other of our 200+ titles!)



Betty was busy, too, with meals to prepare for the family and for frequent visitors, home-schooling for their three children, clothes to wash by hand for the family of five, the usual house-cleaning to be done, shopping for food and other needs for the family, and Bible classes with any ladies and children who became a part of their circle of contacts. In addition, she was writing **First Steps in Faith**, a book on their years of work in Pa-

kistan, then Sri Lanka, and concluding with the beginning of the church in Delhi.

And the weather was HOT! In excess of 100 degrees—sometimes up to 114 degrees, and no air conditioning! Adding to the trauma was the fact that there was no water except for an hour before 6:00 AM (fill every bucket, tub, and container before it goes off!), and the electricity was usually off an hour or so every day (power shifting, it was called, because the available supply was not sufficient for the whole city at one time) so the ceiling fans came to a clanking halt, and the oven-like heat encompassed everything.

Much was learned in those coping experiences. What? On the hottest days, the kids would douse themselves — clothes and all — with water, and then would sit with their feet in a pan of water as they did their studies. They often dampened their beds (charpois) at night. One blessing was that the stove ran on a gas cylinder, so the meals were not interrupted; and good chicken and pork were available, even though there was no beef in that Hindu-believing nation of cow worship. The overall thing that was learned, **“Go with the flow... everything will ultimately be all right.”** That mindset went with them through the years, so that good things were great and negative things were not overwhelming catastrophes. **God would take care.**

Early in June of 1969, after two years in Karachi/Colombo, and seven months in New Delhi, the packing began, sorting printed materials that were to be stored and mailed out from Sunny’s place, and other things that were to be shipped back to the States. By that time seven had obeyed the Gospel, and the number for worship averaged around 20. Sunny’s wife had been baptized and he was teaching other members of his family which consisted of his mother and six brothers. His father had died when Sunny was in his late teens, so he had carried adult responsibility for more than a decade. J.C. had no doubts about his depth of conviction or his ability to carry on the work. But J.C. also planned to return to Delhi after making reports to supporting congregations in the States...

A Note from Sunny, August 2020

“It is exciting to learn that you are working on a biography of J.C. It is true that **if J.C. had not come to Delhi with his family, I have thought about it often, would there be a church in Delhi as it is today?** And what about tons of literature that was printed and sent from Delhi to various parts of the country in many years, that resulted in providing unadulterated teachings of the Bible? People from various parts of the country still write and tell me how they have preserved those books which helped them to learn many Bible truths, and many preachers draw their sermon outlines from those books to preach. That reminds me of Isaiah 55:10,11 and Revelation 14:13.

“**I was searching** for the truth when J.C. met me in the Bible book store and invited me to come and worship with him on Sunday. Since my childhood we were Methodists. Later I joined the Anglican (Episcopal) church, and when J.C. met me I was a member of the Brethren church, where I was also immersed, about two years before meeting J.C. The Brethren church believed, like most others, one is saved by accepting Jesus as a personal savior. Which I did. Later they ‘baptized’ a few of us who had earlier accepted Christ as ‘personal Savior’ to be saved, just to show forth what had already taken place inside. J.C. pointed out to me Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 and other verses of the scripture which convinced me that my earlier immersion was unscriptural. I was baptized on February 9, 1969.”

Chapter Fourteen

An Exciting Trip Home

Betty's brother, Curtis, had joined the Choates in New Delhi for their last two months there. Though he was only twelve years old, the Burtons felt that it would be good for him to enlarge his vision of the world by going to India and traveling home with J.C. and Betty. During those weeks in India, J.C. often took Curtis and Steve with him to visit contacts, and also take care of work business needs ... meetings with the printer, embassy meetings concerning visas, the post office, etc., acquainting them with the ins-and-outs of working in a foreign country. Curtis later said that those experiences totally changed his vision of the world.

Since the journey back to the States in June of 1969 would be through Europe anyway, stopping to see important historical and biblical sites enroute would not cost much extra — only hotels and food — and they knew they would be staying with fellow missionaries in most of the places because they wanted to see the state of the church in the various countries, resulting in an informative but relatively cheap trip! So the six flew from India back to Karachi, Pakistan. It was so good to be again with Christians who had been converted during the years of living there. The city had grown, seemed more modern, and cleaner, so the visit was a happy one.

From Karachi they flew to Teheran, Iran and met with the Christians there. The Don Pettys, who had worked for some time in Lahore, Pakistan while the Choates were in Karachi, had moved to Teheran to work with the Christians on the U.S. military base and to make local converts. On the Sunday the Choates were in Teheran, forty souls assembled for worship — an encouraging thing in that Muslim nation. (In the years after the Shah was forced to leave and the Ayatolla Khomeni took over, persecution of believers in Christ began, and we have no contact now with any of the Christians.)

From Teheran, the Choates flew to Israel where the Everett Huffards worked and had established the church. Several days were spent there, enjoying the fellowship while seeing the Mount

of Olives, the Garden Tomb, the Garden of Gethsemane and other important sites in the city. They took a taxi to Bethlehem to see the “birthplace” of Christ, then to Tiberius on the Sea of Galilee. Of course, Capernaum, Nazareth and other important biblical sites were included in the itinerary before taking a flight to Beirut, Lebanon.



The Garden Tomb



L.D. and Pat Willis, Sherra and G.W. Childs, Verlin and Malcolm George, Betty and J.C. Choate

In Beirut, they spent time with the G.W. Chlds, the Malcolm Georges, and the L.D. Willises, enjoying being with fellow missionaries and worshipping with them. At that time the “Middle East Bible Training College”, existed, designed to help prepare the young converts to grow in the faith and to carry on the work. There was a short visit to Tyre and Sidon.



The Georges accompanied the Choates to Cairo, Egypt for a quick visit to the pyramids, then to the Valley of the Kings. From there they flew to Athens, Greece and were there for worship on a Sunday with the George Dumas family, the Ervin Bishops, and local Christians. J.C. was given opportunity to speak about the work in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India, along with a lesson on Hebrews 13:8. Translation, of course, was done in Greek.

Looking back at those cities, now in 2024, it is sad that we don't know of any churches of Christ in Iran and Lebanon. There are Christians in Jerusalem and Nazareth, perhaps some in Cairo, and though the church still exists in major cities in Europe, the numbers are small and the missionaries are much fewer than in the 1960's and 1970's.

From the Middle East, Rome was the next stop, including the Colisseum, the Appian Way and the Sistine Chapel. Then they boarded planes for home, passing through France, Spain, Portugal and on to New York. Everyone was tired and ready to return to American life.



Home Again in Mississippi

On July 9, their American Airlines flight landed in Memphis, Tennessee, and the Burtons were at the airport to pick them up. Of course, most of the remainder of the night was spent talking about their exciting trip — and enjoying some home-made ice cream! Always a southern treat, in addition to watermelons — in season!

For the Choates, the following days of July were spent with family, both in Winona and in Corinth, worshipping with the church in both places. J.C. was asked to make a report on the work and he also spoke on the subject, “Why Are We Here?” He wrote in his diary, “We are all really enjoying being home. We are taking off a few weeks, and it is wonderful.”

But visits with supporting churches were wonderful too, and that began on the 20th of July, and continued the remainder of the year. J.C. was well aware that he was only the “bridge” between supporters in the States and the workers overseas, so he was always eager to let brethren know of the tremendous things being accomplished by their support. The church now existed in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and New Delhi, because of the faithfulness of American Christians. Only time would tell what more would be developed on the foundation already laid.

A Side Note of History

One momentous thing occurred on July 16, 1969 — the first astronauts blasted off to the moon! On the 20th, Neil Armstrong became the first man to set foot on the moon, then on the 24th there was a safe return to the earth. All of this was available to be seen on TV, an amazing 20th century phenomenon!

Another important point in the story of “space”: Don Peterson was born in Winona, Mississippi in 1933. He became a NASA astronaut in September of 1969! Who would have thought that a little ole Winona boy would become a major figure in the early days of our US space history?

Chapter Fifteen

Back to India

On January 6, 1970, at the Memphis airport J.C. met L.D. Willis, college-mate and Gospel preacher from the Tupelo area where he had worked in the mid-60's. Saying a sad goodbye to Betty and the children, with a final prayer together, J.C. and L.D. boarded an American Airlines flight and headed west. They traveled together for the next two months to foreign countries, locating Christians along the way, preaching at regular worship services and in Gospel meetings.

The first stops were made in the South Sea Islands. Landing in Tonga, J.C. wrote in his diary: "Brother Paul Maoma and wife and brother William Vailala were there to meet me. They took me to their place and a thatched-roof hut for me to stay in. I was served a meal and then rested awhile. Later, brother Paul took me by a three-wheeled taxi cart through the city of Nake-alofa. Later on we went to the Ngeleia congregation for service. I drank some kava (a type of coffee), and preached that night on 'God Hath Spoken'. I baptized one at the wharf. Had supper and went to bed.



“The next day L.D. rejoined me and, after talking to one of the members of another congregation, we walked to a nearby hospital to see a preacher who was sick. Then we went to a Tonga feast at the Ngeleia meeting place. I saw them put the pig, etc., in the pit to roast. While waiting we talked with the members and drank kava. Then all the food was spread before us and various ones of the members talked to those present. The King’s representative was there, and I was also asked to speak. After eating, we went to the Kolomotua congregation. I preached and one lady confessed faults and one came forward to be baptized. Afterward, we returned to the meeting house and had a watermelon cutting!”



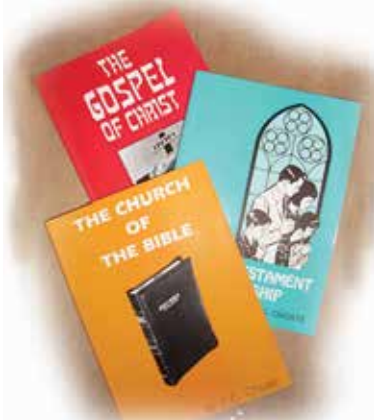
J.C. and L.D. continued on to New Zealand, visiting churches in Wellington and ChristChurch, then moving on to Australia where they were asked to speak to the church in Hobart, Tasmania, and the Heidleburg congregation in Melbourne. Next flight was to Singapore where Gordon Hogan was working with the Moulmein Road congregation. At Four Seas Bible College, Don Green, A.L. Harbin, L.D. and J.C. were asked to speak to the students. On Sunday morning they spoke to the large Gelong congregation, and returned to Moulmein Road for the Sunday evening service.

Moving on to Colombo, Sri Lanka, a Gospel meeting was arranged, ads put in the paper about the meeting and also for literature.



Attendance averaged around 25. J.C. wrote in his diary, “I was told again and again that the work consists mainly of those who were here when we left. The local church is carrying on without foreigners involved but is having financial problems. On the last night, 28 were present. At the close of the meeting, Reggie made a talk in appreciation for what the family and I have meant to the work in Sri Lanka.”

By mid-February, they had reached New Delhi, and L.D. returned to the States. J.C. worked out a “staying” arrangement with the old Lodhi Hotel, eating lunch most often at a cafeteria at the American Embassy. Many hours of the days were filled with writing — **The Gospel of Christ** and **New Testament Worship**, first and third 13-lesson study books to complete the study in **The Church of the Bible**. These are still in demand, and are also available in Spanish and French from our Win-



ona office, but **The Church of the Bible** has been translated into about 50 languages, with about 200,000 being printed throughout the world.

J.C. was also writing several missionary-themed books (**Missionary Problems, Missionary Preparation, The Moving Christian, The Life of a Missionary**), and others — typing Betty's manuscript, **First Steps in Faith**, writing articles for the local monthly magazine, *The Bible Teacher*, writing tracts, preparing ads for the newspapers, corresponding with brethren in many countries, daily letters to Betty and the children, proof-reading materials, etc., etc.

Some time every day was also spent with Sunny and/or other members of the church, in personal studies with new contacts and having Gospel meetings about once a month, using any preacher who was passing through, or doing their own. The Jule Miller filmstrips were not only popular but were effective teaching tools, so they were used in house meetings in both Old and New Delhi.

A typical diary entry said, "Tonight after I ate my tuna sandwich I typed another chapter of Betty's manuscript, wrote a tract, wrote an article, wrote some letters, washed some clothes, took a bath, washed some fruit, and had my Bible study. I miss Betty and the children so much. I pray that they are well. I love them dearly. It is midnight and I am tired."

Souls were gradually being added to the congregations both in Old Delhi and in New Delhi. Meetings, individual studies, or the showing of filmstrips were scheduled for most of the evenings either in the homes of contacts or in the homes where services were regularly conducted on Sundays.

Because tourist visas allowed only three months in India, J.C. had to leave the country frequently. Frank Pierce had asked him to come to Colombo for a Gospel meeting, so he flew down at the end of March. Reggie told J.C. that their seven-year-old daughter, Lilani, had been diagnosed with a serious heart problem, and that she would have to have open heart surgery. Doctors in Colombo had performed seven unsuccessful surgeries of that type and wanted to try again on Lilani, but he had written to Dr. Denton Cooley

in Houston, Texas, sending her hospital records to him. Dr. Cooley agreed to do the surgery free of charge, but the challenge was finding the money for the flight and for the hospital charges. J.C. wrote in his diary, “While we were in the office, Reggie rushed in all excited and showed me a telegram from Betty. It said that money had been raised for him, his wife, and Lilani to come to America for her surgery! I could hardly believe it. We went to the Taprobane Hotel to try to call Betty (no personal or home phones at that time), but couldn’t, so we sent a telegram.” The details of this event were given in chapter ten.

New visa in hand, J.C. returned to India. The busy days continued: “This morning I worked awhile and then took a taxi uptown. I went to the post office, mailed some things, then went to New Age printing, got some proofs and then went to brother Arora’s place and paid him. I went to Sunny’s place and we went up to a Church Relief office to get information about getting an Exemption Certificate for brother Johnson. Going back to Sunny’s place, we then went to see brother Mohan and he took us to see the Abraham Singhs. We had a long discussion and then another Pentecostal man came in. We came by brother Khousal’s place on the way back to Sunny’s. Then I came back to my room, ate, and worked till 1:00 am.”

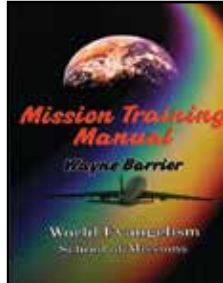
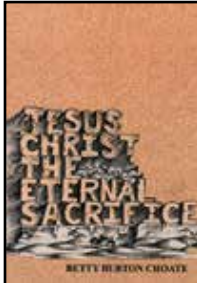
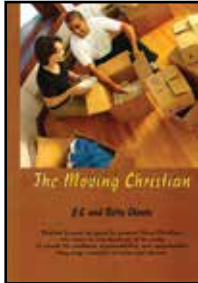
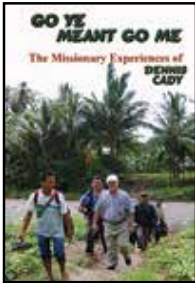
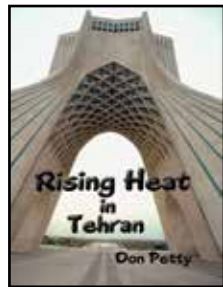
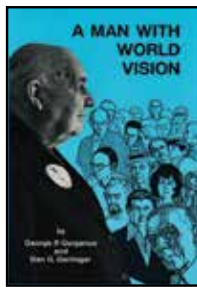
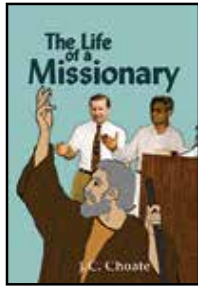
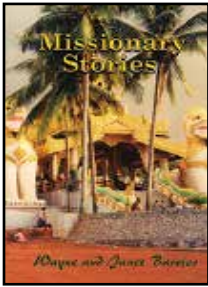
The year continued to roll by, filled to the brim with spiritual work, leaving the country as needed for new visas, and **depending on God’s providential care to open the right doors and close the wrong doors.** Toward the end of the year, J.C. made a lengthy “missionary” trip to Africa, meeting with Christians and missionaries all along the way.

In 1896 John Sheriff, from New Zealand (where an early Restoration movement took place and through which he became a Christian) moved to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and began to teach the truth to local people. Africans are typically very spiritual, though voodooism had its origin there and is still part of the superstitious underlying culture. In the decades following, many of the first missionaries of churches of Christ went to Africa, so the church was much more widely spread there than in India, larger and more mature.

