



Ken & Joan Jensen
Assistant Director

several years before entering the mission.) The mission's director, Jeff Davis, will become the editor of future Newsletters. However, it needs to be reiterated that **Joan is not retiring** at this time. She is currently training a young lady to do her job so that hopefully, eventually, this individual can relieve Joan of all her duties. There is **no set date** for the completion of this training.

In thinking over these past 50 years as a missionary with EMU, I am amazed at the changes that have taken place in so many areas – *and* the things which have remained the same. In this final Newsletter under my pen, I would like to review that half-century with you. Though I use the first-person singular pronoun often, I don't want this to be about what I have done, but rather what the Lord has done to shape the mission into what it is today.

Joan and I became **missionaries** with EMU (then Evangelical Mission to Uruguay) in January 1976 the day after I graduated from Bob Jones University. By then, my parents had been with the mission for about eight years. Though Dad (George Jensen) became the Director of EMU in 1975,

he continued his travels as the Field Representative, while Mom (Marilyn) served as the office administrator. Several factors figured into my entering the mission: (1) I was very familiar with and had a love for the missionaries in Uruguay, having visited the country with my parents and siblings in 1973 for two-and-a-half months. (2) I was intimately aware of the need for someone to help with the US office responsibilities of the mission so that my parents could finally travel together. And (3) the Lord made it abundantly plain through circumstances that I was to pursue this line of work, though



(l-r) My sister Cindy, George & Marilyn Jensen, and me & Joan at my graduation. This is the nearest photo of our start with EMU.

A LOOK BACK

by Ken & Joan Jensen, home office in Taylors, SC

In the 2025 August Newsletter, I announced that I would be **retiring** as a missionary with EMU International in January 2026, completing 50 years of "official" service to the wonderful missionaries of this organization. (I use the word "official" since I was involved with helping in the area of the Newsletter mailing for

I felt totally inadequate for the task. But my mom was an excellent, exacting teacher.

During those 50 years, I was never able to raise all of **our needed support**. For many years, Joan worked outside jobs to help make ends meet. One of our major problems (*my fault*) was that we were never on full-time deputation. From the beginning, my main task, besides work in the office, was to represent EMU's Uruguayan missionaries in churches. Most often I forgot to mention that Joan and I needed support. However, my parents, who had more support coming in than they needed, supplemented our monthly support from their mission account. When I would get discouraged about our support level, Dad would remind me that what I did in the office allowed them to be on the road and in churches. In 1989 we learned that a supporter of my parents, Joan and me, and to a lesser extent the general account (Uruguay) had died and left a portion of the royalties of the **Candyland Game** to EMU. The Board of Directors of the mission determined that since **Eleanor Abbot**, who developed the game, had supported Joan and me, that a percentage of the royalties should be used for our support. Eventually, Joan was able to leave her secular job and begin working "officially" with me in the Home Office. I mention it here to say that the Lord has supplied our needs in some unconventional ways over the past five decades.

When I entered EMU, **the office** processes were pretty much as they had been since the founding of the mission in the 1940s: hand-written receipts, letters and envelopes typed on a manual typewriter, bookkeeping entered in a huge ledger with a pencil, banking by check and cash, money transfers to Uruguay that took 2-3 weeks, and the US office was in a private home, which at that time was a corner of my parents' den. The Newsletter database was kept on metal plates that ran through an amazingly loud, amazingly heavy addressograph machine housed in the storage room attached to my folks' carport – a small room that was also home to a colony of black widow spiders! This was my first work place.

As primarily an office worker, the office **equipment and procedures** have affected me on pretty much a daily basis. After a few years, the office was moved to Joan's and my residence, and the address and phone number of the mission was changed to ours. (The Lord had provided a small but adequate-sized house for our growing family that included an extra add-on room sufficient to accommodate the office – and no black widows!) Though receipts were still hand-written, our typing machines progressed from the manual to an electric Smith-Corona, to a used IBM Selectric, to a memory typewriter. Because almost all of the mission's donations were needed for the work in Uruguay – our only mission country at that time – we did everything we could to keep expenses low in the functioning of the Home Office. In the early 1980s, computers were becoming common in businesses, but they were still very expensive. Then in 1985, IBM introduced the PC Junior to compete with Apple and Commodore for the home/

(continued on page 2)

A Look Back

(continued from page 1)

personal computer market. Joan's brother, **Doug Martin**, who worked for Georgia Tech Research, was neck deep in computer technology and encouraged me to buy the low-priced PC Junior, along with a dot matrix printer. Though by today's standards, the PC Junior was like writing in cuneiform, it was light years ahead of our typewriters!

