

The EMU Newsletter

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

Volume LIX

September 2016

Number 8



Ken & Joan Jensen
Director

ALONG THE WAY . . .

I asked **Kami** and **Ruth** to write articles concerning the visitations to Croatia and France, and they were very forthcoming with their scripts. As has become routine for me, I am late writing once again. However, for a change, it just might be for the better so I can relay some information to you that would not have been in hand a week ago. On the other hand, a few of these items bring sorrow to our mission family.

Our missionaries in the Far East have been most dominate in our news for the month of August. I will begin by sharing with you that which gives us heavy hearts in the midst of rejoicing.

At 11:50 PM, Friday, August 26, **Dale Crowley**, the father of **JD Crowley**, passed into the direct presence of his Lord. Dale's health had been deteriorating over the past few years so that he was forced to move from the Washington, DC, area to Greensboro, NC, to be close to his daughter Celeste and her family. JD made a special trip to visit his dad in April of this year as his siblings felt that their father would pass-away soon. However, Dale rallied somewhat for a few more months. JD's sisters called him again earlier in the week of August 21 to tell him that their dad was failing fast. JD was able to arrive in Greensboro on Thursday and to spend some time with his father before he died

(continued on page 3)

THEN AND NOW

by Ruth Bixby, missionary with her family in northern France

Deuteronomy 4:9 contains one of many admonitions in Scripture to look back and remember what God has done, being sure to recount His works to the generations to come: "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children." We, no doubt like you, have often found courage to face the future and gain a renewed confidence in God's hand of guidance as we have looked back at what He has done. Our biggest event this summer afforded us the opportunity to reconnect with a part of our past and gave us the joy of connecting our past church family with the present church families, and, we trust, contributed toward opening doors of opportunity for future ministry.

In May of 2003, Tim became pastor of a little church in Spartanburg that had already become very dear to us as a couple. I (Ruth) had first gotten to know the family of Cleveland Park Bible Church as a college student. Shortly after Tim was installed as pastor, another young couple visited the church seeking their first church home as a married couple. It didn't take Michael & Liz Cole long to become an integral part of the church body, with Michael serving as an elder, and during that time the Lord knit our hearts together as couples seeking God's mind about future missionary endeavors. Our hopes began to take shape when God brought in Dr. Ken Casillas to become the church's pastor in 2008, and we joined the family

of missionaries at EMU International and began our trek to France. The church has continued to be a vital part of our ministry here in France, serving as the sending church for both of our families and our primary accountability partners for the work we are seeking to do here.

Perhaps that quick overview will help you to understand why it was such an exciting thing for us to be able to receive a representative group from CPBC this summer. This mission trip had been long in the making, as we first began discussing the possibility with the leadership of CPBC more than two years ago. During those two years we also had the privilege of hosting some of the church leaders. Pastor Ken and Soraya Casillas came for a visit shortly after our installation in the Paris area in October of 2013. Then this summer's mission team leader, Dave Wilbur, and his wife, Becky, and their boys came on a pre-mission team preparation trip last October. During the

(continued on page 4)



*Sitting l-r: Dawn Schlichting, Allison Bell, Anna Grace Casillas, Jessica Coggins, Viviane, Mathieu, Michael, & Adeline Cole
Kneeling l-r: Micaiah Bixby, Timothy Wiggins, Becky Bjur
Standing l-r: Donna Bixby, Miriam Bixby (holding Thomas Cole), Travis Foster, Nathaniel & Tim Schlichting, Dave Wilbur, Robert Hurst, Tim & Zacharie Bixby, Liz Cole, Ruth & Gabriel Bixby*

Island Escapades

by Kamaryn Jean Brenneman (a.k.a. Kami), financial administrator of EMU International

I pride myself in how well I've managed to stay out of the EMU Newsletters during my 4.5 years of working in the EMU Home office; but here I am actually writing an article. I had the privilege of spending the majority of July in Croatia visiting our missionaries Kornel & Tanja Crnkovic. They said it was my turn to visit them since they were in the U.S. last summer. They really had to twist my arm to get me to go—just kidding. I was chomping at the bit. My parents said “Go, go!” The bosses took a little more convincing, but they graciously let me go. After all, it was sort of a business trip. . . ?

I flew out of GSP Tuesday evening, July 5th, and landed in Zagreb, Croatia, the following afternoon. Tanja and the girls were waiting for me and had brought along Lucille, a wonderfully hilarious lady. The best part? Lucille is Canadian. I instantly felt connected with her because I myself am 25% Canadian, and her pronunciation of “out” and “about” sounds just like my Grandpa!