Meeting missionaries in the various countries and seeing the

great work they were doing, J.C. asked them to write the stories of the evangelism of Africa, promising that he would print them and make them available to the churches in America. He reasoned, correctly, that “mission” books would not be great sellers, but he believed strongly that the history of the Lord’s work throughout that continent should be preserved through written records. These books, and many others, resulted and can still be ordered through **World Evangelism**:

(P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967; phone 662-283-1192; Websites: WorldEvangelism.org and WorldEvangelismmedia.com)



Chapter Sixteen

A Big Year

1970 was almost at an end, and further plans had been made for J.C. and Betty. Their children were old enough to be left in the care of Betty's parents, Clyde and Theola Burton. It had been almost a year-and-a-half since Betty had been with the Christians they had converted and with the churches they had established in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. The plan was made for her to join J.C. in Colombo for a short three- or four- week visit. She arrived on January 16, 1971.

Even though they stayed up most of the night, talking about all that had happened in their lives since the "separation" a year earlier, there was no time to lose in the local work itself. A Gospel meeting had been announced in the newspaper, to begin on the 17th.

Frank and Joan Pierce had moved to Colombo to continue the work after the Choates had moved to New Delhi. **Reggie Gnanasundaram** was strong in the leadership, often taking the Pierces and the Choates in his vehicle (one of the few members of the church in any of the locations who owned his own car!) to visit prospects. During the meeting, and before the preaching service each evening, Betty had a class with children who came. Attendance averaged 28, with contacts coming in response to newspaper ads and personal visits. It was encouraging to see the growth of the church in numbers as well as in spiritual maturity.

After two weeks with the Sri Lanka Christians, the Choates met with the Pierces and the Gnanasundarams, prayed together, and left for India. On February 6, J.C. wrote in his diary: "Today I am 39 years old. At the airport in New Delhi, we got our bags and took a bus into the city. We went to the Lodi Hotel (where J.C. had stayed under special 'contract' during the previous year), and checked in. Later in the evening, we took a taxi to Sunny David's place. We saw all of the Davids, had tea, got our mail — including precious letters from our children — and came back to the hotel. Had a late dinner and went to bed."

In Delhi, various parts of the work continued. J.C. was writing books on mission work, Betty's book, **First Steps in Faith**, had been printed, so copies were ready to be picked up from the printer and shipped home. J.C. had a training class with the David men, equipping them for carrying on the work without a foreigner being present. And plans were made to have a Gospel meeting once a month. Often, missionaries from other countries would be passing through and would stay over for a week or ten days for the preaching, or J.C. would carry on if no visitor was available. The goal, though, was to have teaching ads and special events ads in the local papers so often that the church in both Old and New Delhi would become well known to people in the area.

While in north India, J.C. and Betty made a trip to Kathmandu, Nepal, because they had learned that an American family — the Don Pfalsers — were working there in a secular job, but were also trying to begin the church. They had made contact with a man — Prem Pradan — who showed real promise. “We went into town and found Prem Pradan's place. He was on the roof of his new meeting house, teaching a hippie. It was very interesting to hear him. Afterwards, we went through the building, and then through the Orphanage Building where 150 children live. He is working throughout Nepal, with about 500 members in his group. Because of his work as a “Christian” in a Buddhist country, he was in jail for a number of years. Brother Pfalser is trying to work with him and we hope to see him fully converted to the Truth.

“This evening, we met with Prem and discussed the Bible on the subject of salvation until 2:30 in the morning! They are off on their understanding, but are willing to study.”

A month later, J.C. and Sunny made a trip back to Kathmandu, taking Bibles and literature that Don could use in his efforts to evangelize. “We had dinner with Don and looked over the literature we had brought. We were thrilled with the good news that Prem Pradan had accepted the biblical teaching on baptism and was now a part of the Lord's church!”

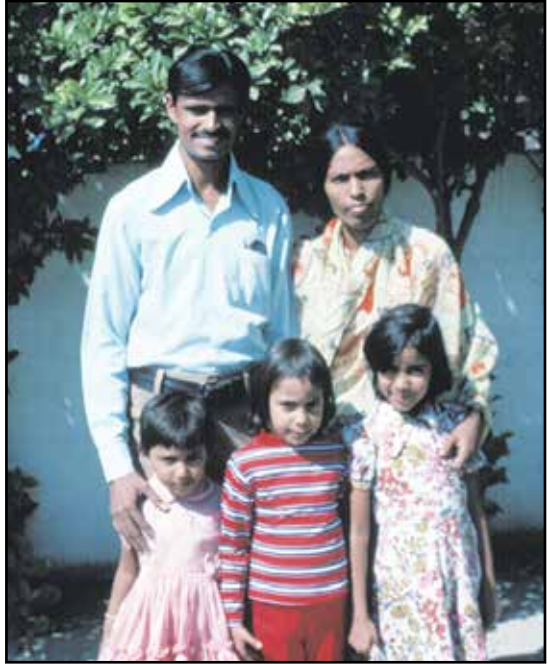
Early in May, J.C. and Betty worshipped with the church

in Delhi and said tearful goodbyes to everyone, ready to board their flight to Karachi on their trip back to the States.

The Allen Jacobs were working with the church in Karachi, and it was so good to meet again with those who had become Christians during the years the Choates worked there. Betty went almost immediately to see Winnie Masih who, along with her sister, had been a faithful Christian through

the years after her conversion. (Bringing things up to date, 2024, though Winnie went to her eternal reward many years ago, her little daughter — Aseema — grew up, and through great financial sacrifice on Winnie’s part, was able to attend Freed Hardeman College. She is still a faithful Christian, living in San Diego, California. She has two daughters — Nickie and Allie. So the word lives on through generations from those early years in Pakistan in the early 60s! We are so thankful!)

While in Karachi, a Gospel meeting was held in a neighboring village, Malir, where a congregation had been established during the early years of working there. J.C. wrote: “Meeting at Malir. Around a hundred were present. I spoke on ‘The Sacrifice of Christ’. Anwar translated. We got back to the Jacobs’ about 10:00, had a snack, then Betty and I prepared for bed. The water quit — seems like Karachi!”



The David family: Sunny, Jasmine, Preeti, Priya, and Sabina

One of the missionaries who followed the Choates in Karachi had had problems with numerous ones in the church, causing them to leave the fellowship. J.C. met with them, individually, and tried to heal the breach. In some cases, nothing could be done. Some moved to other cities in Pakistan where the church existed and renewed their commitment. It is a heartbreaking thing that such divisiveness happens all too often when one missionary puts himself in competition with the work of a previous missionary.

Concerning the Sunday meetings in two congregations in Karachi, J.C. wrote, “Church of Christ, Sindhi Muslim Housing Society, Karachi, Pakistan. Had a large crowd present (around 40). Brother Daniel Patterson conducted Bible Study. I preached on ‘The Pearl of Great Price’. Brother Asghar Ali (from Lahore, Pakistan) translated. Alexander and Nazir were present.”

That evening at the downtown congregation, “I preached on ‘What Christ Expects of this Church’. Asghar Ali translated. Had a good crowd of about 35. Alexander talked to me about coming back. Nazir and his family were present and I talked to them...”

An update on Asghar Ali and his family: He is now in his 80s, has been back in his hometown of Lahore for decades. He was converted from Islam in 1962 by Gordon Hogan and was a faithful part of the church there. At one point, there were no foreign workers in Lahore, even though the house the Hogans had lived in had been bought and the church was meeting there. Asghar was taking the lead, living in the house, and everything was going well until two Americans “took over” the work in Lahore, forcing Asghar to leave the property. Sadly, in time, the property was lost to the church.

Asghar, being a staunch Christian, did not turn his back on Christ, even though “Christians” had forced him to leave the church property. He and his young family began meetings in their village. He and Rhama had five daughters. One married Obed, a convert who aids now in carrying on the work of the church.

About three years ago Asghar was concerned about where the church might meet after he is no longer in this world. He wanted to build a permanent meeting place and asked those on his “contact”

list to help with the needed funds — \$26,000. Just prior, the World Evangelism team had made a plea to all of their supporters for funds for another project, so a repetition of a plea was not a good idea. J.C. had passed into eternity, and Betty could not visit elders and churches to raise money, so what to do? She decided, with prayer, to forward Asghar's email to some of her email contacts. Amazingly, her brother, Curtis Burton, responded immediately, saying he would give up to \$13,000, for whatever could be matched. Within minutes, a sister in New Zealand, Juricz Blackman, made the commitment to match the \$13,000! In less than half an hour the money had been raised! And this is the resulting building:

Headed West through Europe

From Karachi, the Choates flew to Teheran, the middle of May (What was expected to be a few weeks' visit overseas for Betty turned out to be five months!). The US had a military base there, and a stable congregation of the Lord's church had been organized in the home of one of the members. Brother W. C. Rogers was taking the lead in the meetings, and the Choates went to their home. They were told by sister Ola Chappel that she had come to help with the work



**The congregation in Lahore today...
Obed is on the left, Asghar on the right.**

as a result of articles J.C. had written in the Gospel papers.

On Sunday, J. C. preached to a record crowd of 43. “Brother Art Hostler responded to confess his faults, and I led the prayer for him. After the meeting we went home with the Jerry Hayes. I had a study with him and he expressed a desire to be baptized, and so did Marjorie, his wife. I took them to the Rogers’ home and baptized them in their bathtub at almost 11:00 PM! We went back to their home and then took him to his work at the American Embassy.”



Asghar and his wife, Rahat

The next stop on the way back to the States was in Beirut, Lebanon where the G.W. Childs, the Malcolm Georges, and the L.D. Willises were working. They met with the church and J.C. was asked to preach on the Lord’s day. Whether a congregation exists now — in 2024 — we don’t know.

The visit with Bob Hare and other brethren in Vienna, Austria was enhanced by a drive to Budapest, Hungary, then to the border of Chechoslovakia. The Hares, along with brother Gwen Hindsley were deeply involved in getting the Gospel to souls behind the iron curtain. They were much to be admired for their bravery.



Meeting place of the Lahore Church of Christ

The last stop on the way home was in Rome, Italy, where they worshipped with the church on Sunday. In the afternoon, brother Ron Moon took them on a mini-tour of the city... “We saw, among other things, the place where tradition says Paul was imprisoned and then beheaded. We also visited the Church of Paul, and came back by the Appian Way, saw the old Roman aqueduct...”

Monday morning they were at the airport, preparing to begin the journey back to the US. Amazingly, four other missionary families were at the airport: “We checked in and then we visited with three other families taking the same flight to the States: the Bill Burtons, the Charles Moores and the Helmut. The Loy Mitchells who worked in Zimbabwe were also there, taking the afternoon flight.”

A Pan American flight took them to the J.F.K. airport in New York, then by American Airlines to Memphis, TN where the Burtons and the Choate children were eagerly waiting. Home again!

On the Road Again

After months in foreign territory, it was time to visit supporting churches again, and to appeal to other brethren to become involved. A typical Sunday: “We got up at 6:00 AM and drove to West Monroe, Louisiana, to Whites Ferry Road church, for worship. Brother Leonard Gray taught the Bible class and then we heard brother Harvey Starling preach during the worship hour. Must have been 700 present.

“In the afternoon we drove to Camp Ch-Yo-Ca to enroll the girls in their Bible camp, and then we moved on to Bastrop. We had a good evening meeting with the church. I spoke and three young people responded. Brother Jay Mack and his wife hope to go to Mauritius to work later. We drove back to Winona, arriving at 1:00 AM.”

Early in July the family bundled into the station wagon and began a six-week journey north, west, southwest, and east, back to Winona. One of the first stops was with the church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where J.C. and Betty had worked before cutting loose in 1960 to raise funds for their work in Pakistan. Meeting with the Brooklyn Center congregation, J.C. spoke on “The Power of Prayer”

in the morning and gave a brief report on the foreign work in the evening, showing some slides. It was such a joy to be again with their brothers and sisters in Christ, to renew the closeness of past years.

Of course, the drive through the northwestern states was beautiful and, being cooped up in the car for long hours every day provided good “family” time, making up to some extent for the months of separation. They read books, listened to music, played games, had picnics, and ended the days with Bible devotionals. Both J.C. and Betty were well aware of instances of missionary children resenting the life their parents had chosen to live, which often demanded great sacrifices on the part of all members of the family. Some, on reaching adulthood, even left the church. Betty well remembered one occasion when J.C. was in India, a few months earlier. She had passed by Sheila’s door and heard her crying. She went in to ask what was wrong. Sheila replied through sobs, “I want Daddy...” What to do? Betty said, “You know why Daddy is in India. If you need him more than the people there, I will tell him and he will come home.” The subject was never brought up again.



But trips, such as this one, were used as compensation for the many important events in their childrens' lives that J.C. and Betty had to miss because of work demands. It is difficult to imagine greater "togetherness" than weeks on the road, seeing together their beautiful God-created world in the national parks, hearing the reports J.C. made about the work, and meeting Christians who showed their love and concern for the work and life the Choates had undertaken. Yes, the children had lived in India and knew that part of the story, but traveling throughout the brotherhood in the States also brought to life a greater realization of that part of the Family of God.



One stop along the way was with the Tom Carters in Portland, Oregon, whom they had gotten to know while in Pakistan. One interesting note in J.C.'s diary about the visit was this: "At lunch time, Betty and I got into a discussion with Betty Carter's aunt. She used to be a member of the church but is now Pentecostal. I began to quote what Jesus said on one point, and her response was, 'I don't care what Jesus said!' I then asked her if the Holy Spirit guided her to say that. Later we talked some more and she said that she had vowed never to talk to another member of the church of Christ." End of discussion...

Moving on down into California, the Choates went to Wasco and Shafter, renewing old and dear relationships. On Sunday morning J.C. was asked to speak to the church in Shafter, and Sunday evening they worshipped with the Wasco brethren where he also gave a report on the work being done overseas.

Continuing south, of course they had to take the kids to Disneyland, and from there they turned east, stopping in the Houston area with the church in Deer Park. Those brethren were special because they had taken leadership in looking after the Reggie Gnanasundarams when their little daughter, Lilani, had heart surgery at St. Luke's Children's Hospital in Houston.

On Sunday morning J.C. spoke at the Kinwood church in Houston. "...five responded to the invitation, three for baptism, one for restoration, and one to place membership. Sheila and Darla came forward to obey the Lord and I baptized them (August 8, 1971). I was really surprised when Sheila came, and then Darla. Betty and I are so proud of them."

Chapter Seventeen

Detour to South America

The fall months of 1971 were filled with a variety of mission efforts. The Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee had a Missionary Workshop, following the example set earlier by the Forest Park church in Atlanta, Georgia. Numerous well-known missionaries spoke: Harold Paden, John Beckloff, Bob Hare, B.D. Morehead, Marvin Bryant, Robert Shank, and James Judd were some of the speakers, in addition to J.C. Such mission meetings were a great encouragement to congregations to become more deeply involved in foreign work, so worldwide evangelism grew!

In November, J.C., along with Gene Gibson began a trip to Central America to visit churches there. (The Gibsons had moved to Winona and the two families had become very close, so close that their son, Rob, married Sheila in 1981!) Their first flight took them to Belize, British Honduras where Bob and Rita Hurd worked. J.C. preached in a short Gospel meeting.

From Belize, Gene and J.C. flew to Guatemala City where the **Pan American Lectureship** was scheduled to take place. Brothers Wendell Broom, Joe Lee, Reul Lemmons, Bob Douglas, Glover Shipp, Howard Norton, Jerry Hill and George Gurganus — American missionaries — were speakers. (We have printed several books brother Shipp wrote. Order from: worldevangelismlibrary.org.)



Glover Shipp

A side adventure was a bus trip for the group: “Our trip (three bus loads) took us west to an Indian town of indigenous people. There we visited a huge market, and saw their pagan worship services as they lit candles and swung buckets of coals and smoke in front of the buildings to drive away

the evil spirits. On the way from Guatemala City we saw several cone-shaped mountains. One is an active volcano and still smokes.”

After the lectureship, Gene returned to the States, while J.C. visited brethren in numerous countries in Central and South America with the Larry Whites, driving through points in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and finally to the Otis Hanby home in Panama. While there, J.C. spoke to the students at the **Pan American Bible School**.

Saying goodbye to the Hanbys, J.C. flew to Quito, Ecuador where he was met by the Ed Sewells. In his diary, J.C. wrote, “Brother Sewell told me tonight that I was responsible for him being in Quito. He had read an article, ‘Pakistan Needs You’, and decided to go to a foreign field.” A further entry: “Ed and I went up town to the city prison and visited a member. It was a sad sight to behold — several hundred in the condition they were in. We also visited the oldest hospital in the Americas and an old Catholic church building. On the way home, we visited a family who are members of the church.”



From Ecuador, J.C. flew to Lima, Peru, and met with Bert Perry and Hans Dederscheck. As in every meeting with American missionaries, J.C. urged each one to write the story of his work. He knew that, sadly, there was not a great deal of interest in the subject of “foreign mission work”, but he wanted these important chapters of the history of the outreach of the church to be recorded for posterity.