Computers ushered in a whole new era in the office. Eventually, we had programs that handled bookkeeping. So amazing! I used DOS for years, even after Windows was available, as DOS was still faster for me for the donor database, letter typing, and bookkeeping. To that point, the **Newsletter** had been published by typing the text, choosing pictures, taking this to a printing company, paying for them to typeset the text, create a layout, and then I would have to go to the printer to pick up the galleys for proofing. This process was time consuming and very expensive. Eventually, I learned that I could do the typesetting and photo layouts in-house, though a printing company was still needed to print the 4-5,000 copies for mass mailing purposes. In time, the **Newsletter** database was digitized and the addressing was outsourced, as soon as that service became affordable. And in 2001, my "old friends," the addressograph machine and plate maker, were retired to a scrap metal yard for pennies-per-pound.



Labeling the newsletters with the addressograph machine

I mention the computer phase of the office because it was vital to the **expansion of the mission**. Fred Dabold (the founder of the mission) and my parents felt it was impossible to expand the mission's reach beyond Uruguay because of our limited US office resources. And until computers came along, I agreed. In my early years with the mission, several young men and women who wanted to become missionaries under EMU in countries other than Uruguay were turned away for the above stated reason. My father wanted to resign the directorship of the mission when he turned 60 years old – another story that will have to wait. I was the only full-time person in the home office, and no one knew the mission's people and operations like my father and I. So, it was basically understood that I would take the reins when Dad stepped down. Leading up to this transfer of responsibilities, Joan and I came to the conclusion that with the added



(l-r) Tim, Susan, **Connie**, David, Tom, Tommy, Karen, & Daniel Chapman
(Copied from the 1987 December Newsletter)

efficiency of the office via computers, we could handle more American missionaries.

Tom and Connie Chapman became our **first non-Uruguay missionaries** in 1987, a few months before I was appointed as the Director in January 1988. And thus began a new era for EMU. I cannot go into detail about all of the families who came to us about joining EMU after that. It has been one of the greatest joys of our lives to get to know these families, and to truly become a part of their families. As an example, Tom and Connie were in their 40's and had come from Christian-school-teacher backgrounds. They felt called to Chile, where today there is a strong, thriving, national-pastored and led, independent church in Antofagasta, Chile. Three of the Chapman kids (Tom, Susan, & Tim) became missionaries, with one other kid (David) heavily involved with missions in Mexico. And one of those missionaries, **Tim Chapman**, served with his wife, **Cheryl**, and their three children in Lima, Perú, under EMU until last summer when the Lord led them to take a church in Michigan. Most Sundays during the school year, their three children have Sunday lunch with us as they attend BJU. All of our families are different, and our relationships vary in degree, but not in kind. The blessings to us have been overwhelming.

A long-term change that was started – and made mandatory – was the requirement for each American missionary family to contribute to a **retirement account**. It had been my observation over the years that older missionaries – not just EMU missionaries – were retiring from the field and had no retirement plan or savings. The philosophy was "God will take care of my needs." Granted, none of these families ever starved or lived on the street after retirement, but many of them lived hand-to-mouth and some took low paying jobs to stay afloat. After the Candyland royalties became available, EMU's policy changed from "suggesting" that the missionaries have a retirement account to requiring it. However, this was such a novel idea that we decided to help them. We set up a matching fund program for our missionaries of gifting 50-cents for each \$1 they contributed to their retirement account. *Free money!* Who can resist that incentive. We were able to do this for a number of years until the

Candyland royalties began to plummet, at which time our matching ended. But by that time these families already had the mind-set of automatically contributing to their retirement funds. During those "years of bounty" we were also able to help fund special needs in both Uruguay and abroad that could not be funded by their own mission accounts.

