

# EMU

## INTERNATIONAL

*Evangelical Mission to the Unreached*

*Evangelical Mission to Uruguay*

PROCLAIMING THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL

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*Ken & Joan Jensen  
Assistant Director*

### ALONG THE WAY . . .

How rapidly our plans can change. I had intended this "Along the Way" to fill most of the February Newsletter, reviewing almost all of our missionaries to some extent. However, news from Uruguay on Friday, January 26, changed those plans. (See "In the Arms of Her Savior.")

On the same day, Joan and I got our second Shingles vaccine shot. As predicted, we both had sore arms for several days. But as is common for me, I contracted all of the adverse side effects: chills, fever, achy muscles and joints, coughing, sneezing, and buckets of drainage. According to the official stats, only 10% of people succumb to these symptoms. Lucky me! There is nothing more encouraging than getting sick because of a procedure designed to keep you from getting sick!

I want to begin by keying on our national co-workers in Uruguay, who I fear do not generally get the coverage they deserve, for which I am at fault.

In Uruguay the weeks leading up to the New Year are always especially busy ones with special Christmas programs and New Year's Eve services, but since it is also summer's advent, a host of other activities are added. But first I want to mention a few of our older missionaries who have not been able to fully enjoy the blessings of these events.

For many months, **Graciela Pereira** had been in terrible pain awaiting an operation on her spine. She and her husband, **Carlos**, though retired and living in Tacuarembó, *(continued on page 4)*

## IN THE ARMS OF HER SAVIOR

*by Ken Jensen*

Julia Alvarez was just shy of 24-years-old when I first met her early in 1973. My parents had taken their three kids (2 in college) to Uruguay to see the missionary work that kept Dad on the road almost continually visiting churches as EMU's field representative and to meet the people Mom served through her daily office work as the sole personnel in the "home office" out of our home in Marietta, GA, and then Greenville, SC. And we 3 kids, by this time, supported the work in Uruguay financially when possible, and I helped Dad address around 7,000 Newsletters every month. (Far less now!) We knew the names of the missionaries but had not met them personally.

Our family's Uruguay interior trip took us to the mining town of Minas de Corrales. We were told it was the largest (though small) gold mining venture in Uruguay. The town was also known as the San Francisco of Uruguay because of its steep roads. The only flat on the roads was at the top or bottom of the hills. At this time, Luis Nacelli was the pastor of the small church in this out-of-the-way spot in northcentral Uruguay. Julia had graduated from the Bible Institute in Montevideo in November 1972 and joined EMU (referred to as

MEU in Uruguay) the next month. Her first assignment was the rough territory of Corrales and its surrounding countryside.

Julia Alvarez was born in the central/eastern Department of Treinta y Tres ("33") and raised in the little rice plantation of La Cipa, where her father worked in the rice fields. Eventually, the family would have 8-9 children.

The Rodriguez family, of which Chicha is the youngest daughter, though six years Julia's senior, lived on an estancia in compo (country grass lands) in this department. At some point, one of Chicha's older brothers and his wife hired Julia to look after their son Gonzalo as a sort of nanny. It was at this time that Julia first heard the Gospel from this godly family. But she did not accept the Lord as her Savior at that time.

Sometime after high school – though none of my sources state whether she ever graduated – Julia moved to Montevideo to find work. This was a time of great emotional turmoil for Julia, and twice she considered suicide. Chicha's sister-in-law, who was Julia's former employer, contacted

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*Julia Alvarez in the early 1970s on visitation in an interior village*



*Julia (rt) with friend & mentor Chicha at Camp Bethel - located almost halfway between La Charqueada & the city of "33" - four years ago.*



# A Historic Day for the Tampuan Church

by JD & Kim Crowley, teacher, preacher, & linguist in Ban Lung, Cambodia

On December 10, 2023, 700 tribal Christians, mostly Tampuan, came together to celebrate the official launch of the Tampuan New Testament and Tampuan Old Testament Portions. God and His Word were honored and celebrated! I remember saying to God in 1994 that if He would save just a few Tampuan families through the Gospel work here, our heaven would be two heavens! Now the number of Tampuan believers is reaching a thousand, if you include baptized children and teens.



(the details of this photo are found in the following 3 paragraphs)

The all-day festivities began with a victory procession. At the head of the procession were the two main local translators (*1<sup>st</sup> row, center*) holding copies of the sacred texts, Mr. **Way Tieng** and my dearest tribal Pastor-Brother, Mr. **Kvas Diang**. Next to them, (*rt*) Miss **Kvas Yett** (who calls Kim “Mom”) led the singers and folk dancers. Yett is the “hymnist-laureate” of the Tampuan churches, responsible for nearly all of the 100 plus songs in the Tampuan Hymnal. She wrote the processional hymn for this occasion.