Thursday and Friday were spent at the Crnkovics' house getting ready for camp and touring their hometown of Koprivnica. Friday afternoon we started the trek down to the island of Pag on the Adriatic Sea. Croatia is beautiful! All the corn fields made me feel like I was driving through PA near my uncle's farm. As we got closer to the coast, there were mountains towering above us on one side of the car, and the sea peacefully bobbing along on the other side. The water was cool and refreshing, although it seemed much saltier than “my” ocean. I couldn't get over how clear the water was – I could see 20-25 feet down! One sad thing about the “beach” - Croatian children do not have the privilege of building sand castles, because they have no sand, only rocks.

Camp started that Saturday with the main service in the morning. Then we (about 130 of us) would break into our teams to discuss the message and answer any questions. As a team, we also had to figure out the riddles – every morning during the service we were given clues that built on each other during the week. We had to figure out which Biblical couple was being described. Before being dismissed from our group meetings, we also discussed strategy for the games throughout the week. Since it's an Olympic year, there were 5 teams representing the colors of the Olympic rings. I was on the red team led by Tanja's brother, and we called ourselves “Red Threat.” Of course everything I've been talking about in this paragraph actually occurred in Croatian, so I would have been completely lost without my excellent translators and other buddies who kept me in the loop. Lest I come across overly



Part of the first camp group under the tents ready for the camping service

dramatic, 99% of the people spoke some English so I was still able to speak my normal amount for the 2+ weeks I was gone – English just wasn't spoken in the group meetings.

The children left the morning service after the singing to go have their own lessons about Ruth and Queen Esther. I helped with some royalty-themed crafts for the kiddos. One day the girls made necklaces and the boys made cuffs, and another day they all made scepters. I'm not sure which they enjoyed more – the craft itself, or posing for, and looking at, the pictures on my camera. We were going to make crowns the last day, but that didn't happen because of the weather. More on that later.

There was free time between group meetings and lunch, and then again in the afternoon between supper and the evening service. During free time we played games, memorized Bible verses (to get points for our teams), walked to get ice cream, and go to the beach.

Wednesday night there was really heavy rain during the evening service. So bad at times that water was pooling on the roof of the tent. It took a couple of the men to pull the fabric back down so it wouldn't cave in. And just like in South Carolina, the rain was coming down from every angle, so we were all huddled in the middle of the tent trying to avoid getting wet. But no matter how loud the rain and thunder were, we just sang louder.

Thursday was the calm before the storm. In the wee hours of Friday morning, everyone in my tent (except me) was awakened by the strong winds whistling through the tent and whipping it around. I half-woke up to the shrieks and shrills of the other girls, rolled over, and went back to sleep. I thought the extra breeze felt good! By 7:30 that morning, everyone in the camp was bustling about packing up their things, taking down the tents, and throwing everything into the cars. Camp was ending a day early. We didn't get to hear the final message, the children didn't get to finish their lessons or crafts, we didn't get the answers to our riddles, and we didn't get the final team scores! Apparently that was

the worst wind/storm Croatia had seen in a long time. Did I mention that we were trapped on the island? The winds were so strong and the bridges too high that the officials weren't letting people leave. (I considered befriending a volleyball and putting a message in a bottle to launch into the ocean, but it wasn't quite that bad.) We played lots of soccer and volleyball the two days we were trapped, and that was fine by me. Trying to find places for 57 people to sleep was a little more difficult. We had three small cabins and an apartment that one of the ladies from the Crnkovics' church was renting for the week. She graciously let 9 of the older girls crash on her floor, and 3 of the older boys camped out in the hallway/stairwell of the building. Although the boys were inside, I'm guessing it was still a bit gusty for them since the wind ripped the door to the building off its hinges. Everyone else was at camp in the cabins with some of the men sleeping in the vans. I've never seen/felt wind that strong for that long. I now have a better understanding of Pooh & Piglet's blustery day.



Kami in the forefront of the selfie with a group of wind-blown friends

Sunday we were allowed to leave the island, so Kornel & Tanja took me to Split, in the south, where they used to live. Just before we got into town, we stopped on the side of the road to get pictures overlooking the city. The weather was perfect, and we could see for miles kilometers. We connected with some of their friends and walked through Diocletian's Palace and explored the rest of town. I loved the old architecture and all the ridiculously old stone everywhere.

Monday started the second week of camp with 27 of us there. Since the winds had died down, we were able to set up the tents again and operate normally without the fear of being blown away. We broke up into 3 groups and each tackled different areas on the Island of Pag. Our motto was

(continued on page 3)

Island Escapades

(continued from page 2)



This is the group that went to the Island of Pag to hand out tracts the week after the first camp.