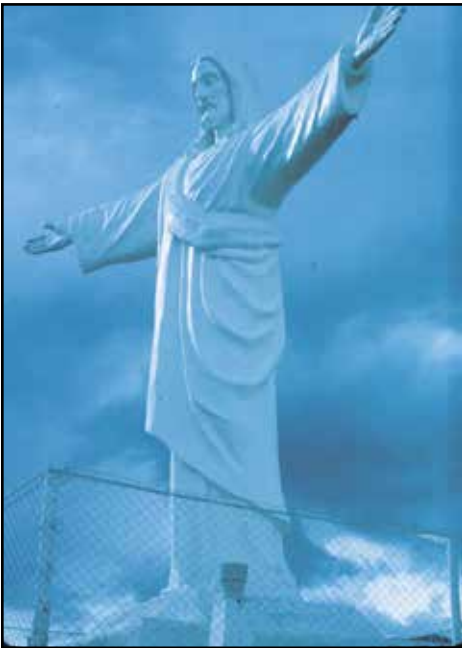
From Santiago, Chile J.C. flew to Buenos Aires, Argentina where he worshiped with a small congregation before taking a flight to Montevideo, Uruguay. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, J.C. met with Ellis Long, Carl Henderson, Don Vizant, Howard Norton, Ted Stewart, John Simon, Arlie Smith, Robert Grissom, and Stanley Shipp.

“At 11:00 AM I spoke to about 20 at the **Sao Paulo Bible School**. They asked questions and expressed appreciation for our work in Pakistan, Ceylon, and India. Brother Vizant translated my lesson into Portuguese.

J.C., always the person watchful of expenses, recorded, “I came back to my room (He always wanted the fellowship of stay-

ing in the homes of brethren, but sometimes there was no choice but to book a hotel), and rested till 4:00 PM. Going to a nearby store, I bought a can opener, then I went to a food market and bought four cans of Vienna sausage. I came in and ate a can.”

On the last Sunday of the South American trip, J.C. flew to San Juan, Puerto Rica. He took a taxi to the home of John Fogarty. The evening meeting was with the Park Gardens Church of Christ. “Had an English service. I led the opening prayer



and had the Lord's Supper. Had a Spanish service and then I spoke to the students of **Caribbean Christian College** and to the members of the church on our work. Brother Stanley Morgan translated into Spanish."

The next stop was in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, then to Port Au Prince, Haiti. In Kingston, Jamaica he met with the Guy Caskeys. "Tonight the Todds came over and then we went to the Marvin Crawsons for a study. I spoke and told of the work in Nepal. Brother Caskey later said they felt I had come by the providence of God. I guess they were needing encouragement."

On December 23, the flight took J.C. finally to Orlando, Florida and ultimately landed in Memphis, Tennessee! "Betty and the children met me and then we stopped at Brittlings for supper. We drove on to Corinth, MS to see my folks and also visited with Don and his family, then drove to Winona, arriving around 1:00 AM. Betty told me tonight that she is pregnant. I was surprised but we are happy."

Chapter Eighteen

The Vision Grows with a Greater Voice

At the end of January, 1972, J.C. returned to India alone. Landing in Singapore, Gordon Hogan met him at the airport and they were up until 2:00 AM, catching up on the happenings in their lives. The deep relationship that had developed during their years together in Pakistan had not waned with the passing of time and changing of work locations.

It was good to be again with the church, located at 131 Moulmein Road, and to be asked to preach during the regular worship hour. About 100 were present.

Saying goodbye to the Hogans, J.C. flew to Colombo, Sri Lanka for a few days, during which he preached in a Gospel meeting. Also, along with Reggie Gnanasundaram, he had personal Bible studies with contacts who had not yet obeyed the Gospel. It was encouraging to see that the church was growing, and that former converts were remaining faithful.



Next stop was New Delhi where there were busy days: “Sunday morning: I preached on ‘Forgiveness’. Sunny David translated. He also taught the Bible class. Twenty were present. At 3:30, after we had eaten lunch, Sunny and I went to Old Delhi to the home of brother Prem Chatterjee. For the evening service at 1/46 Nirankari Colony, we had worship and I spoke on ‘Worship in Spirit and in Truth’. Sunny translated. After the meeting, we visited with a sick lady and had prayer. We had dinner with brother Chatterjee and then came home. We saw the rough proofs of the artist work for the book covers, and I proof read some.”

Because of the printing of Hindi books for evangelism in India, and also the printing of English books to be shipped to the US, frequent meetings with the printer were necessary. The vision for greater outreach through books and magazines was growing.

Worship in New Delhi: “We had Bible study and I preached on ‘Am I My Brother’s Keeper?’ We had six visitors — two of them were men Sunny had studied with. Four were Hindus. After the service we studied with them. A preacher of the Ayra Samaj (Hindu group) came. His intention was to convert us, but he is now almost converted to Christianity.”

The decision was made to go to Kathmandu, Nepal, to be with the American Christians there and to have a Gospel meeting. Sunny and J.C. traveled by train through Lucknow, Muzuffapur, and then to Raxaul where they checked through customs into Nepal.

“We paid our hotel bill, had Cokes, and then we loaded into the bus at 7:00 AM to leave for Kathmandu. We traveled all day through the winding, mountain roads. Had nothing to eat or drink all day but a Coke and a box of cookies. The Himalayas loomed up with their snow-covered peaks. Simply beautiful. We arrived in Kathmandu a little before 5:00 PM. Took a taxi to the Don Pfalser home, also met the Ray McMillians. At 6:00 PM we went to the meeting house and Ray spoke. Came in to his house afterwards, and he and Don told us about the split with Prem Pradhan. It is all very sad.”

Chapter Nineteen

The Family Returns to India

On the return trip to the States in April of 1972, J.C. stopped in Teheran, Iran where there was a US military base, and where a surprising number of Christians were stationed. Henry Pipkin worked with the church, which averaged about 40-50 in Sunday attendance. J.C. was asked to preach in a meeting which resulted in a number of restorations and baptisms.

Joyfully reunited with the family in April, the remainder of the year was filled with appointments with supporting churches, to let them know of the work being done with their funds. Since the beginning of their efforts in Pakistan in 1962, individuals and congregations had remained steadfast in their support. Brethren often told J.C. that the reason they stayed with him was because he sent regular bi-monthly reports through the mail and made personal reports every two years if he was in the States — good advice for anyone doing mission work!

As expected, that new member of the Choate household arrived on July 21: a boy, healthy, and a blessing to the family! (In fact, though they didn't know it at the time, Bradley Shannon would introduce them to a whole new world: computers! The first "home computer" came on the market when Brad was eleven years old. He really wanted one, begged and begged until there was no resistance left! The magazine to which he subscribed was "P C Matic", nothing but code for developing programs! What began as a childish obsession turned into the tool which enabled the developing of "*The Voice of Truth International*" and the layout and printing of more than 250 books written by fellow-Christians! Still, nearly 40 years later, Brad is the go-to person for *my* computer problems, and Dennis Larson, whom we first met decades ago when he worked for an American company in Indonesia, deals with *the office problems!* Providence?!!!)

In the summer, Darla, Sheila, and Steve went to the West Monroe (Louisiana) Bible Camp. One of the teachers/counselors was Barbara Oliver, of Memphis, TN. She and Betty got to know each other, and Barbara was intrigued with the idea of doing foreign

mission work. As it turned out, she joined the Choates in Winona, becoming like a daughter in the family. Of course, she had to have financial support and, being a young female, was limited in opportunities to raise it herself. The family was overjoyed when the church in Selmer, TN came on board!



Barbara Oliver

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Knowing that they would be leaving the States during the school year, the Choate kids were enrolled in “Calvert Correspondence Courses” and began their studies in the fall. This continued until they returned to school in Winona in the fall of 1974. The experience was good for everyone, and Betty always said she benefitted most from it because she got to go through grades 4-9 again!

Of course, the visits with churches during those months were vital, for reporting and raising funds toward the expected return to India in December, but the Choates’ not-in-very-good-condition-car (tight funds, always) often created difficulties. This is an excerpt from J.C.’s diary: “On the way to an appointment in Knoxville, TN, the generator sign came on. I was told that it was the alternator. We drove on past Memphis and we had a blowout before we got to Jackson, TN. I fixed it and then drove on. Before arriving in Nashville, we had another flat. A couple took me to a garage and I got a new tire. We went on and got a new alternator at another garage. The car took out again, and I got a recharge of the battery in Nashville. We drove on, stopped to get another battery charge, and the car took out again. We finally stopped on Highway 70, two miles out of Rock-

wood. It was 2:00 AM and we spent the night in the car. At 8:30 we got a man to help crank the car and we went on to Rockwood. The car quit again and I got a voltage regulator. Finally discovered the alternator was not properly connected. Got the car fixed and drove on to Karns...”

The Karns church in Knoxville, TN and the Forest Park church in Georgia had Mission Workshops that year, and both J.C. and Betty taught classes. Many new families were committing to go to foreign fields in those days, but in 2024 the emphasis on long-term foreign work has now dwindled to almost nothing, as have the “Mission Workshops” that were growing in popularity and effectiveness during those years. Too many Christians and congregations have forgotten the parting command given by our Lord: *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel...”*

Packed and Ready

Knowing that they would be needing more clothes and equipment than could be taken in suitcases, Betty’s Dad built a box for the extras. That was packed, nailed shut, and picked up by a trucking line that took it to New Orleans for shipment to India on December 8.

That night, the Choates, along with Barbara, left the Memphis Airport to begin the long journey to the other side of the world.

What an experience unfolded for the family during the next three weeks! They flew to Tokyo, Hong Kong, and on to Singapore where the Gordon Hogans — “family” from the Pakistan days — lived. It was so good to have time with them again.

From Singapore, the Choates flew to Bangkok, Thailand to spend a few days with Christians there, then on to Kolkata, India. From there, they flew to Agra, and Barbara and the kids were introduced to India — the modern version and the ancient treasures: Hindu temples, museums, the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, mosques from the old days, etc., etc. There is a lot to see in India!

On December 26, they landed in New Delhi, and went to the home of Sunny David. What a happy reunion! The following Sunday they worshiped with the church that was then meeting in



Sunny's home. J.C. spoke on "Hearing, Ye Hear Not", and Sunny translated. In the evening they went to worship with the congregation in Nirankari Colony, in Old Delhi. It was such a blessing to be with fellow-Christians in India again.

The following days were spent looking at houses for rent. Finally, they settled on E/10/B Defence Colony, New Delhi and moved in. The house was two-story, with a connected "house" next door in which the owners — the Sandhus — lived. Upstairs became the Choates' living quarters — bedrooms, baths, office — while the downstairs "living room" became the meeting place for the church. The kitchen and dining area were in full-time use, with meals for visitors and members of the church several times each week.

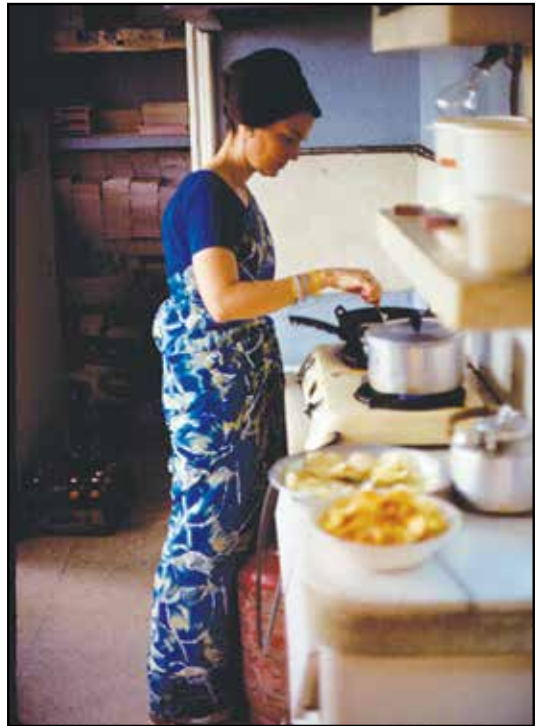
Of course, there were the usual problems: water only on limited hours each day, frequent power outages, terrible days-long dust storms, and extreme heat. The Sandhus were helpful landlords and, as the families became close, on occasions the Choates were invited to spend nights with them because they had air-conditioners! What blessings! Eventually, window fans that blew on wet-coverings (we learned later that this type of cooling system is even now used in

some of our western states!) were installed, providing some relief from up to 115 degree heat many days; and, thankfully, our cooking stove was gas so we were still able to cook when the electricity went off for hours or days.

Shifting from Sunny's house, the first worship services of the church at E/10/B were held on January 7. From J.C.'s diary: "Had 23 present for our first meeting at this place. Sunny David taught the adult Bible class and I preached on 'Redeeming the Time'. Sunny translated. This evening we had a business meeting with seven present. Had good discussions and planned several things for the work."

Since Betty had a heavy work load ("mothering" the family, shopping for food and other needs, keeping house, hand-washing the clothes, supervising the childrens' school work, full involvement in the spiritual work, writing, outreach, visitation, etc., etc.) we needed a "cook", so Anandi was hired. Things went along OK for awhile, but then we began to notice that items were missing. "We looked

and looked and finally decided Anandi was quietly snitching things. She denied it. I asked to see her quarters but she refused. Then Betty and I told her that either she allow us to search her quarters or we would call the police. We did, and found the missing film, Sheila's ring, and several other things. We learned through such experiences that what our brother in Pakistan had told us years earlier was also true of India: 'Don't trust anybody...'"



Knowing that they had only a three-month visa (though they ultimately got a three-month extension), a Gospel meeting was planned for January 26-28. “This evening Sunny David came and we all worked hard to get around 270 letters ready to send out to invite our Delhi Bible students to attend our meetings.... Had 36 for worship on Sunday and Vipul preached... Afterwards, brother Chatterjee and his friend, Keith, ate lunch with us. This afternoon, Betty and Barbara went out for a personal study with a lady visitor.”



The church in New Delhi, Francis David teaching.

Attendance continued to grow, with an average of 40-50 each week. With in-home Bible studies with those who visited the assemblies, advertising the work through teaching ads in the newspapers, and hand-bills mailed regularly to 1000 recipients of the monthly magazine, future growth looked promising.

Sunny David had taught and baptized his mother and six brothers. Now, he and Francis often preached and taught the adult Bible class, with one preaching and the other translating from Hindi to English, and vice-versa. Services were held each Sunday and Wednesday at E/10/B, then in the evening J.C. or one of the other men went to Old Delhi to help with the worship service there.

Throughout each week, J.C. and Sunny had personal studies with new contacts, and Betty taught female visitors. It was a busy and exciting time, and the church was growing, week by week.



A sight that was familiar in India.

The Choates' extended visas were set to expire in June. The Sandhus had a cousin who was in government, so they went to see him. "Later we went to the Foreign Registration Office and got papers to apply for extensions. Then we went to Delhi High Court and got stamped papers for Mr. Sandhu to serve as our guarantor. After he signed the papers, we applied for visas for one year, not as a 'tourist', but as a 'journalist', because I regularly send articles to papers back home. Our case has now been turned over to the government."

A few days later, the government representative came to the Choates' with his family for dinner. "He told us, he had good news and that our visas would be granted!"

Visa pressure gone, the work continued. Various missionaries who were passing through India on their way overseas or back to the States stopped off and preached in Gospel meetings, resulting in conversions and spiritual growth of the church. In August a "film-strip" meeting was held, using the **Jule Miller Filmstrips** as the focal point. "Got started around 9:15 (late, 'Indian Standard Time'!).

had a devotional, then I taught a class on the Holy Spirit. Next, Sunny taught a class and then we had a time of singing. Afterwards, we showed the filmstrips. We had some food brought in for lunch, this afternoon I taught a class on prayer and later on world evangelism.”

Using visiting missionaries, or himself if no one else was available, J.C. scheduled a Gospel meeting every month! What a time of spiritual nourishment and growth in Delhi!

Church Planting and Growth throughout Asia

It was encouraging to know, also, that the church was being planted in other Asian countries. The Steve Cates had moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, and J.C. went there to preach in a Gospel meeting in September. (Later, Colin and Ellen McKee joined the missionaries in Indonesia for ten-and-a-half years, and they continue their work through translation and printing of study materials, and a weekly radio program, even though they have now returned to the States.) Eighteen were present for the morning service in Jakarta, then in the evening they went to another part of the city where about fifteen gathered. At the close of the four-day meeting, “Thirty-five assembled for a service and five responded to the invitation: 3 women and 2 men. It was wonderful.”