The next missionary family to join EMU helped initiate another major change. But first, during this period of beginning to take on more missionaries, Joan discovered that EMU was not operating under the proper tax-exempt category with State or Federal laws. This led to the need to re-apply for the exemptions as a church rather than a school, as the original designation from 1971 documents showed. This was an amazingly time-consuming and involved endeavor, but finally in 1992 we were granted our new status before the government. The next year, the **Crowley family** joined Evangelical Mission to Uruguay. Although the Chapmans were not in Uruguay, at least Chile was sort of close to Uruguay, but Cambodia just didn't fit the mission name at all! The solution was to change the name of the mission to **EMU International** with two branches: the original Evangelical Mission to Uruguay (which was also incorporated in Uruguay) and everyone else under the name Evangelical Mission to the Unreached. (My idea of "to the Universe" was not well received.) It was not until January 1996 that I got around to changing the name of **the Uruguayan Newsletter to the EMU Newsletter**. In 2018, under the influence of **Steve Erkens**, the Newsletter's name and masthead were again changed to **EMU International**. (**Kathy Bell**, an art teacher at BJU, had designed the Newsletter letterhead we used from 1976 until 2017.)

The non-Uruguay branch of the mission continued to grow over the years to include two of our own kids: **Steve and Charity Erkens** to China (leaving the field in 2021) and **Josh and Amy Jensen** in Cambodia. Today, EMU has missionaries going to or in ten countries. And the range of ministries has expanded.

Many changes have also taken place in Uruguay. All of the missionaries currently serving in that South American Republic entered EMU within the last 50 years –

(continued on page 3)



Photo of all of the EMU missionaries in Uruguay in the summer of 1975.
Of this group, only Chicha Rodriguez is still serving the Lord with MEU. The others have either died or moved to other ministries.

A Look Back

(continued from page 2)

except one – and most of them entered MEU (the Spanish acronym) while I was the director for 30 years. **Chicha Rodriguez** is the only active missionary who pre-dates me (and that by ten years), and she is the only actively serving missionary from the era of the Dabolds. The sobering realization is that all of those missionaries are becoming gray! Though we do have several young families who have joined with our mission in Uruguay in recent years, most of them are working at Camp Emmanuel and in the Uruguay office.



The 1st Family Camp held at Camp Emmanuel in February 1976

In 1975, land was purchased about a kilometer from the beach in Guazuvirá, Uruguay, to build a Christian camp: **Camp Emmanuel**. Construction began that spring, and the first building - the kitchen/dining room - was usable, though unfinished, for the summer camps. In these 50 years the camp has changed in every aspect. Though the land footprint is the same, almost every inch of the property now has buildings or is utilized in some way for the camping experience. For many years, the “camp director” was one of our national pastors assisted by other pastors, along with their wives and church members volunteering as cooks, staff, and counselors. With the hiring of **Pedro Donzé** in December 2005, that began to change. As the full-time camp director and office administrator, he has overseen many changes to the program, facilities, training of staff, and financial oversight. We also inaugurated work teams



The 1st US camp work team with Uruguayan nationals in May 2002. We re-roofed all the buildings with insulated, metal sheeting.

from the US to help with improvements and repairs, many of these taking place during the “**Rick’s Work Projects**.” My brother Rick’s first work trip to the camp was in May 2006, and they have continued every year since, except during COVID. There

have also been a host of guest speakers at the camps over the decades from many different US churches, Christian colleges, and other missionary organizations. And many patrons from the US have given to build new, needed structures and fund improvements to existing buildings. Almost all of my memories of Uruguay include Camp Emmanuel and the people I’ve fellowshiped with there. I even love the camp food!