Mrs. **Tanuja Carson** (*2<sup>nd</sup> row center*) came from Australia to represent her husband, Mr. Andrew Carson, the lead translator, who was not able to attend. Next to Tanuja is Mr. **Jon Smedley** (*rt*) of New Tribes Mission (*now Ethnos360*) who has received the mantle to lead the team in the translation of the rest of the Old Testament. Behind them are scores of Tampuan believers singing and rejoicing—and bringing up the rear, a wet-eyed, deliriously happy missionary. (Click this link to hear the hymn and watch the procession. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1DKtWJnBF8&t=18s>)

The gong choir was made up of Christian musicians who joined the celebration from various tribes. The gongs are played much like a bell choir, with the smaller gongs being struck at just the right time to create the tune, while the larger gongs keep the lush rhythm going. **Pastor Naay** (*1<sup>st</sup> row left*), a Krung Christian who is the church’s master musician in our province, led the procession on a stringed instrument. You could almost imagine King David right there among them, “dancing before the LORD with all his might” (2 Samuel 6:4).

This event was likely the largest



Part of the celebrants under the meeting tent

convocation of Christians in the history of this province, but if all the believers from all the language groups had attended, the number would have been near 4,000. God has done so much more than all of us could have ever asked for or imagined! To him be glory, praise, honor, majesty, and dominion, now and forever more. Amen!

Because I did the linguistic work and developed the Tampuan alphabet, many people even to this day think I also translated the Bible. But the true story is that, just in time, Andrew and Tanuja Carson came from Australia to do that arduous, twenty-year task, freeing Kim and me to continue our work training pastors and their wives in all six tribal groups.



JD Crowley speaking at the Bible dedication

The following is the real story about the real translators that I presented at the Tampuan Bible Dedication. This short speech is entitled EVERY BIBLE IS TRANSLATED AT THE COST OF SOMEONE’S LIFE:

*This Tampuan New Testament I’m holding in my hand represents the lives of two people. You see, every Bible in the world has been translated at a cost, and the cost is always at least one human life—usually two or three or more.*

*Five hundred years ago, William Tyndale and Thomas Matthew were burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. The cost of this English Bible was the lives of those two men, and others.*

*Just seven years ago, four Bible translators*

*in the Middle East were murdered when militants invaded their office and shot them to death. But did that end the project? No. Soon a New Testament will be published; what will be the cost of that Bible? At least four lives.*

*Perhaps you’re wondering if all Bible translation projects require the death of a translator. No, but all require the LIFE of a translator.*

*One hundred years ago, Arthur and Esther Hammond left their family and the comforts of their country to come to Cambodia. They spent 30 years of their lives so that we could have a Bible in Khmer. This Khmer Bible that I’m holding right now, how much did it cost? At least two lives.*

*What about this Tampuan Bible? What was the cost of its translation? The cost was two human lives, and more. Andrew and Tanuja Carson offered their lives as living sacrifices to God so that you could have a Tampuan Bible—just as the Apostle Paul commanded all of us in Romans 12:1, “I urge you therefore, brothers, because of the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God....”*



Tanuja & Andrew Carson

God gave **Andrew and Tanuja Carson** unusually sharp minds. Andrew once told me that if he had not come to Ratanakiri, he would likely have practiced law in Australia. Lawyers in Australia receive on average \$10,000 a month. In thirty years, that would add up to three and a half million dollars! But that money meant nothing to Andrew and Tanuja compared to Tampuan Christians having their own Bible.

*Is this kind of sacrifice for the sake of others an unusual and amazing thing in Christianity? Not at all. It’s normal. Romans 12:1, which we just read, says, ALL Christians are to live a life of sacrifice for others, following the example of Jesus Christ, who gave up His life for us to save us from sin, death, and hell. Three days later He rose again!*

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## In the Arms of Her Savior

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Chicha, who was living in Montevideo by then and was a missionary with MEU, and asked her to contact Julia and invite her to church. After sitting under the preaching of the Word a few times, she gave her heart to Christ. The Bible Institute was housed at Calvary Temple where she was attending church, so she eventually began taking courses to train to be a missionary.