Colin and Ellen McKee

Returning to India, J.C. stopped in Singapore where the Hogans worked with the Moulmein Road church, the first congregation in that part of Asia. 131 were present for the evening service. For the morning service at the Sirangun congregation, about 90 met for worship.

Back in India, Harvey Starling stopped in Delhi for a Gospel meeting. Hundreds of handbills were circulated, and ads were

placed in the papers. A record crowd of 86 were present for the closing service, with an average of 67 throughout.

For December 31, J.C. wrote in his diary: “For the end-of-the-year celebration, Betty made pastries and other snack food for the 47 who gathered for the occasion. We had “entertainment”, singing, and prayer through midnight. Had refreshments and then more singing on through the night. Sunny and Francis David, and I made talks. Had a wonderful night and a great year!”

Into 1974

1974 proved to be a very different year than expected. J.C. got word that his Dad was to have surgery at a Memphis hospital, and the February 3 diary entry said, “John (his brother) called, saying the doctors did not give Daddy any hope. I talked to Mama and James. Mr. Sandhu took me to the Foreign Registration Office and I finally got an exit permit. Then we went to Pan American Airlines office, to Air India, and got my ticket home. Had our evening meeting and brother Gary Walker spoke. Afterwards, I talked with brother Charles Thompson and he made a confession of faults and was restored. I got packed, had prayer with the family, and Mr. Sandhu took me to the airport....”

After 20 hours in the air, J.C. landed in Memphis. “Mama, James, John, and the Burtons were there to meet me. I was told Daddy was still living. We went to the hospital and I got to see him but he was unconscious.” Two days later, he passed away.

The blessing that resulted from the unexpected family loss was that J.C. was able to further talk with his brothers about their need to obey the Gospel, which ultimately resulted in their baptism. Now, in 2024, two brothers are deceased but, Don, the youngest brother, is a deacon in the local church. We are so thankful.

Unexpected Visitors!

To J.C.’s amazement, when he visited the Burtons, there was serious talk of them — Dad and Mom Burton, O’Nirah (Betty’s sister) and her two daughters, Kim and Betty Ann — accompanying him when he returned to India!

Decision made, passports had to be issued, visas had to be applied for, tickets bought — and everything was completed by February 28! Amazing! Flying from Memphis to New York, then to London, Frankfurt, Beirut, Teheran, and landing in New Delhi 20 hours later, they were met at the airport by the very excited family!

March was a month crammed full with work and “play”. L.D. Willis had come to preach in a Gospel meeting in New Delhi, which was well attended and fruitful. David Hallett, who had been working in Northeast India, also came to be the main speaker in a simultaneous meeting in Old Delhi. Can you imagine the crowded arrangements with the six Choates, the five Burtons, plus the two visiting preachers, in the three bedrooms — the kids had to take their “charpois” and pallets to the main bedroom, and everybody took turns with showers during the hours when the water was on — and meals were worked into the “coming and going” schedule for the Gospel meetings. But everyone survived and the church benefited in spite of the challenges.

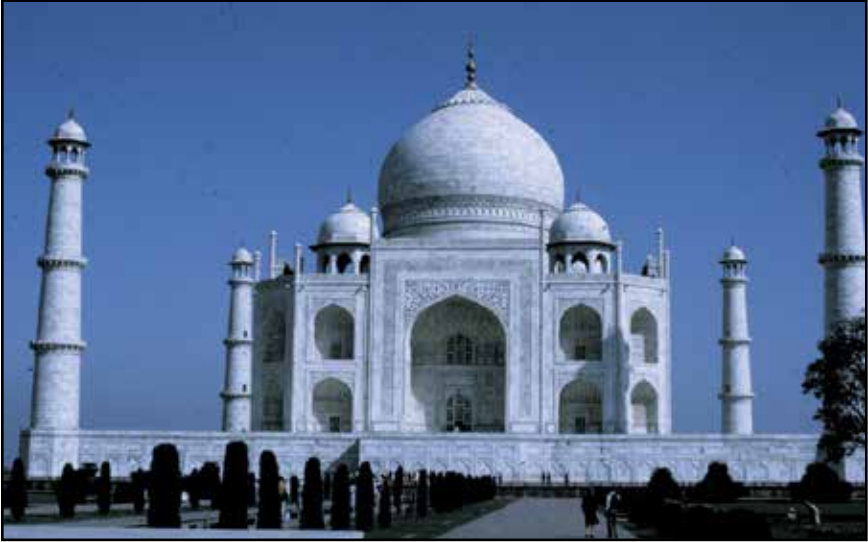
In addition to shopping for food and cooking meals, Betty took the Burtons to see sights in Delhi, the Kutb Minar, the fort in Old Delhi, Humayan’s tomb, Lodhi Gardens, and other places of historic interest.

While L.D. was in Delhi, he and J.C. made arrangements to go to Colombo, Sri Lanka for a Gospel meeting. There was good attendance — about 60 at each service — but we were saddened to know that competition for leadership in the church was threatening division. With the passing of months, the split took place. Knowing the entirety of the background, the Choates were supportive of Reggie and those who separated with him. It is always devastating when Satan wreaks havoc among God’s people, but even worse when the church is young and the Christians are vulnerable, spiritually.

Leaving Colombo, with words of encouragement to the Gnanasundarams and others with them, L.D. took a flight to Beirut, Lebanon where he and Malcolm George were working with the young church, and J.C. returned to New Delhi.

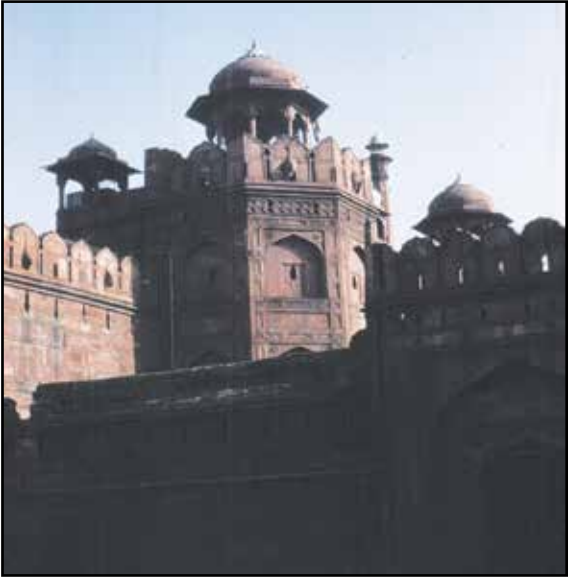
Knowing that the Burtons’ time in India was drawing to a

close, train tickets were purchased to make the necessary trip to Agra to see the fort there and the Taj Mahal — no visit to India is complete without going to that well-known site!



The Taj Mahal

Back in Delhi, the notes in J.C.'s diary were: "Darla and Sheila are not well. Steve is still sick (frequent bouts with stomach problems), and O'Nirah is sick as well. We tried to get her some medicine but all the drug stores are closed for Sunday. Tonight, after the Burtons said goodbye to everyone,



we intended to have dinner but the gas for the stove ran out, so we had

a snack. Finally went to bed for awhile, then got up at 3:00 to make the trip to the airport. We all hugged goodbye and I helped them check through immigration. We went upstairs to see the Pan American plane take off at 5:30, then we took a taxi home and went to bed....” The end of an unexpected and wonderful time together, in spite of the usual challenges and complications.

The year’s visa for which the Choates had applied ultimately was denied. Why? Because if it had been granted, they could have applied for another year, and another, etc., on and on. So by saying neither yes nor no for the entire year, the government worker who had helped with the application was not offended, but neither was the precedent set for approval. So an extension of six weeks was allowed to give time for packing and leaving. The departure date was set for July 1, 1974.

On the last Sunday evening in Delhi, “Forty or more were present for the service. Afterwards, they had a tea for us and several spoke their goodbyes. I also spoke and we prayed together. It was a very sad time.”

Headed Home, from the Other Side of the World

The shipping company came and took the Choates’ crate to begin its long voyage to the States, suitcases were packed and they took two taxis to the train station. “Twenty were there to see us off at 7:10 in the morning. My!”

So, obviously, the trip home was not a “direct flight”. The train was



over-crowded and there was general confusion about the seating: “We were scattered throughout the car, and Barbara’s name was not even on the list. We just had chairs in the aisles to sit in, and we were really cramped because we had to keep our luggage with us so it wouldn’t be stolen. The only thing that saved us was that the car was air conditioned.”

They traveled through India, stopping with the Jim Johnsons and others in Chennai, then they went by plane to Colombo. Reggie, along with most of the church, were at the airport to meet them. It was a heart-warming reunion. A vacation? The next day, “I went to Dr. Chacko’s for tea and had a good study with him. We then went to the Duraisinghams’. Betty taught a ladies’ class in the evening. I wrote my report. The next evening we met in a home for a special Gospel meeting. Around 50 were present. On Sunday, I taught on ‘The Value of the Soul’, with about 70 present.”

From Colombo, the Choates flew to Karachi, met with various members of the church, then flew to Teheran, Iran where they renewed acquaintances with Christians on the military base. Then began the “tourist” part of the return trip home: Tel Aviv, Israel, first, then on to Jerusalem.



Sites in old Jerusalem.

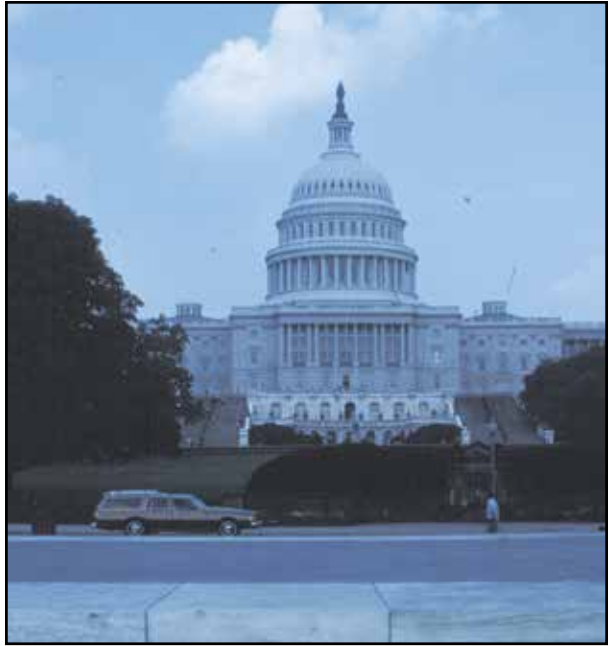


Over-view of Jerusalem.



The Dome of the Rock, built over the site where it is believed that Abraham would have offered his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice.

“ T h i s morning we had a good breakfast and then walked up to the old city. We stopped at a tourist office to check on a flight to Nicocia, Cyprus. We were told that there had been a coup and fighting was raging. That meant we couldn't go to Cyprus, Beirut, and Cairo.”



From Israel, they flew to Athens, Corinth, then to Rome, took a train to Pompeii and made the tour of the ruins. Returning to Rome, they flew to Paris, London, and New York. There they rented a car and drove through Wilmington, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and on through the Blue Ridge Mountains, to Knoxville, Nashville, and finally to Memphis. The Burtons and the Gene Gibsons were there to meet them. Home at last!

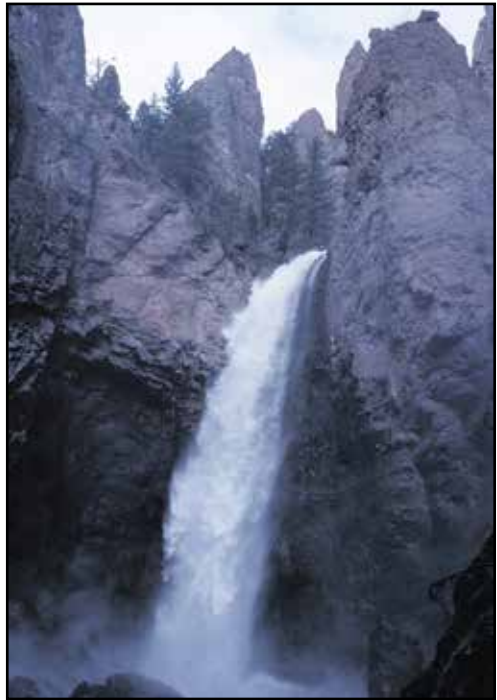
Chapter Twenty

In and out, around the World

Back at home in Winona, life returned to US normalcy: the children began school in the fall (1974), J.C. had weekend and Wednesday night appointments with supporting churches or with new congregations he hoped to get involved in the work. He and Betty both taught classes in a mission workshop at Harding University, and in a later one in Forest Park, Georgia.

The new year, 1975, proved to be exciting. Because J.C. had been away from his children so much, he tried to somewhat compensate by planning extensive time together with “car trips”, that were also “reporting to supporters” trips, and “further fund-raising” trips — combining work and play! In the early summer of ’75, they made a great six-week trip. Returning first to Minneapolis where J.C. and Betty had worked for two years before going overseas, they spent time with the Bob Sanders, Robert Speers, Glen and Fredolph Andersons, familiar and loved faces. Driving through North Dakota, they camped out most nights in a tent and had picnics, keeping costs down to little more than gasoline fill-ups. They were surprised to see some low prices: 17.9 cents a gallon in one place!

From Badlands, North Dakota, they drove



to Custer's National Monument, then headed for Yellowstone National Park in Montana, Glacier National Park, Baniff National Park and other beautiful areas. Heading further west, they visited the Tom Carters in Oregon, renewing their fellowship with Christians they had known years earlier in north Pakistan.

Turning south, they drove through the Redwood National Park before stopping for the night and putting up their tent at a campground. The next day they drove on down to San Francisco, crossed over the Golden Gate Bridge, then on down to Shafter, California where they had worked in 1957! Worshiping with the church, J.C. was asked to speak, and one person confessed faults and asked for prayers.

At nearby Bakersfield, they were thrilled to see more loved ones from decades past: Bob and Pat Fulfer, Elizabeth Holland, Vada Westbrook, Flora and George Eslick, and numerous others. "Betty and the girls went with Pat Fulfer to the Westside meeting house where Betty taught a class for the ladies. Sunday evening I was asked to speak to the church, with a good response."

Saying fond goodbyes, they continued south to Indio, California where they had to replace a bad tire. "I gave a tract to the young man who put on the new tire and encouraged him to visit the church of Christ. I was surprised when he told me he was a member of the church!" Wonderful!

Turning east, they drove to the Grand Canyon and rented a cabin for the night, ending the day with their usual time of Bible study and worship. After Zion National Park and Bryce Canyon, they admired the beauty of Mesa Verde Park. They stopped at "Four Corners" where Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado come together. Amazing!

Eager to get home, and driving on Interstate highways (President Eisenhower's great improvement over two-lane roads that had connected the country when the Choates had traveled from Mississippi to California to begin their work with the church in Shafter in 1957), they continued to El Paso, Texas, filled up with gas, and drove through the night. "Arriving in Houston, we went to Deer

Park to be with the church that had been of such great help when Lilani Gnanasundaram had her heart surgery at the Texas Childrens' Hospital in Houston in 1970.”

Home again in Winona on July 7th! “After Bible Study tonight, I gave the invitation and Steve responded. I baptized my boy into Christ! I am very happy about that.” In the changing room, after his baptism, Steve “danced a little jig”, and J.C. began to scold him. thinking he was making a mockery of what had just happened. Steve quickly explained, “No, Daddy! I’m just so happy that I’ve obeyed the Gospel!”

Now, all three of the older children had begun their individual walk with God.

Time to Go Again

The fall trip overseas began at the end of August. Because J.C. wanted to have influence in the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world, he made his way west from the US and into the islands in Asia. Through the mission workshops in Forest Park, Georgia, he had strengthened the interest of Robert and Mary Martin in working in the Fiji Islands, spending three weeks preaching in meetings with congregations that had been begun.

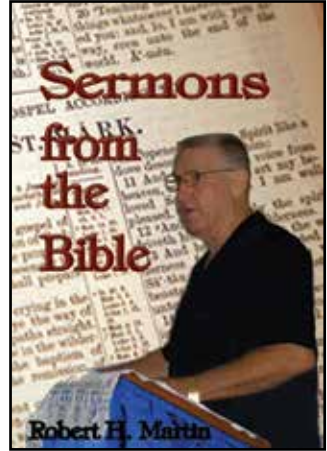
A recent note (2023) from Robert, who is still deeply involved in that work, reads: “Mary and I really enjoyed your (Betty’s) article in the *World Evangelism* for March/April 2023. It brought back some precious memories of brother J.C. Choate and ALL that he meant to us as young missionaries. I was reminding Mary how that I read ALL his books on mission work and took all the exams in the back of the books. J.C. and your personal encouragement was so valuable to Mary and I. It was because of



Robert and Mary Martin

J.C. Choate that I wrote those outlines on mission work and he was so kind to publish them; they have been used by some of the “missionaries in residence” at FHU. Writing those first two lead to the one that J.C. wanted me to do in manuscript form like a story of our life in missions NOW for 57 years.