In the years of Dabold, my father, and several years of my directorship, most of the decisions for the ministries in Uruguay, especially the major ones, were made by the director. There was a **Junta** (Board) in Uruguay made up of Uruguayans with the EMU director as the head of the Junta. When I became the director, there were two American men with MEU teaching at the Bible Institute whom I relied on heavily for information concerning issues in Uruguay. In 1995, both of those families returned to the US permanently. It was then that I realized the absolute necessity of an active, involved Junta in Uruguay to oversee the ministry properly. Thankfully, the Uruguayan missionaries filled the void wonderfully. It took some time for them to be convinced that my point of view was not law – we each had one vote. Many of our Junta meetings lasted almost all day as difficult matters were discussed, but the end results culminated in unity of mind and purpose. These men – and one woman – were and are such a blessing! Their collective wisdom, understanding of their own people, and love for the Lord’s work made this one of the most beneficial changes in MEU.

In the early years after I entered the mission, money for the work in Uruguay was tight. Donations barely kept up with expenses. I remember one month there was just over \$30 in the mission’s checking account and no savings! The Lord always supplied our needs, but there were many things we would have liked to have done to help our national missionaries, but could not. To make matters worse, after I became the director in 1988, I began to learn that MEU was very much out of compliance with **Uruguayan laws** in a host of areas, which the Dabolds nor my parents knew about. In an effort to become compliant with government regulations, we had to move circumspectly, as we were out of compliance in so many areas and could not in any conceivable way comply with them all at once. Without compliance, the government had every right to shut down the mission. We were gradually making progress on these new costs when we learned that the government also required two salary increases every year! By the late 1980s, the Junta and I determined that we would have to start laying off missionaries! At almost that exact time, the EMU office was notified about the Eleanor Abbot Estate and Candyland! Everything changed instantly. Now, lest you think the mission became rich, these extra funds were soon eaten up by other government regulations, especially pertaining to Uruguayan property

taxes and building compliance (approval). It took many more years to untangle this spaghetti-mess! The outcome of all of this is that MEU is now fully compliant with Uruguayan law and continues to be on a sound, although tight, financial footing.

One of the most monumental changes that took place in MEU in Uruguay was also one of my greatest dilemmas. One of the three goals of EMU (listed towards the end of this article) is establishing churches that would be pastored by the nationals and supported by each local national church. To my knowledge, no independent, fundamental church in Uruguay had ever achieved this goal. In 1988, I began to try to finally make the goal a reality. But it was a Gordian Knot problem: every possible solution I devised was blocked either by government regulations or congregational fears. Only near the end of my tenure as director did we finally design a workable plan – imaginatively called **The Plan** – to satisfy the government, the churches, and the pastors. Today all of our churches in Uruguay are individually incorporated and supporting their own pastors. There are still mission related expenses that MEU pays for, such as the Workers’ Conference, but basically, EMU covers only the salaries for our non-pastoral Uruguayan missionaries.

In 1976, the **US Board of Directors** included **George Jensen, Bob Harrison** (who was on the Board even before my father), **Ray Hansel, David Yearick, Jim Martin, and Ed Watke** (for a very short time). This was the most stable group to serve on the Board since its founding. I had known most of these men since my childhood, and they would become close friends in the years to come. All of them have since taken up residence in Heaven.



(l-r) George Jensen, Jack Buttram (he joined the Board in 1982), me, David Yearick, Jim Martin, Ray Hansel, & Bob Harrison

As that group of men resigned from the Board due to aging, I found other godly men to replace them – men who already had a history of being genuinely interested in EMU. I have used the word “men” a lot here. But not all on the Board are men; **Joan** has been on the Board since 2005 and has served as Secretary or Treasurer or both since then. It has been a blessing to have men and a woman on the Board in whom I have full confidence.

Another change that occurred was the writing and approval of a comprehensive

(continued on page 4)

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Page 4

A Look Back

(continued from page 3)

Policy Manual for the mission. As we grew in members, it was obvious that we needed such a document for the sake of missionary applicants, existing missionaries, and for those of us in leadership. After countless hours of research, discussion, prayer, and writing, the current Policy Manual was approved by the Board of Directors in 2009.