“svaki dom” – “every home” in Croatian. We walked door to door making sure each house received a pamphlet with a clear presentation of the Gospel. Thankfully we had buddies so I wasn’t a clueless American wandering the streets of Croatia by myself. After all, knowing “hello” and being able to count from 1-10 only gets you so far. We were able to pass out seven thousand pamphlets that had the “Good News for Every Home.”

Wednesday night we all went to the town

of Zadar to take some people to the ferry and to sight-see for a bit. We heard the sea organ, which was hauntingly beautiful. It really did sound like an organ! Thursday we were cleaning up camp and trying to cram everything back into the cars. Let’s just say it was a very cozy ride back to Koprivnica. Friday night my hosts threw me a going-away party. We all sat around and talked, laughed, ate, laughed, sang, and laughed some more. My Croatian family was so welcoming and friendly, and it was such a sweet time of fellowship. After the party and re-packing my luggage (trying to squeeze in all my Croatian coffee and chocolates!), we got about a 3-hour nap before having to leave for the airport for my 6:45 a.m. flight. (Word to the wise – don’t ever schedule a flight that early!) By some miracle, we made it on time, and I was on my way home.

My connecting flight in Munich was the day after the attacks in the Munich mall, but thankfully my time in Germany was uneventful. I landed at GSP Saturday

evening, July 23rd, where I was greeted by my parents, niece, and nephew.

I’m thankful that God gave me the opportunity to go to Croatia and see the Crnkovics’ ministry and meet their friends whom I’ve prayed for after reading about them in the Crnkovics’ updates. I’m thankful He got me there and back safely, and that He allowed me to meet such wonderful, inviting people. He gave me a Canadian and an Irishman, who also knew no Croatian; He gave me children who didn’t care what language I spoke; He gave me friends my own age who laughed with me for my horrible pronunciation of their language; and He gave me adults who welcomed me and always made sure I was doing well. Everyone at camp came right up and introduced themselves and pulled me right in to whatever they were doing. By the time I left, I felt like I’d known these people forever. While I miss all my Croatian friends, it’s nice to be home and sleep in my own bed - with air conditioning! *And to be back working with my wonderful bosses? (Somehow Kami forgot to add this last sentence, so, as the Newsletter editor, I’m helping her complete her true thoughts!! - KJ) ☩*

ALONG THE WAY...

(continued from page 1)

the next night. The funeral was held on Monday of the following week. JD’s wife **Kim** and son, **Nate**, were not able to accompany him on this last minute journey. JD plans to spend a few days in Greensboro helping Celeste and Sharon get their father’s possessions in order before flying back to Cambodia.



Then early on Sunday morning, August 28, we received a call from **Brian Kane** letting us know that **Lydia’s** father, **Dennis Potts**, had passed away very early Sunday morning. Dennis and his wife **Sheila** have been missionaries to the Philippines for all of Lydia’s life. But a few years ago Dennis began having unexplained severe pain. No cause could be found, nor was a cure forthcoming in spite of seeing many doctors. The Potts finally had to leave the mission field and move back to Greenville, SC. Brian stated the disease as Multiple Symptom Atrophy. Of the four Potts children, two live in the Philippines and Lydia in Cambodia. As of today we do not know when the funeral will be. Brian and Lydia’s family of nine arrives in Atlanta on Friday morning, September 2. They will be staying at the mission house of Hampton Park Baptist Church during their sojourn

in Greenville. They head back to Cambodia on September 23. The Kane family just got back home to Ban Lung after being absent off and on for about four months, which began with their trip to Thailand for the birth of Natalia. And those weeks have been filled with plenty of illness! The family was looking forward to getting settled down at home again.

The Hancocks are our Cambodia missionaries who had already planned to come to the States at the end of August. Their family arrived in Los Angeles, CA, to begin a two-and-a-half week visit. **Becky’s brother** is getting married in CA on September 3. The next day the Hancocks will speak at the supporting church pastored by **Matt’s uncle** in Sonora. During this short visit, the Hancocks are squeezing in a visit to Birmingham, AL, to see **Matt’s folks**, and then on to Greenville, SC, to be with their sending church, **Trinity Bible Church**, and other family members.

Two weeks before the USA trip, the Hancocks moved from Phnom Penh to **Kampong Cham**, where they will be helping with a church plant along with two other missionary families. JD was able to go down to Phnom Penh to help with the move.

A “long” anticipated move by one of our Cambodia missionary families did not take place as hoped and planned in July OR August. **Josh and Amy Jensen** had been told that they would be able to move from Ban Lung into a house that was being

renovated for them in **Oyadao** by August 30. However, after most of their belongings were moved in, they were informed by a Cambodian friend that the plumbing that was installed in the house was unworkable and needed to be redone - which included tearing up the new bathroom’s concrete floors! Unfortunately, they also had to leave the matchbox apartment they were staying in while the Oyadao house was being made livable. They are having to find housing to tide them over, again.