“Betty, J.C. & you have meant so much to us as missionaries; so much so that we cannot express in human words. We have passed it on to younger ones who have done foreign mission work (more than 10 of them now). God bless you, sis, and just keep on working until the Lord calls you home like J.C. did. That is what Mary & I plan to do. It is not easy sometimes now days because I am walking toward 80 years young and Mary is 76; she is just as beautiful as when I met her in high school. Love you soooooo much. In Christian love, Robert & Mary Martin”



Literature printed for distribution

From the Islands, J.C. preached in a Gospel meeting in Sydney, Australia, then flew on to Singapore where he taught daily in the Four Seas Bible College and also had nightly meetings with the Moulmein Road church — about 250 attendees, with great interest among the young people.

Saying goodbye to the Hogans, J.C. flew to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. “I was picked up at the airport by Peter Lee and Steven Chan. We drove to Klang and then went over to the meeting house. On the way we talked about various Bible subjects,

including the Holy Spirit.” After the Gospel meeting each night, there was a time for questions and discussion of Scripture. One member was restored. For Sunday morning worship, 75 were present.

Of course, India was the ultimate destination, so J.C. was thankful to make that flight on October 1 on a Jumbo jet that “...was almost empty. Got to Delhi and checked through customs, took a taxi to the house. Got the keys from the Sandhus and went inside. I saw that



the printer had delivered all of the books we were having printed. In the evening I went to Sunny’s place to see the family. He is at Nagpur. Baptized two. Heard Sunny’s radio program tonight from Colombo. It sounded good.” Sunday was typical: “Must have been 40 present. I preached on ‘Lord, Open our Eyes.’ After worship we visited and then gathered to work on getting Vol. 6, No. 6 of *The Bible Teacher* ready for the mail. About 20 stayed and most all worked all afternoon. Francis and a friend prepared food for us.

“After the evening service we went over to Sunny’s place to eat and then we recorded three sets of announcements for the radio programs by Sampson and Francis David. It was almost midnight when I got home. Wrote Betty and the children, and had a bath. It is almost 2:00 AM. I am exhausted.”

On the return trip to the US in November, 1975, J.C. delivered radio tapes to Reggie in Colombo and had a Gospel meeting with the church for several nights, then flew to Karachi for a short

time with the church before going on to Teheran where the Don Pet-
tys were working with Christians on the Air Base. After four days
there, he flew to Germany to be with Otis Gatewood, and to Vienna,
Austria with Bob Hare — dedicated missionaries of that era.

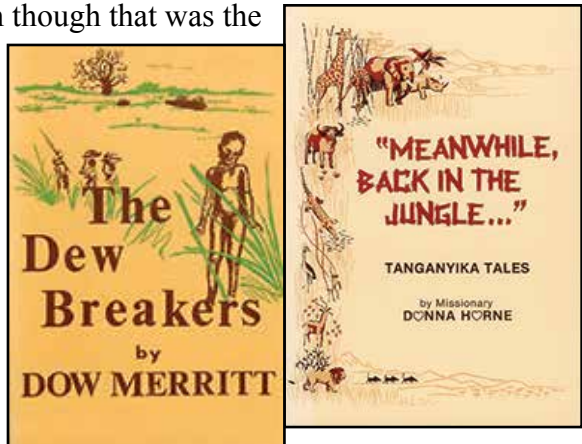
And Back to Winona!

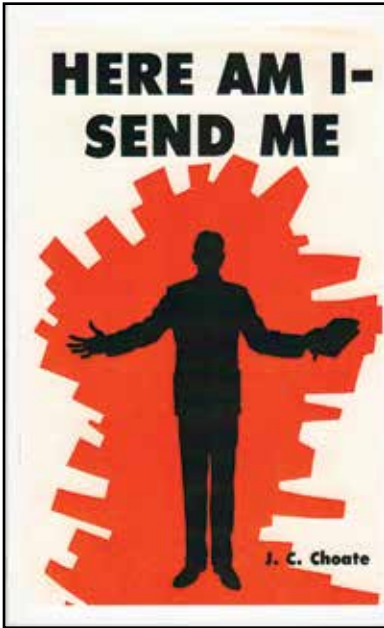
How wonderful to be home again!

Of course, the usual visits resumed with supporting churches,
and there was work to do also in Winona. J.C. had personal studies
with people who visited the assemblies of the church, and particular-
ly with black friends and relatives of newly-baptized Katy Purnell.
Katy had taken a Bible course through a church in Oklahoma and her
name had been given ultimately to Gene Gibson in Winona. With the
passing of time, Gene decided it was unChristian not to study with
her personally, in her home. The result was her conversion, baptism,
and the dividing of the Winona church because of prevailing racial
prejudices — the first religious group in town to be integrated! Other
conversions resulted from the studies, and the church grew, in spite
of the division. (Thankfully, in 1997, harmony was restored through
repentance and confession of faults, and now no one seems to see
“color” among the Christians. All are “one” in Christ.)

Ever a believer in the value of the printed page, J.C. had
become more deeply involved in the printing of books written by
missionaries. He knew that “mission” books were not a high priority
among churches, even though that was the
Lord’s “great com-
mission” to Chris-
tians, but his reason-
ing was that this vital
history of the church
of the 20th century
needed to be written
and preserved.

Printing
also included basic





study books that he advertized in the brotherhood Gospel papers. His own books, **The Gospel of Christ**, **The Church of the Bible**, and **New Testament Worship** were printed. **You Can Be Just a Christian** by Jim Massey and **What Is Christianity?** by Joel Stephen Williams were also encouraged as introductory studies concerning the Gospel and the church. In 2024, about 250 titles are in print, with about 112 tri-fold tracts available on a wide range of biblical subjects.

Of these mission books, many are provided to Bible students in Christian colleges and universities free of charge. Study books and tracts are sent by the thousands to brethren overseas, providing teaching materials that they can share with their contacts. The work continues to grow...



Chapter Twenty-One

A Huge New Door Opens: Radio, then TV

From 1962 through the summer of 1974, the Choates' foreign mission work had been largely focused on personal studies with individuals, building up the local church, and printing tracts and monthly magazines for strengthening those they were converting. Having begun a weekly radio program for India, broadcast from Radio Sri Lanka, "The Giant of Asia", which could be heard from the Fiji Islands on the East to the Scandinavian countries on the West, J.C.'s vision grew to much greater heights. **Why not develop radio programs in the main languages of India, and introduce the Gospel to the whole country** (now more than 1.4 billion souls in 2024!)?

Was it only an impossible dream?

The return trip to India in the spring of 1976 provided the answer. There were now two broadcasts each week in Hindi, with Sunny David as the speaker. Requests for Bible study courses continued to come in, and baptisms were being reported. J.C. and Sunny decided to make a trip to south India to talk with Telugu-, Tamil-, Kannada-, Malayalam-, and English-speaking brethren about recording programs in their languages. The men on their list had been Christians for six or eight years, had attended a Bible school in Madras, and had good reputations as ministers of the Gospel in their areas.

Traveling by train, the first stop was with Joshua and Nehemiah Gootam in Kakinada. Nehemiah had charge of a local Bible school. "Sunny preached at the Wednesday evening service and we recorded some singing. On Thursday, I set up ten tapes to begin the recording of the sermons. On Friday we continued the work until almost 2:00 AM. Did a total of ten sermons tonight.

"I spent most of Saturday getting the tapes recorded. We did eleven more, altogether. Got through before 1:00 AM. I am to

preach tomorrow morning and Sunny and I will leave for Chennai on Monday.



“At 9:00 AM worship began. After some singing, Bible reading and prayer, I was introduced, and Nehemiah translated into Telugu for me. I preached on ‘The Power of Choice’, and two requested baptism. We went out to the baptistery and they were baptized. I was asked to lead a prayer, then we returned to the meeting house for the Lord’s Supper and giving.

“Had evening worship and one of the Bible school students spoke. We recorded more singing and announcements to be used for the Telugu radio tapes. I recorded the last three sermons on cassettes.”

From Kakinada, J.C. and Sunny went by train to Chennai and then to Bangalore. They took a rickshaw to P.R. Swamy’s house where Don Norwood was conducting a Bible school. The next day, J.C., with Sunny, Gary



Walker, and David Hallett shared a breakfast at the Swamy home. “Sunny led some songs, brother Norwood spoke, and I was asked to make some comments about the effects of ‘culture’ on our work. Then David Hallett closed with prayer. Came back to the Walkers’ and I got to work on the Telugu tapes. Had lunch and then each of us had half a watermelon. Sure was good! I worked up the rest of the tapes and then we packed, ready to fly back to Chennai and then on to Colombo tomorrow.”

Not only was Reggie Gnanasundaram a strong leader in the church in Colombo and the manager of the radio contracts for the growing number of weekly programs in the major languages of India, he was also the speaker for some of the English lessons, in addition to J.C. “I lined up the singing, John Daniels made the announcements, and Reggie did the preaching on these. We recorded nine sermons today.”

Sunday, April 4, 1976: “I got up at 6:30, dressed, had breakfast, and we were at the place of worship by 8:00. Morning; North Colombo Church of Christ, brother Edwards’ home. 15 were present.

“Hindala Church of Christ, met in the Jacob Daniel home at 10:30. I preached. Had around 40. After the meeting we talked and studied till around 1:30. Came back to Reggie’s and had lunch and rested awhile.

“Evening at “Girls Friends Hall” in Colpetty. Met at 5:45 for worship. Must have had 60 to 70 present. I preached on “Are You Sure You Are a Christian?” Had a good meeting and came home. I timed the last three tapes we recorded on Saturday.

“I wrote an article for the papers and at 5:00 PM we left for brother Benjamin’s place for a Bible study. At 7:00 we went to Jacob Daniel’s home for a study. I answered questions on the Holy Spirit. Came home and I worked till midnight.” Those were busy days!

Returning to India and to Bangalore, J.C. went to P.R. Swamy’s home for Sunday worship where he preached and brother Swamy translated into Tamil. After the service, he recorded some congregational singing of Tamil hymns. Because of the noise in the area, “It was past 11:30 PM when we began recording brother



Swamy's lessons. We completed 3 tapes by 3:00 AM!"

On Sunday, about 75 were present for worship. J.C. preached and brother Swamy translated. It was great encouragement to see the church growing throughout India.

Of course, an important factor in the growth was the preaching of the Gospel each week over Radio Sri Lanka. Back in Colombo, at the Gnanasundaram home, **"After breakfast, Reggie and I went to the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation offices and spoke to the**

ones in charge of the Tamil and Telugu programs and arranged for another weekly Telugu program, and for two weekly Tamil programs. We will have six new programs to begin in May and, with the two Hindi programs already on the air, we will have eight weekly programs, two each in four major Indian languages: Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and English; 2 1/2 hours of Gospel preaching going into India each week!



Also, Reggie has given me the manuscripts of his radio sermons, so I will take them to New Delhi and have them printed in book form."

Chapter Twenty-Two

Twenty Years...

A pattern of work developed in the ensuing years. J.C. would spend about three months overseas in the spring, three months during the summer raising funds for the radio programs and the necessary printing for follow-up, three months in the fall overseas again, and three months in the winter visiting supporting churches to report on the work and also making contacts with new congregations.

Being away from family so much was difficult for everyone. Betty learned that she had to be both “father and mother” to the children, but since they understood the need for the continuation of the work in India, they proved to be very easy to raise! Sheila and Darla were now all grown up, so in 1978 they began their first year at Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas. Steve was in his Freshman year of high school, and Shannon was a first-grader. Happiness for everyone, except the lonely mother!

On J.C.’s return trip to India that fall, he stopped in Indonesia to be with Don and Ann Green in Jakarta. The Chengkari church had a Gospel meeting, with J.C. speaking each night. On Sunday, “I spoke during the Bible Study hour on the work in India. For the worship service, I had a lesson for the English speaking group on the subject, ‘Lord, Open Our Eyes’. Arnold Banjar came forward to be baptized. In the evening, a record crowd of over 60 were present for worship.”

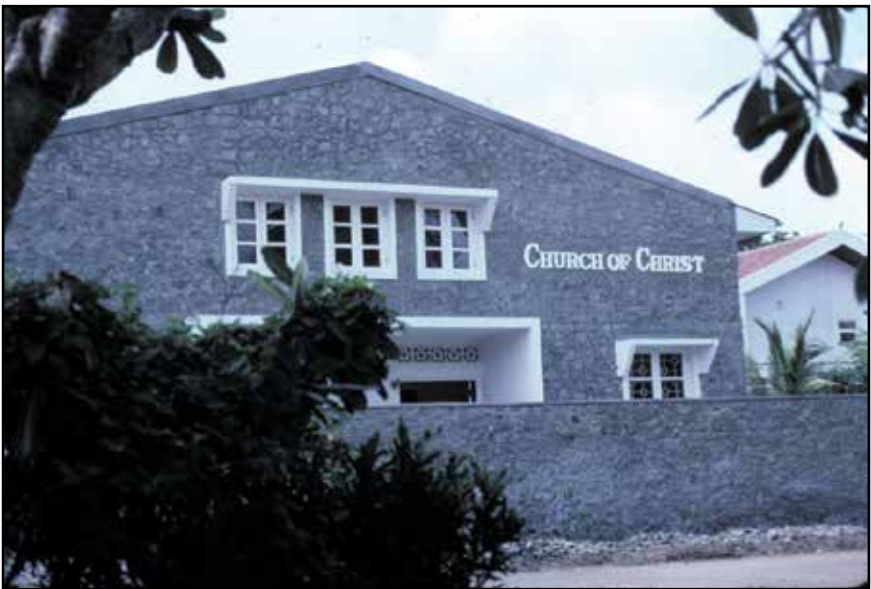
The next week J.C. flew to Medan, Indonesia where Colin and Ellen McKee had started the church. This began a lasting friendship that has only grown through the years.



Colin McKee

When, because of visa problems, the McKees returned to live in the States, working with the Choates in Winona, 2002-2003. They continued to make annual 3-month trips back to Indonesia, to preach in meetings and to work with local congregations, until covid stopped that routine. They do continue to have a weekly radio program, and even now, after all these years, Colin translates materials into the Indonesian language so that they can be printed and used by Christians all over the nation.

Bob and Nina Stewart, who had done secular work in Afghanistan, and then in Maui, Hawaii, moved to Winona in 1979 to help with office work. L.D. Willis, along with Howard Rogers and Edsel Faris, met with J.C. and the elders of the Pine Hill church in the Florence, AL area. They pledged funds toward the purchasing of land and construction of a meeting house in Colombo. That feat was finally accomplished and the church has a beautiful place to meet, without fear of outsiders.



In the fall of 1980, J.C. and Betty, along with Steve and Shannon made the return trip to India, via Europe and the Middle East. Stopping briefly in Egypt, of course they visited the Pyramids. “We

then came back to our room and had morning worship. We had our singing, prayer, the reading of Moses dealing with Pharaoh in Egypt, and then we had the reading of Christ's death, and had the Supper."

Further along, they stopped in Karachi, Pakistan, where Steve had been born. They were able to meet with Christians in the local congregation, including sister Winnie Masih, whose daughter — Aseema Songstad — now lives in San Diego and is still a faithful Christian. While in Karachi, they also met with Christians at Malir and Mahmoodabad, villages around Karachi where the church had been established during the five years they lived there.

Continuing on to India, they arrived in Delhi at their "home", E/10/B defence Colony, on September 22, 1980. Even though Sunny had cleaned and dusted, there was still work to be done: a water problem, as usual! For the next several days, a plumber did the work and finally they had the early morning rationed flow of water.

The normal work was resumed: the recording of radio sermons as the men of the different language groups made their twice-annual trip to Delhi; the writing and printing of books and magazines; studies with those who visited the assemblies, etc. As usual, Betty prepared meals for the visitors as well as for all who stayed on Sundays to work on preparations for mailing the magazines. With so much activity, there was no time for home-sickness. Of course, they did try to stay in touch with Sheila and Darla, mostly via mail with occasional phone calls, though the calls were difficult and expensive.

October 15: "I spent the morning setting up 20 English tapes. Then I had Steve to do two new sets of announcements. This afternoon, Sunny and Emmanuel came back from Buland Shahar to say that they had a good trip and that five were obedient to the Gospel."

The work finished for the quarter, the Choates began the journey home, via Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar, now) and they met with the church there. George Achard (who had heard the radio program from Sri Lanka, and had been converted as a result. He and Gertrude are faithful Christians, as are their grown-up children, living now in Nashville, TN) picked them up at the airport and took them to

the meeting place of the church where brother Garth Vertannes provided much of the leadership. “After worship I talked to the men at length about different Bible subjects. In the afternoon, Betty had a class with the ladies. I gave them a set of the **Jule Miller Filmstrips** and also some of the books we had printed in India.”