*This is the earliest MEU missionary family photo I could find that includes Julia. She is in the center of the first row. Chicha & Ursula are to our left of her.*



*Julia teaching a children's class in Calvary Temple of "33"*

Julia's tenure with MEU kept her in the interior for the next 51 years: Minas de Corrales, Artigas (on the Brazilian border),

## A Historic Day

(continued from page 2)

*A Bible dedication ceremony is a time to glorify God for His Word—and that is our highest goal today. But another goal is for you and me to think about the lives of these two, and others, who gave themselves as a sacrifice to God so that those without a Bible could have a Bible. Soon God will call Tampuan Christians to give up ease, family, homes, and safety in order to give themselves as a sacrifice to God so that others can hear the gospel and read the Bible in their own language. When He calls us, may we say Yes! †*

"33", Rincón, and, finally, La Charqueada. She always worked under a pastor in these places, except the last two. In Rincón, Pastor Gonzalo Rodríguez, her former charge, was her head pastor from Vergara, not too many miles from Rincón. We often joked about the role-reversal of those years! In La Charqueada, Rubito Rodríguez was her supervisory pastor. Rubito is the youngest brother of Gonzalo, and he has preached at the little chapel in La Charqueada many times.

While in Rincón, Julia developed breast cancer resulting in major surgery, chemo, and radiation. These three sapped her strength to the point that she was unable to properly care for herself. At this time, Julia's mother (now deceased) and sister lived in La Charqueada (also known as General Enrique Martínez). In 2011, the Southern Baptists decided to sell their small church building that had been empty for six years. The price was a doable \$6,000. When I first saw the structure after they bought it, my heart sank, as I couldn't imagine the place ever being suitable as a church. I was wrong. The men and women from the church in "33" poured a huge number of work hours into the project, which is still today a pleasant looking, comfortable church.

Last August, a routine check-up revealed that cancer had returned necessitating a hysterectomy. The operation seemed to be successful, and Julia opted not to undergo the radiation, remembering how debilitating it was the first time.

Early on the morning of Friday, January 26, we received some sad news from Uruguay. We were informed that Julia Alvarez had passed away earlier in the week. Chicha Rodríguez, who had come to the Greenville, SC, area for a family wedding, had talked to Julia Alvarez on Monday evening, January 22, to make arrangements for Chicha's drive with Jeff Davis to visit with Julia during their trip to "33" in February. Julia told Chicha that she was doing well – so well in fact that she was able to ride her motorbike again to get around.

We are not fully apprised of the timeline, but from what we can gather, that very night Julia died at her house alone in her sleep, probably from a heart attack. It was two days later, sensing something was wrong, that her sister went to her house and found her body. In Uruguay, by law the dead are to be buried within 24 hours. She was obviously past that time, so her body was immediately entombed in La Charqueada without a funeral service. The next day, Thursday (while Chicha was flying back to Uruguay and unaware of Julia's death), a graveside memorial service was held in honor of Julia. A good number of Christian friends attended the service.

In the 51 years I have known Julia Alvarez, my opinion of her has varied almost not at all. She was so consistent in her testimony. She was a tallish, slender, raven-haired



*(l-r) Chicha, Ursula, & Julia (six years ago)*

lady. (When she lost her hair during her first cancer treatments, Joan was able to secure a very nice black wig from a friend at our church who had gone through this process not long before. The wig looked natural on her.) She had a wonderful sense of humor, and sometime she and I traded barbs at some length, always in great fun. But she also had a very serious side when it came to the Bible, the Christians she ministered to, and the lost she was always trying to reach in her community. In the early years of her ministry of visitation and working with children and ladies, she rode a bike. I seem to remember a photo of her also riding a horse on visitation. Later, donations were given for her to have a motorbike (more like a scooter), which was a great convenience, as reaching anywhere outside of the village was difficult. She was not a complainer though often I learned of needs she had that were not being addressed. One of the things that impressed me most was her repeated declarations that she wanted to take Ursula Thiessen's place as an interior missionary. We were all in awe of Ursula's spiritual life and work ethic, and Julia kept Ursula's example before herself as an encouragement. Chicha, closer to Julia in age, remained a dear friend to the end.

Those who knew Julia already miss her. She was a faithful servant of the Lord in His harvest field. And she was a good friend. It was a privilege to be a co-worker with her.

In closing I want to draw attention to the picture of the MEU missionaries taken around 1973. The group there is a little small, as not all of the wives of the men were present. However, as I was looking over this photo for use in this article, it occurred to me that ALL these dear people are now in heaven, except Ursula Thiessen and Chicha Rodríguez. That is sobering. For you younger readers, 50 years might seem like an eternity – but it goes by very fast. There have been replacements for several of these men, but even they are aging. I can think of at least 3 of our pastors in Uruguay who are hoping to retire in 2024. But there are no younger men in the wings waiting to step onto the stage of leadership. There is not much physically any of you readers can do to remedy this problem, but all of us can pray that the Lord of the harvest will cast forth laborers into His harvest field. We would appreciate your participation in those prayers! †

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## ALONG THE WAY...