The Erkens family from Beijing made a surprise visit to Greenville, SC, in August. They were informed by the university that Steve will be teaching at that the government required them to return to the States to apply for Steve and Charity’s visas! Joan and I enjoyed the week-and-a-half their family stayed with us, but it was a terribly costly expense to acquire two visas. The Erkens family made it back to China on August 26. Another “glitch” is that the Erkens need to choose a different church to attend and serve in.

There are many other subjects on my list for this newsletter, but these pages have become overloaded already. As a quick note, there will be a men’s retreat and ladies’ retreat at Camp Emmanuel in September. It is the end of winter there, so pray for good weather! And thank you for your prayers for the ministries of EMU International. ☩

Return Service Requested

Page 4

Then and Now

(continued from page 1)

time with the Wilburs and in the following months leading up to this summer's mission trip, we worked as a team on a plan that we hoped would expose the CPBC mission team members to our ministry as well as to Christian brothers and sisters here. We also sought ways in which the team could contribute to our outreach efforts, and we happily received their offers of manual labor and their ministry of personal encouragement.

The goals for the mission team were primarily two-fold: 1) to expose the team to our ministry here, giving them a taste for French missions and our ministry specifically; 2) to use the extra manpower the team could provide to further our labors.

One of the most obvious ways the team observed the ministry was by attending the churches. We are in a unique stage of a church-planting ministry in that we are still meeting half the month with our mother church and the other half we have our separate church plant meetings in a rented restaurant. The mission team's stay encompassed two Sundays, allowing them to experience both of those church gatherings. Their first Sunday with us we met with the smaller church plant group of about 40 people in the restaurant, allowing the members to get a feel for the new work that has begun. That first Sunday the team members participated in the teaching during the Sunday school hour, and they received their first real taste of what it is like to attend a church service in a primarily French culture and to interact in a language that is not their mother tongue.

During their second Sunday with us, the team members took part in a full day of church activities at our mother church in Saint-Denis. There, too, several of the team members were able to participate,

either through preaching or giving their testimonies. On a typical Sunday at the church of Saint-Denis, a visitor will experience a worship service filled not only with French people and the French language, but will also see many other participants dressed in their long, flowing Indian garb or bright, African prints. Following the morning worship service, mission team members were able to enjoy a church potluck with the 180 or so in attendance, giving them an opportunity to interact with the Christian brothers and sisters who form this very multi-ethnic group and to taste food from a variety of cultures. (Our Tamil ladies worked especially hard to make sure the Americans got to experience real Indian food!) In the afternoon, everyone re-gathered to hear the testimonies of several people from both sides (the CPBC group and members of the Saint-Denis church), shared through a translator, giving an opportunity for both groups to appreciate some of the differences and yet also the similarities of the circumstances which God uses to draw souls to Himself. Several of the team members related what an impression it had made on them to be able to worship in such a multi-ethnic setting.

Another activity that we planned to help expose the team members to French missions was an evening sharing a meal in the homes of people from our church plant. The team members were divided up into small groups and enjoyed one of their few opportunities to interact in a "real-life setting."

The team also served us and labored with us in various ways. Team members worked alongside our church people on three different days, canvassing part of our target area with Gospels of John and an invitation to our bi-monthly church meetings. Here in France, we are allowed to put flyers directly into mailboxes, and these outreaches enabled us to distribute a

few thousand invitations and Gospels.

Another outreach the CPBC team helped us to execute was two Bible clubs in our target area. Both of these clubs were held outside in a park, and we had between 15 and 20 children at each club. Team members assisted in the games and crafts and made good friends with the children, proving that sometimes language isn't even necessary in order for hearts to be knit to one another. Both of these outreach efforts, the Bible clubs and the distributions, provided additional opportunities for the team members to work alongside our church people.

The team also served our families very personally and physically, spending two days doing work around our homes. The majority of the team members worked around our house, participating in some deep cleaning, especially working to clean out an old shed and adapting it to be used as a carport for our family van. The work was certainly not luxurious, but the team members participated willingly and accomplished more than we expected. A smaller group spent the two workdays at the Coles' home, doing some electrical work in order to install a ventilation system in their only bathroom and helping out with some other small house projects.

The mission team's visit was not without its challenges (including a round of chicken pox among the missionary children and pink-eye which affected several people), but we saw God answer many prayers to enable us to meet those challenges. On this side of the visit, we can gratefully testify that any difficulties encountered were worth the effort, and we trust those efforts will bear long-term fruit for the Kingdom. ☩

Email: office@emuinternational.org

Website: www.emuinternational.org

Phone: (864) 268-9267