The Years Add Up

During the following years, the same pattern was followed — three months overseas, recording programs and setting up printing, three months at home visiting congregations to report and raise funds for the ever-increasing work, three months overseas again, and three months with American churches. It became a practice for Betty to accompany J.C. once in two years, so that she would continue to be directly involved with the Christians who were so precious to them.



George and Gertrude



Sheila and Rob

At home in Winona, Rob, the son of Gene and Madolyn Gibson, had given Sheila an engagement ring and they were married August 3, 1981. Darla was teaching school in Natchez, MS, Steve was in his first year at Harding University. Shannon was old enough to be left with his grandparents when Betty traveled with J.C., if he did not accompany them.

Since India is directly opposite the US, on the other side of the world, travel there enabled J.C. to stop off in various countries to speak in Gospel meetings. One such visit was in South Africa: “John Reese, Betty and I drove over to the Southern African Bible School in Benoni. There we met with brother and sister Al Horne. I also talked to Peter Mostert about printing work.

“I spoke to the student body about our literature and radio work in India. In the evening we went to the mid-week Bible Study with the Benoni church. Brother Horne taught the class and I gave a report on our work and the closing invitation.”

The World Evangelism team continues to be involved in evangelism in numerous countries in Africa, with radio programs and the printing of literature. Visits are made to help with churches in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, and other neighboring countries.

Back in India

In the fall of 1984, J.C., Betty, and Shannon returned to India. Recording of radio programs was resumed, and Shannon helped with setting up and editing the tapes. Then J.C. and Sunny made a



trip to Shillong, Assam, to encourage the brethren there. “We had a meeting with the Nongrim Hills church. We met also with brethren from Manipur. They talked to me about printing our books in the Paite language, since the English versions are already being shared with brethren. There is such a need for more printed materials.”

The meetings continued throughout the week. On the last evening, J.C. spoke on “The Victorious Kingdom”, and one young man asked to be baptized. Altogether, a total of seven obeyed the Gospel.

Moving on to Nepal, “Because of the local feeling toward foreigners coming to teach about Christianity, I let Sunny and others do the preaching. Had around 20 present and a good meeting. We walked up to brother Ganman’s place to take his wife to the nearby river and baptize her.”

On October 31, tragedy struck India: “There seems to be a lot of burning and looting tonight.

November 1, 1984: “Sunny brought a newspaper that told of the assassination of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Sunny said that much of the shopping center in South Extension (our area of Delhi) had been burned. Sikhs are being killed throughout India. Mrs. Gandhi’s son, Rajiv, has been sworn in as Prime Minister.

November 2: “Sunny came in and said that the riots are still going on. All the shops are closed, and the burning of houses, shops, everything continues. I heard on BBC and VOA that over 1000 have been killed in India, and around 500 here in New Delhi. We are staying in, praying that things will soon return to normal. For now, the city is under evening curfew.”

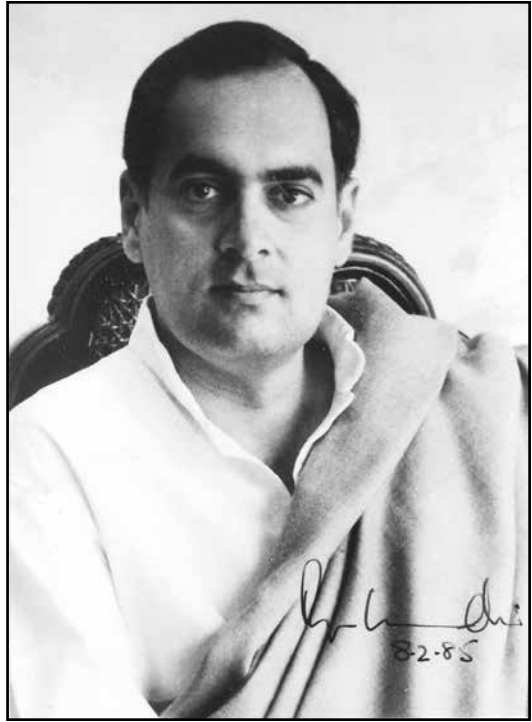
An interesting side note: Betty began to write to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, and he wrote back! This, in response to her first letter:

Dear Mrs. Choate,

Thank you for your letter and for your kind and comforting words.

I find that you wrote on 30th January, which is a hallowed day in Indian history, the anniversary of Mahatma

Gandhi's martyrdom. You have referred to his travels from village to village with his message and suggested that in our times the same message of brotherhood can be conveyed through television. Yes and no. Television is expensive and it will be long before our villagers can afford TV sets in their homes. But we have a programme of installing community viewing sets, and we have also put in orbit a satellite of our own



so as to be able to reach as many of India's 526,000 villages as we can. Besides, as you know, India is a land of many languages. One cannot have a heart-to-heart talk with all the people of India, not knowing their different mother-tongues. Yet, as I discovered when travelling across the country in the recent election campaign, it is possible to reach out to the people in spite of the language barrier.

The key, as you have wisely pointed out is to convince the people that their good is uppermost in our heart. There is a statement of Mahatma Gandhi which I particularly treasure:

"I will give you a talisman: whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain

anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melting away.”

Yours sincerely,

(Rajiv Gandhi)

Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister of India from 1984-1989. Because of his support against the Sri Lankan Tamils who tried to take over that government, he was assassinated in 1991. In Chennai where he was to speak at a campaign rally, running for re-election, Gandhi “...left his car and began walking towards the dais where he was to deliver a speech. Along the way, he was garlanded by many well-wishers, Indian National Congress workers and school children. The assassin, Kelaivani Rajaratnam, approached and greeted him. She then bent down to touch his feet and detonated an RDX explosive-laden belt tucked below her dress. Gandhi, his assassin and 14 others were killed in the explosion that followed, along with 43 others who were gravely injured.”

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Work Goes On...

1986 was an eventful year. J.C. returned to India in mid-February, via Africa. His first stop was in Ivory Coast where he spent several days with Bob Prater, visiting various congregations and giving lessons that were translated into French. From there he flew to Accra, Ghana and was with the Ted Wheelers and the Dan McVeys. On Sunday, with the church in Ashaiman where 205 were present, J.C. spoke and two confessed faults and one was baptized.

On to Johannesburg, South Africa where John and Beth Reese worked with the South Hampton church. In Benoni, he met with Al and Donna Horne and discussed with them their plans for writing a book on their work in Africa. He also spoke to the students of the South Africa Bible School about the work in India and the printing of literature in the various countries. During the time with the Reeses, Loy and Donna Mitchell who were working in Zimbabwe, came by for a meeting. J.C.'s purpose in meeting with the men in the various African countries was to look into the costs and possibilities of printing literature for evangelism. He was told that, even though tracts were available, books and magazines had not been printed in most places.

Reaching India on March 12, a call came through from Betty saying that there had been a kitchen fire in the house and that she desperately needed him to come home to take care of the office work while she and her father would be deeply involved in restoring the house. It was a busy three months, blending office responsibilities with visiting supporting churches, and re-doing almost all of the inside of the house, but the work was



John Reese

finally completed and J.C. returned to India the middle of May for six weeks.

July 27, 1986: “Morning worship, Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, MS: We attended Bible study and I led the opening prayer. Brother Haskell Sparks preached and at the close of the service he told of our 25 years of work in India and called Betty and me up to the pulpit to present a plaque in honor of our years of work overseas.”

The years flew by with the kids growing into their own lives! Steve attended college at Harding University where he met Melinda Salmon from Naples, Florida. They were married on December 21, 1987, with J.C. performing the ceremony at the Golden Gate meeting house in Naples.

Major Events

During the early years of radio recording (1975), Betty would accompany J.C. once in two years, leaving the children with their grandparents, Clyde and Theola Burton, but by the time Steve had married and Shannon had graduated and was in college (he married Georgia Morrow, a fellow-student in 1992), Betty accompanied him each time — until 1993 when the decision was made to construct an office building in Winona, with storage space for the books that were being printed.



Wayne Barrier, a member of the church in Pine Hill, Alabama had become deeply involved in the overseas work and had accompanied J.C. on trips since 1983, so he was aware of the need for permanent office space. Men (Andy Akins) in the Pine Hill congregation did construction work, so it was arranged for them to make the trip to Winona, stay at the Choates' house during the week, and make the needed happen!

From J.C.'s diary, a typical day: "Andy and the others went to work this morning, and Betty and her Dad joined in. They came home for lunch, and Mama Burton had prepared a snack for us. The Roadway Transport people brought 5,000 copies of **Gospel Sermonettes** and I unloaded them. We had dinner and then did office work until midnight. Betty is working on volume 2 of *The Voice of Truth International*."



Another brother (G.K. Tanner) from the Morton, Mississippi church did wiring and plumbing. Betty and her Dad put up 365 sheets of paneling! Much of the work was done voluntarily or at greatly reduced charges, so the building cost about half of what was estimated.

Co-workers Added

With the printing of books in the States, much proofing of manuscripts had to be done, and there were book orders to fill. The

growth of the work overseas necessitated additional funds, so the reporting to congregations and printed reports with financial reports were necessary. Various ones told J.C. that the reason they continued to faithfully support the work through the years was because he kept them so well informed about what their funds were accomplishing overseas. Of course, the increased office work required having co-workers to do what J.C. and Betty did not have time to do.

Looking back through the years, it is such a reassuring thing to see God’s providence as He brought the needed co-workers on board. The first “extra” to



Eulene Ramsey

join the work was Rusty Maynard and his family, Leo and Jane. During the months of construction of our enlarged office building in 1993, Connie Krute (often with the aid of her parents, Everett and Edra Krute) was co-worker in the office, but later she decided to return to Oklahoma to be with her aging parents. Bob and Nina Stewart, formerly secular government employees in Afghanistan, joined us for a year. Later Barbara Oliver (who had lived two years with us in India, 1972-74) decided to move



Byron and Gay Nichols

to Winona. About the same time, Darrell and Eulene Ramsey of Houston, Texas had seen an article in the *Christian Chronicle* about the need for help with the work, so they came over to check on it. As it turned out, they and Barbara made the decision to move to Winona that year! And Byron Nichols decided to join us as Associate Editor, and later, as Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*, working from his home in Springfield, Missouri. What providential timing God does!

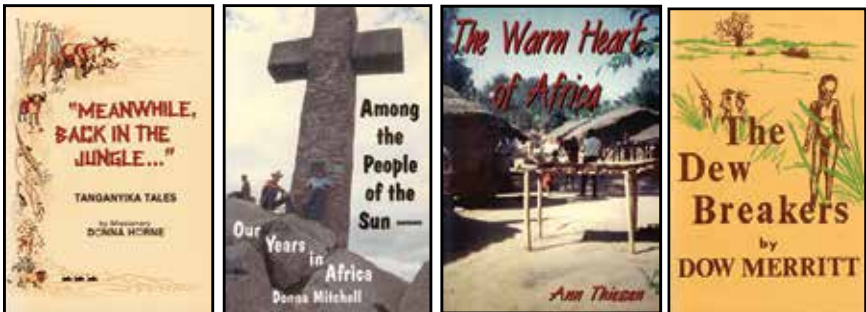
Chapter Twenty-Four

Into the Decade of the 90's

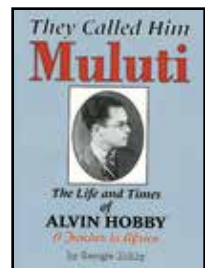
The pattern of being overseas three months in the spring, home to raise funds for the work, back to India three months in the fall, and home again for fund-raising during the winter continued year-after-year.

A typical diary entry said: “Morning worship: Sunny taught the Bible class on Revelation. We also had classes for the children. I preached during the worship hour on ‘The Blessings of God’. Nelson David translated it into Hindi. Had a house full, even though some were out due to sickness. After worship, more than 30 stayed to work on getting the magazine addressed and bundled for mailing. Brother Murgeasen said he will bring his two girls and a son for baptism in the morning. All finally went home and tonight we had a snack and went to bed after 2:00 AM.”

It is a sad truth that many in the States value their Christian literature very little, but that is not the case overseas where not much is available. J.C. met one brother from Maesei, Myanmar. “He said



Pictured above are some of the life stories written by missionaries to Africa. In total, we at World Evangelism, have printed more than forty of these books, reserving for posterity the history of the Lord's work in distant countries of the world. We encourage you to order these, read them, and be inspired to follow their example.



he had gotten one of my books and had waited 10 years to meet me! We gave him a copy of **The Church of the Bible** and also a copy of **The Voice of Truth International**. We are so thankful that our brethren in the States are helping us to fill this void for many souls — but millions more are waiting...”

“Then Sunny gave a short talk on my 50 years of preaching and presented me with a plaque. All, then were invited to have refreshments and to have a piece of cake made for the occasion. I was caught with surprise!”



The work continued in the following weeks: “I got my recording equipment going. Also am doing a set of Sunny’s sermons so he can give them to different ones. He mailed about 100 packets of books and

tracts, and also sent out some packets of my articles and of Betty’s to several of those who print our magazines. He gave me copies of the Paite magazines and of **Why We Believe What We Believe.**”

In May of 1996, J.C. and Betty made an extended trip to Australia and New Zealand. In Sydney, J.C. was asked to speak to the Blacktown Church of Christ, where Max McArthur preached. In addition to his lesson on “Be Careful”, he taught the Bible class and had opportunity to tell about the work in India. Brother Stuart Penhall took them to Canberra where they had lunch with members of the church, one of which was from Sri Lanka! J.C. gave them copies of the Australian edition of **The Voice of Truth International**.

From Sydney, the Choates flew to Auckland where they met John and Lynda Staiger who had recently moved there from South

Africa. A bus trip took them to New Plymouth where Rod Kyle picked them up. The church was having a campaign with students from Freed Hardeman University. “Got to visit with the students and all the members, some of whom cried for joy at receiving a copy of *The Voice of Truth International*.

“In the afternoon, Rod and I went to a home where two of the campaigners were having a Bible study with a young woman. She decided then to be baptized. Rod and I had further discussion with her. Also, a young man decided to be baptized. We all went back to the meeting house and then to a motel where Rod baptized those two.”



John and Lynder Staiger and family



Loy and Donna Mitchell

On another visit to Mutare, Zimbabwe, J.C. and Betty were riding in the car with brother Loy Mitchell. Passing a man along the road, Loy dropped a tract and, as they looked behind, they saw the man pick it up and walk on his way, reading the life-saving message. [As “World Evangelism” has gotten involved in printing books in numerous African countries and languages, we have been told how grateful everyone is to have *study books!* Previously, only tracts were available.]

In the fall of 1997 Dennis and Sharon Larson, who had returned to their North Carolina home from Indonesia, began to be involved in the work. Dennis' occupation was computer programing, so he came to Winona if there was a problem in the office that he couldn't fix over the phone. But Dennis was also a very capable carpenter, so he and Papa Burton built a "kitchen" area in the office building and added shelving to cabinets, upstairs and downstairs.



Dennis and Sharon Larson

The printing of books in the States also continued: “An 18-wheeler brought copies of new books: **Scriptural Organization of the Church, You Can Be Just a Christian, The Role of Wom-**





One area of book storage in the World Evangelism building.

an, and **Abiding in the Doctrine of Christ**. We also got volume 24 of ***The Voice of Truth International***. Altogether, we received more than 23,000 books and a large assignment of magazines.”

During those years from 1993 until the summer of 2007, Barbara Oliver and Eulene Ramsey were tireless workers in the office. Eulene did the keeping of financial records, and the typing of manuscripts, among many other jobs. Barbara’s continual work included the proofing of manuscripts set up for printing, and communication with brethren here in the States about the work, a double task during the months when both J.C. and Betty were overseas. Their management in the office was a continual blessing from God. There was great grief when Eulene passed from this life to her eternal home in 2011. Barbara left full time work with the Choates and decided in 2010 to do some mission work in Costa Rica.

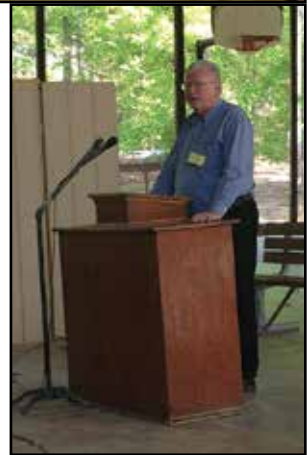
Chapter Twenty-Five

Changing Times

The first mission workshops were begun by the Forest Park church in Valdosta, Georgia. Other congregations volunteered to host the annual meetings, including the Karns church in Knoxville, Tennessee. In August of 2002, the Richland Hills church in Dallas, Texas was the sponsor. The Choates registered and then set up their books and magazines, particularly displaying the life stories written by missionaries.