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have helped in that church ministry since their retirement several years ago. Until 2023, the church was without a regular pastor, so Carlos preached when needed, and Graciela was involved with the children's and women's ministries. **Nico and Valeria Gomez** now lead this interior church. Sadly Graciela's back problem degenerated to the point that she could not get out much and was in constant pain. As is common in Uruguay, it took forever for the doctors and surgeons to coordinate a time for an operation. Towards the end of last year, she underwent the needed procedure and is recovering well. Earlier in the spring (Uruguay time), Carlos had his gallbladder removed, and he, too, is healing satisfactorily.

**Ursula Thiessen** is another of our missionaries who has had to slow down over the last few years. But at 95-years-old this should be expected! She lives in a house supplied by one of her nieces. Ursula shares the residence with her younger sister. Sadly, her sister has lost her eyesight in recent months. A Uruguayan lady has been hired to help these two older ladies at home. Chicha Rodriguez and Joan and I recently made a video call to Uruguay in which Ursula said she is endeavoring to win this lady to the Lord. That has been Ursula's life goal since she first came into EMU 71 years ago! Her health does not permit her to attend church, but she does watch the video-feet of the church services.

**Chicha Rodriguez** was in the Greenville, SC, area to attend a family wedding and then spent a few months visiting with family. Shortly after arriving at the home of her nephew in Greenville, where Chicha's older sister lives, her sister became very ill. Thankfully, Chicha was there to help care for her. We did not get to see Chicha often because of this situation, but it was a

blessing when we could get together. Joan and I always enjoy debriefing Chicha for all the news in Uruguay.

Since only one of our churches in Uruguay has an indoor baptismal pool, late spring through summer is the ideal time to hold baptismal services, though occasionally a sister church will "borrow" the indoor pool at Calvary Temple of Montevideo. Calvary Temple of Treinta y Tres ("33") uses one of three places: the Rio Olimar Chico that skirts "33" and is convenient to the church; a small stream some distance from Bethel Camp; or, as in this photo, a kiddie pool. The candidates were Juan Taboas, a 24-year-old policeman; Chela, an 85-year-old former Jehovah's Witness; and Mariela, a 25-year-old schoolteacher.



*(l-r) Pastor Rubito, Juan, Chela, & Mariela*

In November 2023, Gethsemani Church of Montevideo, also, held a baptismal service. **Pastor Gabriel Gomez** baptized Nahuel, a young man who grew up in the church. Nahuel's father and Gabriel attended the Bible Institute together. Sadly, Nahuel lost his father to cancer when he was just a lad of 11 years old. Nahuel's grandmother has the distinction of being a member of Gethsemani longer than anyone else. She is currently 92.

January and February are the months for **MEU's summer camps**. In January, the Children's, Adolescents', and Jovenes' camps took place. I hope to report on those weeks in the March Newsletter.

In February, **Jeff Davis** travels to Uruguay (February 7-27) for the Family Camp and Workers' Conference. This year, Doctors **David and Maribel Bell**, long-time missionaries to Spain, will be the guest speakers. David is the son of Dr. **Bob and Kathy Bell** who taught Bible and art at BJU for many decades. This family has been friends of our family and EMU since the 1960s. We are thrilled to have David and Maribel in Uruguay for their first time.

**Ted Allston** had to cancel a trip to India because his heart was out of rhythm. He underwent a successful heart ablation on January 24.

**Brian Kane**, with the help of many others, has organized a dedication service for the presentation of the Krung New Testament. Two of our pastors from Hampton Park Baptist will be attending. The celebrations will be on February 11.

**Josh and Amy Jensen** will arrive Stateside with their 7 children on February 14 to begin a 6-month furlough. Their first month will be up north before working their way south.

**Marco and Gwendolyn Nuñez** will be visiting churches in Michigan and New York from February 28 to March 6.

**John and Suzie Leman** started their full-time ministry with EMU on January 1. For most of January, they were ministering in London. From February 29 to May 1 they will be holding meetings in South Africa.

Thank you so much for your interest in the ministries of EMU. We do count on your prayers and financial support (when possible). †

Email: [office@emuinternational.org](mailto:office@emuinternational.org)  
Website: [www.emuinternational.org](http://www.emuinternational.org)  
Phone: (864) 268-9267