In 2008 I developed a full-blown case of **Trigeminal Neuralgia**. It had been coming on by spurts for months even in 2007, but was bearable for the most part. With the onset of the disease, my physical limitations increased greatly. Over the course of almost six months after the “full-blown” pain started, various drugs in various amounts were combined to arrest the excruciating pain. And by-in-large, the drugs were effective most of the time. However, the side effects of the drugs played havoc with my energy level, and I realized that my years as the director of the mission were to be truncated. Over the years, the disease was able to overcome my dosage level so that my doctors were forced to increase the drugs. Eventually, I determined it was not fair to our missionaries or to the mission supporters to have such an impaired director. I was beginning to experience severe relapses when overseas, spending about half my time sleeping. So, I began looking for a replacement. In 2015, I was put into contact with **Jeff Davis** through a mutual friend. He had recently left the pastorate of a church in Anderson, SC, and was seeking his next ministry. After several individual meetings, Jeff met with the Board of Directors and was approved to begin training with me to become the next director of EMU. In 2017 Jeff and I visited Uruguay together in order for him and the Uruguayans to get to know each other. The baton of directorship was handed off to Jeff in 2018, and I became the assistant director - until I relinquish that position on January 31, 2026.

A much shorter, though as important, list is made up of those **things that have not changed** about EMU in the past 50 years. Most importantly, the **doctrinal stand** of the mission has remained the same. Although the designation “fundamentalist” has fallen out of vogue in recent years, our missionaries all hold to the historic fundamentals of the faith.

The **goals of EMU** from its inception have been *“to bring glory to God by assisting churches and individuals in carrying out the Great Commission given to the Church Universal by our Lord Jesus Christ through ministries of evangelism, establishing indigenous churches, and training nationals to do the same.”* Though the ministries of EMU have grown and are varied, they all aim to accomplish at least one of these goals.

The custom of our offices in the US, Uruguay, and Cambodia is **strict fiscal responsibility** in making every dollar count and be accounted for. The office expenses have been minimal by any standard of mission organization. Having the office in our home (actually, attached to – not in our den like my parents!) has saved untold thousands on rental space. And the Lord has always supplied sufficient space in our house to accommodate the growing needs. When Joan finally retires, it will be up to the powers-that-be to decide the location of the Home Office.

One of the most unique aspects of EMU which, to me, has not changed and I hope never will, is **the family atmosphere**. Although several of our missionaries have never met one another for a host of reasons, those who have the opportunity to meet do so with sweet fellowship. The doors of communication are never closed. The level of friendship between families varies, of course, but our desire is that every family both like and love their fellow workers. Personally, over the past 50 years, Joan and I have accumulated fathers, mothers,

sisters, brothers, children, grandchildren, aunts, and uncles around the world from our EMU families, and other families we have gotten to know while traveling to churches representing the mission.

I remember well over 50 years ago Fred Dabold saying, **“It’s been a picnic!”** when asked about his years serving the Lord with EMU. His wife, Seva, would reply, “Fred don’t say things like that! People will take it wrong.” My father picked up the same refrain as Pa Dabold, and Mom retained Ma Dabold’s rejoinder. As a pragmatist/realist, I can say, “These past 50 years with EMU have been a picnic,” too. However, with the added commentary that picnics can be plagued with sudden thunderstorms, hail, ants, mosquitoes, flies, and sunburn! Picnics are enjoyable, but not perfect. And such have been our years with EMU. There have been nearly unbelievable trials, painful decisions, even loss of friends in some instances. But in the end, there is not another occupation I would have rather been engaged in. Serving the Lord through serving the EMU family has rendered blessing far outweighing the difficult, uncertain times. And to do so with the love-of-my-life by my side as a co-worker has been a blessing and privilege few people experience. Fifty of our fifty-one-and-a-half years of marriage have revolved around service with EMU. With all my heart, I can honestly declare, **“It’s been worth a life’s work!”** †

PS - May the Lord grant each of you a blessed New Year. And thank you for your prayers and support of EMU International.

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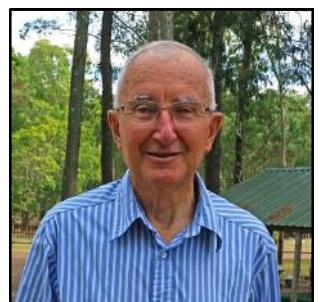
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