“In the afternoon we heard John Reese talk about the work of World Bible School. Afterwards, we met with the Reeses, George Funk, Roger Dickson, Mid McKnight, Sylvio Salamon from Mauritius, and a host of others. Everett Huffard had a very good session, explaining Islam and its shaping of populations where it is in total control. We also met African workers who have used our books and were excited to meet us. Every program like this is an



inspiring experience, and I just wish more congregations focused on carrying out our Lord’s great commission.”

Monthly “team meetings” took place in Winona. “Dennis and Sharon Larson (Indonesia) came, and then Don and Beverly Norwood (India). A little later Byron and Gay Nichols (Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*) came in. Then Roger Mills and Colin and Ellen McKee (former missionaries in Indonesia, who also spent a year in Winona during 2002, to help carry on the work) arrived. A little later, Tim Howard, Wayne and Janet Barrier (India, Myanmar and other Asian countries), and Joe Mabrey came.



“Each one was given time to talk about his work and the methods proving most effective in his evangelism. Don Norwood showed a video of his most recent trip to India. Wayne reported on his work, then John Mark Wilson told of a class he has with students in several countries.

“Of course, as usual, we went to Guy’s for a catfish dinner. The Larsons say they wouldn’t come if we didn’t do that!”

Health Challenges

2002 brought some major changes into the Choates’ lives. J.C. was noticing that his feet were continually bothering him and he finally decided he needed to check with a doctor. Feeling that a specialist would be better able to diagnose the problem, rather

than a general practitioner, Betty decided to see if they could get an appointment at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. She made the call and was told that it would be several months before an appointment could be scheduled. Sad news, but back to work.

Amazingly, two weeks later the phone rang and a staff scheduler of the Mayo Clinic was on the line! She said that if J.C. would agree for a complete physical, they could come on a date just two weeks away! Betty was amazed that in a clinic as large and important as the Mayo was, someone had kept her phone number and information about their need to see a specialist for J.C.'s foot problem! **It had to be God's providential care!**

And providence proved to be working even further: the physical revealed that J.C. had colon cancer! Since he was experiencing no symptoms, if he had not had the complete physical examination, the tumor would not have been discovered until cancer cells had spread throughout his body. With prayers of thanksgiving, he agreed to surgery, August 26, which was successful, and thus began a long-term connection with the clinic, as regular check-ups were required for several months, though there were no chemotherapy or radiation treatments.

There was an added gift by God. A young woman worked in the office of one of the doctors J.C. saw in taking the various tests: Karen Fox. Karen's parents had worked as missionaries in Thailand, and J.C. had met them on one of the stopovers in the trips to India. Her father deceased, Karen and her mother, Mary, lived in Jacksonville. They were hospitable Christians, so their home became the "motel" for the Choates whenever they had doctors' appointments. What a blessing they were!

December 13, a check-up with Dr. Metzgar showed that all was well, so it was time to resume uninterrupted work.

One day, an interesting thing happened. "As we were getting ready to go to Sunday worship, a man called, wanting to come to the office. Barbara sent him to the house, and I talked to him. He was from Florida, making a truck delivery to the local grocery store. While in Florida, he had found a copy of **The Church of the Bible**

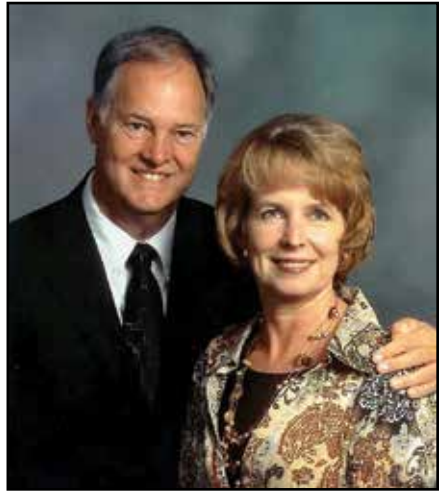
in a Goodwill store. He liked it and decided to look me up because Winona was the destination of a future delivery! I studied with him and took him to the office and gave him a bunch of our books and magazines. He insisted on giving me \$100 and then left. We tried to get him to stay for worship but he felt he needed to get back on the road. I got his address...”

Return to the Yearly Routine

At the end of February in 2003, J.C. and Betty returned to India. In addition to resuming the regular work of recording radio programs and overseeing the printing of literature, arrangements were beginning to be made to purchase a parcel of land in New Delhi for the construction of a meeting house for the church.

Wayne and Janet Barrier had committed full-time to the overall mission program, so they came to Delhi in March. A typical day: “Joshua Gootam and I recorded 6 of his sermons, then we stopped for lunch. Betty had made rice, dal, spaghetti and meat sauce for the seven of us. Afterwards, Wayne and Janet worked on preparing 160 packets of books and magazines to send out to my special list. The power went off at least two times and slowed us down but we went on and recorded 6 more sermons before stopping for the evening. After everyone else went home, we had dinner with the Barriers and then talked about the work and all that needs to be done until midnight.”

Back home for the summer, visits were made to supporting churches, and office work continued as usual. One diary entry recorded: “Today we had 9,000 books to come by Federal Express: 5,000 **New Testament Worship** in Spanish, 2,000 copies of **New Testament Worship** in English, and 2,000 copies of **The Gospel of**



Wayne and Janet Barrier

Christ. I am sending 3,000 copies of **The Gospel of Christ and New Testament Worship** to George Funk for Africa.”

In the fall of 2003, Eulene carried on the work in the office while Barbara accompanied J.C. and Betty in their return trip overseas. Though Barbara had lived with the Choates during their last time in India as a family, 1972-1974, the years had flown by and many changes had been made. They went first to India, meeting with the brethren and recording radio programs, then to Colombo, Sri Lanka to deliver the tapes. Of course, being with the Christians again and traveling north to south in India and on to Colombo, brought back treasured memories for Barbara.

Leaving Sri Lanka, they flew to Singapore, then spent time with the John Staiger family in New Zealand, and with the Graham Walkers in Auckland. While with the Palmerston North congregation, Betty taught in an area-wide ladies’ meeting which lasted for several days. On Sunday, J.C. was asked to deliver the morning lesson during worship: *Reaching the World for Christ*.

On to Wanganui, New Zealand where they met with Kent and Rachel O’Donnell. Next stop, New Plymouth with the church, and especially with Steve and Juricz Blackman. [You may remember that I wrote in an earlier chapter that when the church in Lahore, Pakistan was needing financial help constructing a meeting house, the Blackmans gave \$13,000.] All along the way, J.C. was asked to speak during worship hours and Betty taught special ladies’ classes.

In Hobart, Tasmania, Dennis Gresham picked them up at the airport and drove them around to see some of the country’s beautiful scenery. They also learned a little about Tasmania’s history: it served as a penal colony for the British in long-ago days when that part of the world was being settled by foreigners.

J.C. spoke on Sunday, “It Is Easy to be a Christian”, with a record attendance of 70, some coming from neighboring congregations. Betty and Barbara took part in a “Ladies Challenge”.

A Bible school session had been scheduled in Yangon, Myanmar, so the Choates and Barbara spent a week teaching classes for 25 students from various cities in that country. Philip Lian trans-

lated the lessons from the book of Hebrews. George and Gertrude Achard were strong workers in the Lord's church in Yangon during those years, but they later moved to the Nashville, Tennessee area and continue to be active Christians there.

The extended trip ended, and the Choates returned to the States. The 2004 schedule remained much the same, except that when they were again in New Delhi on September 19, Sunny had a call from the States saying that Betty's Dad had died of a heart attack. J.C. and Betty returned home to be with the family for the funeral and the aftermath of such an unexpected death. "Papa" had had breakfast with "Mama Burton" and had gone into the living room to sit in his easy chair. Then, without any warning, he breathed his last breath and went home to his reward. Since Betty's childhood, the Burtons



had been loving parents and faithful Christians, and Papa was an elder in the Winona church. Overshadowing the grief and tears was thankfulness for all that the Burtons had done through the years to help deal with the challenges of foreign mission work.

had been loving parents and faithful Christians, and Papa was an elder in the Winona church. Overshadowing the grief and tears was thankfulness for all that the Burtons had done through the years to help deal with the challenges of foreign mission work.

The Work Continues

Ever looking for additional ways to energize the church, J.C. began the publication of a magazine he called "*Global Harvest*" in 2004. Its purpose was to better educate the church not only on the work in which he was involved in India and Asia, but to give a voice to the work done by others throughout the world. An opening challenge was framed in these words:

"Do we really love Jesus? By inspiration John wrote in 1 John 4:3: 'For this is the love of God, that we keep

GLOBAL HARVEST
the Voice of World Evangelism

Summer 2012




We're looking for Gideon and his 300!

Yes, we're looking for a strong, biblically-sound, and passionate man (and wife) to take the lead in a much-needed work in the Lord's church. We're calling him "Gideon".

And we're looking for his 300 warriors who will work with him, and with God, to turn things around in the church.

Have you seen him?

His commandments...’ What did Jesus plainly command? (1) Go and preach the Gospel. (2) Baptize the believers. (3) Teach them all that He had taught the disciples.

“What is most of the American church doing? (1) Preaching to the church. (2) Baptizing some of our children. (3) Teaching ourselves for ourselves.

“Ask yourself, and answer honestly: (1) What percentage of the weekly contribution is spent on evangelizing the lost? (2) What percentage is spent on keeping the members happy and catering to their needs and ‘entertainment’? (3) How long has it been since a new congregation was begun in your area through a planned program of the elders/leaders of the church (not through angry division or doctrinal problems)? (4) How long has it been since some new person (not brought up ‘in the church’) was baptized in your baptistry? (5) What percentage of the children in your congregation remain faithful five years after they leave home? Reported statistics say that the number is less than 70%.

“Are we honestly ‘going’? Can we honestly say before God that our vision is for ‘the world’ in our plans for teaching His word? No. Are we baptizing ‘new blood’? Yes, we are willing to baptize ‘those who come to us — but few are ‘coming’ because we are not ‘going’.

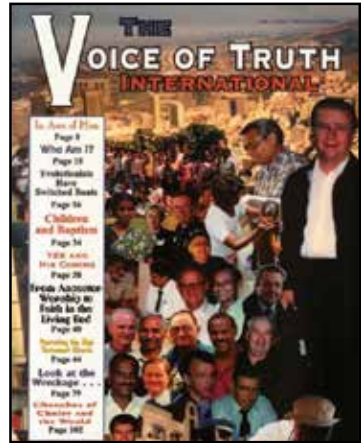
“Are we genuinely teaching the church all that Christ taught? No. If we were, we wouldn’t be losing such a large per-

centage of our children. If we were, a strong spirit of evangelism would be constantly moving the church out to new communities, new cities, even new countries, sowing the seed and reaping the harvest. We would be deeply spiritual people, focused on evangelism and grounding new converts.”

In visiting supporting churches and raising funds for additional work, this message was always paramount.

By that time in 2004, many of the radio programs in India had become TV programs because of the amazing decision of the Indian government to allow religious **telecasting** on its channels, where no religious broadcasts had been allowed on its radio stations! The quarterly magazine, *The Voice of Truth International* (now up to volume 120 in 2024), was not only in circulation throughout the United States but was sent regularly to churches in approximately 60 additional countries, bringing the message to souls in mission areas where work was being done but workers were few.

The printing of books and tracts in the States was also a growing achievement. What had begun in 1952 with J.C.’s first book, **Sermon Outlines**, had expanded into more than two hundred titles by faithful brethren. J.C.’s logic concerning the ever-increasing treasure of books: **“Print enough to sell enough to pay the printer; don’t ever be in debt on printing. Then you will have books to give away!”** He made about 25 of the titles available to **World Bible School** teachers, to people in prison ministry, and to



anyone who was using the books as follow-up teaching materials, at a charge of \$1.50 — well below the price he was paying for the printing. And thousands of copies were shipped overseas, free of any charge.

On December 26 of 2004, a 9.1 underwater earthquake in the Indian Ocean shook that part of the world and caused a tsunami that inundated coastal areas in surrounding countries, taking the lives of upwards of 260,000 people. The southeastern coast of India was devastated. Having a great deal of evangelistic work in that area, with many congregations and individual Christians affected, J.C. immediately sent letters to supporters, requesting funds to aid in the recovery.

By the time of his and Betty's departure for India in mid-February of 2005, to continue with their twice-annual meeting and working with the local brethren, and to provide funds toward recovery from the tsunami, in excess of \$140,000 had been raised. They landed first in New Delhi to be with the church, then flew to Kakinada where they met with Joshua Gootam and the church of about 300 members there. Funds were given for Christians in outlying villages who had suffered losses from the tsunami, and also for the printing of their Telegu magazine and other materials for radio and TV contacts.



The congregation at Kakinada

From Kakinada, the Choates traveled by train to Bangalore, further south in India. They were met by the local evangelist and radio speaker, P. R. Swamy, and his son, Douglas. They had contacts with

congregations throughout the stricken area, so they traveled together by van and distributed funds to Christians who had lost everything in the devastation. With each congregation, they also had public meetings to encourage those who attended.



P.R. Swamy and his son, Douglas

Making the rounds, they met with B. Arjunan, Philemon, and S. Rajanayagam, Tamil TV speakers, and with P. K. Varghese in Trivandrum, the Malayalam radio/TV speaker. In each place, aid was given for congregations and men with whom they worked. J.C. wrote in his diary: “**We drove**

throughout the region and saw different areas where the tsunami hit. Destruction was everywhere. It was a sad picture.”

In addition to bringing aid to the tsunami victims, the regular work of those spring/fall visits had to be done, so radio programs were recorded in English and Tamil, and funds were given for the TV programs that were professionally taped, and for the printing of monthly magazines and other follow-up materials. **Always, the vision was paramount: spread the Gospel through the airwaves, and back it up with physical materials that could be read and studied long after the verbal message was silent.**

Returning to the States, J.C. reported to congregations near and far that had given sacrificially to help their brethren in India, showing slides of the devastation and conveying the gratitude for all that had been done toward recovery. Often, the return home from those Sunday visits happened when the clock struck one or two A.M. Of course, office work also continued every day with putting together the issues of *The Voice of Truth International*, communication with

supporting brethren, with fellow-missionaries, with co-workers overseas, with filling book orders, and doing the thousand-and-one other things that demanded attention from day to day. J.C. even found time to cut the grass at their house and at the office, while Betty pulled weeds. Menial work for a “famous” missionary!

Co-Workers in India

After the Choates settled in New Delhi, and during the following years, their working relationship with brethren throughout the country grew through the new radio/TV programs and the printing of supportive literature. Below are pictures of precious Family members:



Sunny and Jasmine



Francis and Elsy



Earnest and Benu



Joshua and Kabita



Philemon and Baby



Arjunan and Glory



Rajanayagam and Rachael



P.K. and Thankam



Swamy and Saroja



Reggie and Mahes

2005

As stated earlier, **India had decided to allow religious TV programs on its various channels**, provided the costs were paid in foreign currency. Since all the expenses had always been paid by American church support, that was not a problem. The question was, would the radio speakers be “comfortable” being filmed for TV programs? As the Choates had learned through the years, there seems to be little or no “stage fright” among people in India, so the transition was made without any real challenges! What a blessing!

But another factor was also involved: *J.C. would no longer be required to make the three-month visits to India to record radio programs!* **How was that providential timing?** In August of 2005, following the latest check-up at the Mayo Clinic, J.C. had a call: “My pet scan showed two spots of cancer cells in my right lung. I now have to have a biopsy and maybe surgery. I cancelled my week-end speaking appointments and am headed for Jacksonville.”

The middle of August, J.C. had appointments for further testing at the Mayo Clinic for the cancer the doctors had found in his lungs. He was allowed to return home, but surgery was scheduled for September 8 in Jacksonville, Florida.

An additional devastation came when Hurricane Katrina hit the southern coast and then whipped north, coming back south from north Mississippi on August 29, bringing down three large pine trees in the Choates’ yard. One of them fell on their house, causing extensive damage that required the total re-working of half the house. They left for Jacksonville for the surgery with a tarpaulin over the roof, the power off,



and weeks of recovery work ahead, knowing too that J.C. would be unable to help with any of it.

The surgery took place as scheduled, and tests were clear for several months. The lung surgery weakened him, but J.C. continued to go to the office and be a part of the normal work whenever he could. Of course, he was not able to make the overseas trips or the weekend visits to supporting churches. **2006 and 2007 were therefore seen as providential:** They allowed time for J.C. to help Betty learn the new parts of the work that she would have to be responsible for. He also wrote letters and made calls, encouraging several seemingly interested brethren to move to Winona to take up the work he was no longer able to do, praying earnestly that God would supply the help that was needed. Nothing positive happened, and finally he surrendered to what seemed evident, “Maybe it’s time for our Indian brethren to go ahead with the work on their own, without American involvement.”

Chapter Twenty-Six

“But I Want to Work!”

Surrender...

What they had been doing for decades was God’s work, not their own, so God would take care of it.

In May of 2007, Wayne Barrier visited the Fraley’s Chapel church where Jerry and Paula Bates worked. He talked with them about the possibility of moving to Winona to join the “World Evangelism” team. They came down to look the situation over in detail and decided “yes” in June, then moved to Winona in August. In July, Louis Rushmore contacted J.C. about also joining the work, and he was so thankful that they moved to Winona in September. What wonderful answers to prayers and to surrender!

Team meetings took place in the following months, including not only the American brethren, but also Sunny and Nargis David from New Delhi. The Choates took them to visit supporting churches



so that Sunny could become a real person to brethren who had made his work possible for decades. Philemon Rajah from Tamil Nadu, India, and P.K. Varghese from Kerala, India also came and had opportunity to meet and report about their work.

The year was 2008. Almost two-and-a-half years of dealing with the recurrence of the dreaded cancer had brought not only many changes but also **great evidence of God’s providence for the work to continue that had been begun forty-five years earlier.**

Because J.C. was increasingly limited in being able to “get out and about”, fellow members of the team came often to Winona: the Wayne Barriers, the Byron Nichols, the Dennis Larsons, the Jerry Bates, and the Louis Rushmores met, discussed, and planned not only the continuation but also the expansion of the work. Wayne and Janet, with their sons, Joey and Jeremy, were working closely with brethren in the Philippines, in Myanmar, in Malaysia, and in Viet Nam. In addition to the commitments already made to India, Jerry was beginning to add several African countries to his trips, working closely with the Bear Valley Schools of preaching.

Knowing that the end was near, Betty tried to encourage J.C. with words of anticipation of the wonderful new world he would be entering, seeing his Lord face-to-face, and experiencing in reality all that God has in store for His faithful children. J. C.’s answer was the plea, **“But I want to work!”** **The vision and the strong impetus he had had from his earliest years stayed with him to the last.** Surely in that new world God will have work for us to do, and the desire that filled J.C.’s heart can be satisfied in the work he will do for all of eternity...



Obituary

J.C. Choate was born to J.F. and Hollis Choate in Corinth, Miss., on Feb. 6, 1932. He was baptized while still in high school and began preaching shortly thereafter.

He held a B.A. in Bible, a Master's in Missions, and D.Min. in Missions. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, David Lipscomb College, Alabama Christian College (B.A.), and Harding Graduate School (M.A.)

He wrote numerous books, among them **The Gospel of Christ, The Church of the Bible, New Testament Worship, A Missionary Speaks** (1983), **A Missionary Speaks Up** (1984), **A Missionary Speaks Out** (1986), **How to Begin the Church of Christ Where You Are** (2002) and **Sermons from Matthew** (2003).

He was founder of World Evangelism Foundation and J.C. Choate Publications, as well as Editor-in-Chief of *The Voice of Truth International*, a quarterly magazine published for churches of Christ in the interest of evangelism world-wide.

J.C. was the leader in the brotherhood for publishing missionary accounts on the field and missions studies.

In 1955 J.C. married the former Betty Burton of Winona, Miss.

Before moving overseas, J.C. preached for churches in Corinth, Gulfport, Tupelo and Belzoni, Miss., Shafter, Calif., and Minneapolis, Minn.

J.C. and Betty moved in 1962 with their infant daughter to Karachi, Pakistan, to begin the church in that city. In succeeding years their work has included planting New Testament Christianity in Colombo, Sri Lanka and New Delhi, India, as well as extensive publication and broadcasting efforts in the U.S., India and Asia.

Throughout their latter years, the Choates traveled twice a year, three months at a time, to India and other nations where "World Evangelism" work was being done.

In May 2007 J.C. was awarded an honorary doctorate from Heritage Christian University, Florence, Ala., for his many years of dedicated service to missions.

After a long battle with cancer, J.C. passed away at his home in Winona Feb. 1, 2008, at 12:20 p.m. CST, at age 75. He would have been 76 on the 6th.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The Story Goes On India Then...India Now

Would you like to follow J.C.'s dream through these passing decades? I'll give you a brief but exciting overview, one that was covered beautifully in the annual **India Mission Conference** which our team was privileged to host at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama:

“ F o r most of two years (1960-1962) we tried to get visas as Americans for long-term work in India. When our attempts were unsuccessful, J.C. wrote about it in the brotherhood Gospel pa-



Area-wide world mission meeting.

pers. Canadian brethren, knowing that both Canada and India were in the Commonwealth of Nations, realized that they needed no visas! Brothers J.C. and Cecil Bailey, as well as Carl and Jim Johnson, and others began to make plans and to raise funds to go. In fact, we were already settled in Karachi, Pakistan when brother J.C. Bailey stopped to visit with us on his way to India in late 1963.

“The Canadian missionaries worked primarily in states in South India, the Baileys in Andhra Pradesh, and the Johnsons in Tamil Nadu. Converts were made and

churches came into existence. With the spreading of the news, many American brethren made short working trips of two or three weeks to add to the outreach that was being done. The Gary Walkers, Craig Phillips and other Americans discovered that they could get student visas or other types that allowed them to live and work in India. So the work force grew through the years.

Six decades later, what progress was reported during the 2018 Conference? **“That the church in India is no longer in its infancy but has made tremendous gains in size as well as in maturity! Numerous congregations number in the hundreds of members, have their own buildings, are blessed with elders and deacons, and are financially and spiritually able to take care of their own needs. Orphanages exist and care is provided in many places for widows. There are leadership training programs, Bible colleges, evangelistic outreach programs, Bible camps, seminars, lectureships, and monthly preachers’ meetings that provide study opportunities as well as door-knocking and Bible studies with contacts in the city or village where the meeting is taking place. Radio and TV programs continue to add to the number who have opportunity to learn the truth, with monthly magazines, Bible courses, and other printed materials provided for follow-up, in addition to all the personal studies that take place every day.**

“How many churches exist in India now? A definite number would be difficult to name, but it would be no exaggeration to say that there are certainly more members of the Lord’s church in India today than in the United States! What wonderful changes these six decades have brought for the souls in that land who were hungry for God’s truth!”

And how thankful we are for the many brothers and congregations on this side of the world who have made this dream become a reality!

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Now, Back to our Particular Part of the Story:

Since we were not able to get visas to go to India, we went to Karachi, Pakistan instead, beginning the church in that multi-million city, working there from 1962 and into 1967. Others took our place, and we did interim work in Colombo, Sri Lanka for almost a year (1968), planting the church in that capital city. At the end of 1968 we moved to New Delhi, India to sow the seed and were there until the middle of 1969. You can read about these years of work and the churches that developed in my book, **First Steps in Faith**.

The David family, and a few others, had been converted in New Delhi during the first seven months we spent there, up to the middle of 1969. Even though it was not financially possible to move a family of five in and out, functioning on 3-month tourist visas, J.C. knew that he needed to be with the infant church to help it in its growth toward maturity, so the children and I stayed in the States and he returned alone to India at the beginning of 1970. J.C.'s times outside of India were spent profitably, encouraging Christians in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Iran and other neighboring countries where young churches existed.

In the fall of 1972 we returned as a family, finishing out a 3-month visa, then a 3-month extension, then our landlord helped us to meet a government official who had enough clout that we were able to apply for 1-year journalist visas. Ultimately, permission was denied, but we had been allowed the time anyway before the decision was handed down! What a neat “get-around” that visa office did!

Those months saw tremendous progress in the church, not only in Delhi but also with the work being done by other brethren throughout the country. Capable preachers and workers, now with

6-8 years of experience, were working with the foreign missionaries to expand the growth of the church.

And a new opportunity was also opening up: brother Reggie, one of those first converts in Sri Lanka, had informed us that the radio station there — “the Giant of Asia” — [and this was before television had come to that part of the world] was being opened for religious broadcasting!



Our family, top, down: Steve, Darla, J.C., Betty, Shannon, and Sheila

Even while we had lived in Pakistan, we had listened primarily to Radio Ceylon, so we knew something of its coverage. Actually, it could be heard throughout the Eastern Hemisphere, from the Fiji Islands in the east to the Scandinavian countries in the west!

We were thrilled beyond words with the developing scenario:

- (1) Our time in India was up, and we had to return to the States.
- (2) There was the possibility of broadcasting programs, sponsored by churches of Christ, on “the Giant of Asia”.
- (3) We knew of men, sound in the faith, who could record sermons in five of the major languages of India!
- (4) If funds could be raised for those programs, the message of the Gospel would go out *all over the country, and millions would have the opportunity to hear, learn, and obey!*

- (5) In support of the programs, Bible correspondence courses and other printed materials would have to be offered.
 - (6) Follow-up work would be done by the local Christians and preachers.
-

Many books and tracts were made available.



When we were first considering the undertaking, we knew that it would require long periods of separation for our family. J.C.'s attempt to encourage me was, "Let's just try it for awhile and see how it works." My reply was, "You know there will be such an overwhelming response that there would be no way either of us could ever say, 'That's enough — we can't go on with this separation'; either we go into it for the long term, or not at all." With the commitment made, we came back to the States in mid-1974 and J.C. began visiting churches, telling of the great open door and raising funds for the proposed programs.



A pattern developed of three months in India in the spring to record the radio tapes and to work with the brethren on the developing and printing of literature, three months in the summer to raise funds to pay for all of that new undertaking, three more months in India in the fall for the recording, and three months in the winter to visit more churches and to raise more money. Once every two years, Daddy and Mother kept our children so that I could join J.C. on a three-month stint in India. That continued for twenty years, until our children were out of the nest and I could accompany him on each trip.

What has happened in these almost six decades? Through the combined efforts of Canadian, American, and Indian brethren the church has grown from non-existence through birth, infancy, and now into a blossoming maturity in many parts of the country. Thousands of congregations have been established, and hundreds of thousands have been born into God’s family. Bible correspondence courses, coupled with monthly magazines in the local languages, and many study books have been printed and distributed free of charge throughout the country and even in neighboring countries. Most of the radio programs have now morphed into television programs, since TV is available everywhere, and the response continues to grow. Initially the work in India grew primarily through personal contacts, Gospel meetings, but “mass media” is the on-going chapter of the story.

Combined with the efforts of others and our continued efforts to teach the Gospel through mass media, there are now several Bible colleges in the country, orphanages and aid for widows, work among the blind population (which numbers about 40% of the blind people of the entire world), many programs to help those in need, seminars for maturing Christians, family Bible camps, monthly area preachers’ meetings, and annual lecture programs that draw thousands from neighboring congregations.



Annual mission meeting held in Winona.

Though there are still not enough local resources to pay for the mass-media efforts, many churches pay their own preachers, build their own buildings, and cover the cost of local work.

In addition to the work in India, evangelism continues in Pakistan through the efforts of local Christians and preachers. Churches exist in Nepal and Myanmar, and through the printing of our quarterly magazine, *The Voice of Truth International*, teaching is being done in about 50 additional countries. It is also printed on site in India, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ghana.



In 1993, largely through volunteer help from American brethren, an 8,000 square foot, two-story office building was constructed in Winona, MS for the use of World Evangelism team members. Barbara Oliver and Eulene Ramsey worked with us in that office for fifteen years. J.C. served as Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* from its first issue in 1994 until his death in 2008; Byron Nichols, who had been the Associate Editor, then moved into the position of Editor. Byron retired in 2017 and Louis Rushmore became the Editor, with Jerry Bates serving as Associate Editor.

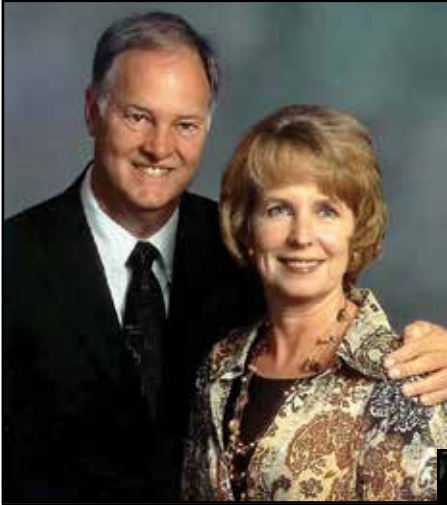
When J.C.'s cancer returned in 2005, we began the prayerful search for others to join the team, to continue with the work J.C. had been doing here at home and overseas. Betty learned to do what she could do as a woman. In the late summer of 2007, Jerry and Paula

Bates moved to Winona, joined a month later by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore. God has so graciously provided for every need!

Now, and Looking Ahead

Always praying for God’s providential guidance, J.C. was the planner and executioner of the plans for the work that had been done for forty-eight years. He left this life on February 1, 2008.

Wayne and Janet Barrier



What would become of the close relationship with brethren and churches overseas? Would supporting churches and individuals cease their support, resulting in the ending of radio/television programs and the monthly magazines, Bible courses, and other much-needed printed materials? A time of crisis had come, and countless souls were held in the balance.



Jerry and Paula Bates



**Louis and Bonnie
Rushmore**

Since 1965, the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi had sponsored the Choates' work, receiving funds and serving as the representation between supporting brethren in the States and the brethren overseas. Immediately after J.C.'s death, the elders had a meeting with Wayne Barrier, Jerry Bates, Louis Rushmore, and Betty, who made up the "World Evangelism" team.



The elders of the Liberty church

Each team member had his own sponsoring church, and though they worked together in the overall program, each one chose how to expand his own work to



Christians from Liberty in Winona, helping package materials for mail-outs.

reach into new territories, under the oversight of their individual elders. The **Double Springs** congregation in Alabama served as sponsor for the Barriers, while the **Strickland** church in Corinth, MS was sponsor for the Bates, and **Siwell Road** church in Jackson, MS stood behind the Rushmores. Even though each of these brethren had their

own support base, and had added to the overall work program of “World Evangelism”, the primary funds for the initial work came to the elders of the **Liberty** church.

In the momentous meeting, the commitment was made that the Liberty church would continue to sponsor Betty and the on-going work, receiving funds and collaborating with the office in Winona. The Bates and Rushmores would continue to live in Winona and take care of office needs there, while also making trips overseas, two or three times a year to take part in seminars and teaching programs among those churches. Betty would continue with stateside printing work, make occasional trips overseas, and stay in contact with supporters in the States via bi-monthly reports and with co-workers overseas via the Internet.

It was with great thankfulness to God that the future of the work was assured.

Enlargement

It has now been sixteen years since J.C. left this world, and changes of enlargement have taken place in the overall work. With sorrow, we learned of **Bonnie Rushmore**’s pancreatic cancer, which took her life in 2015. Sadly, Bob Noland, who, with his wife, **Martha**, had been the Rushmores’ very close friends and co-workers in the church, was diagnosed also with pancreatic cancer and also died in 2015. In January of 2017, **Louis and Martha** decided to fill the terrible voids in their lives by marriage and combining their talents to continue the work the Rushmores had been doing with the World Evangelism team. In early January of 2019, they moved to Ocala, Florida, near Martha’s son. They have continued with overseas visits, and Louis serves as the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

Again, God supplied! The weekend the Rushmores told of their decision to move to Florida, Paula was speaking to Jeff Archey in Cleveland, TN and told him of our loss. He replied that he thought he knew the very people to take their place: **Shane and Emily Fisher**, who had just returned to the States after four years of working

with Malcolm Parsley and the brethren in South Korea! Contact was made, and two weeks later the Fishers spent the weekend with the team and made the commitment to move to Winona. They began their work with us in March of 2019, and made their first trip



among co-workers in India in September of that year. Not only are Shane and Emily talented, capable, and sound in the faith, they are in their late 30's — the beginning of a team of the younger generation to carry on the work for years to come!

Who is next in line to join us???



Betty, on the left, with our ever-supportive children: Steve and Brad (Shannon) in the back; Sheila, Georgia (Brad's wife), and Darla.



A Prayer to God

J.C. Choate

*Together. Lord, we've
weathered
Many trials through the
past,
And I know from what
You've shown me
That Your love will ever
last.
It has been a comfort to
me
Just to always have You
near,
To know You'll love and
keep me
Has been a shield to every
fear.
We have gone down many
pathways
Since I gave myself to You
And even when I faltered
You brought me safely
through.*

*Now, please, dear Lord, continue
To be with me all the way,
Then take me home to Heaven
When I've lived that final day.*

In the name of Jesus Christ.....

Amen