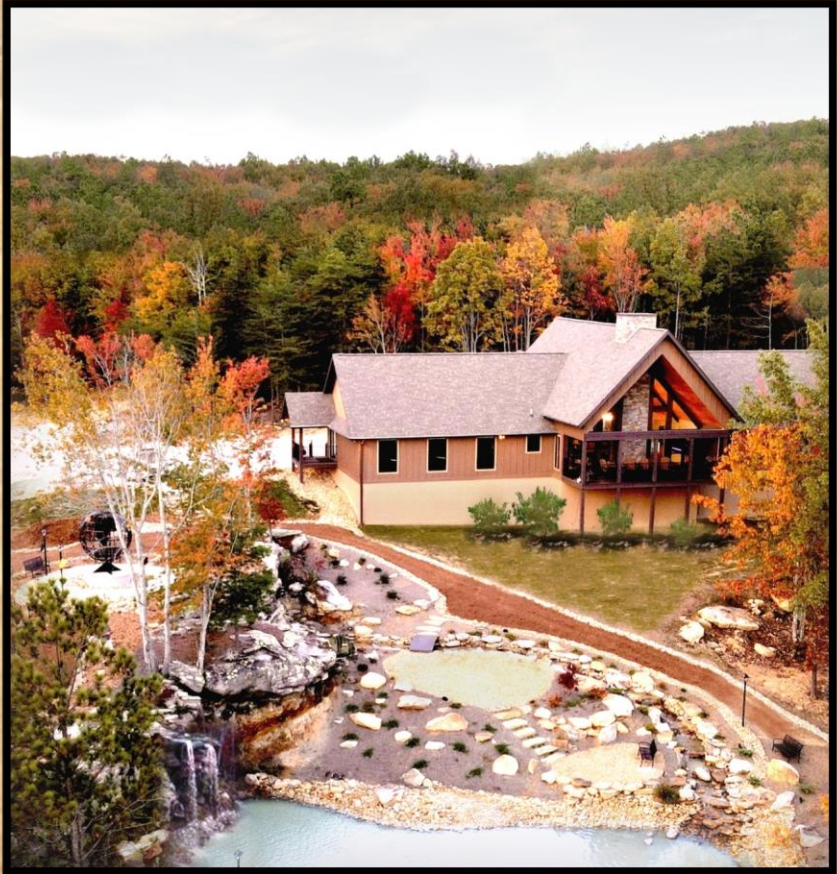


# A Missionary Kid Did **WHAT?!**



The Story of EdenRidge

Chuck Hopkins

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Chuck Hopkins

*Epanoui* Productions  
A Ministry of Mission to Missionaries  
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Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”  
(Matthew 9:37-38)

**This book is dedicated to His missionaries,  
to those laborers whom the Lord of the harvest has sent unto  
the far corners of the entire world.**



## Acknowledgements

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## Foreword

With God nothing is impossible. Yet, throughout the history of mankind, many have been called to take on what seemed to be impossible tasks. We have been inspired with the amazing accounts of men and women who have followed God's leading and direction, acting in faith, to successfully carry out the tasks He gave them. Noah built an ark and preserved a tiny remnant of humanity when the flood destroyed the rest; Moses led the children of Israel out of slavery and to the promised land; Rahab saved her family and was in the lineage of Christ Jesus; David was called from the fields where he tended sheep to reign as king over God's people; Nehemiah governed the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the face of tremendous opposition; the Apostle Paul journeyed far and wide to take the good news of Christ to the world in spite of nearly overwhelming obstacles.

Such stories continue to be told to this very day and the story of EdenRidge is no less an example of how God entrusted to the mind and heart of a young man, Oliver Dossmann, a "dream" which eventually became reality. God is the author of the dreams and visions that He wants accomplished and when we believe in and follow the dreams that God has given us, our obedience enhances our faith and our confidence in God.

When I first met Oliver Dossmann, he was a schoolboy from France. He was eager to learn and please, well on his way to mastering his new languages: English for the American school he was going to attend and Spanish for the South American country, which he had moved to with his missionary parents. He was curious about everything, had impressive skills in many areas, and was enthusiastic when it came to doing whatever he was asked to do.

The book you are about to read is not so much about a place as it is about a dream in the heart and mind of a young man who discovered what he wanted to do with his life and set out

to do it. It's about responding to God and seeing how He brings a vision to fruition through the faithfulness of a chosen servant. It helps us to begin to understand some of the nuances of one of the Proverbs: "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21 NIV).

I remember when Oliver first shared his dream with me. He was so young and the dream so big: to create a place where missionaries and others could find rest and renewal. It wasn't so long after that that I was actually walking around on a beautiful tract of forested land in Tennessee, the side of a mountain with dramatic rock outcroppings, and Oliver was telling me what structures he envisioned being built and where they would be placed on the property. Then, it seemed no time at all before the first well-appointed log cabin was actually being occupied, more were being built, and EdenRidge had become a reality.

The Lord is continuing His story of EdenRidge. It is a wonderful place for His servants to find rest from their labors and refreshment for continuing on in the tasks to which they have been called. As you read this book, enjoy the journey, enjoy the blessing. Who knows? Maybe God has a dream for you to pursue for His glory.

What a blessing to be a witness to the birth of this particular vision and to pass the story on to you.

Ron Cline

Global Ambassador, Reach Beyond (HCJB World Radio)

Author of *Feel the Zeal*

## **A Missionary Kid Did What?! The Story of EdenRidge**

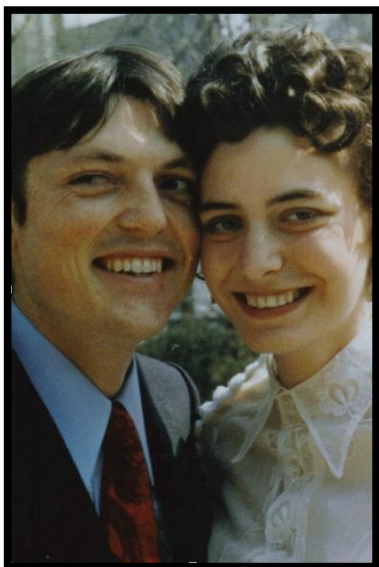
Many successful organizations were started by God-inspired visions that grew into effective world-influencing ministries through the leadership of a central figure. EdenRidge is a ministry and organization dedicated to missionaries that is growing from the vision and leadership of such a central figure, Oliver Dossmann. This is his story.

### ***Daniel and Françoise Dossmann***

If an accurate story of EdenRidge is to be told, it rightly begins with Oliver's parents, Daniel and Françoise Dossmann, and subsequently with Oliver's story of EdenRidge, which developed as a vision and became his passion.

Daniel and Françoise were both born and raised in Paris, France. They met at a guitar class in a music school in one of Paris' *Arrondissements* (Districts). The classes were held in the large wedding room of City Hall. Daniel had recently returned from his tour of military service. He had served after the official end of the Algerian colonial war when the atmosphere of war was still prevalent. He was teaching classical guitar for the first time and was in charge of the beginners. Daniel's musical career started when he was about sixteen years old. He first learned to play Blues on the guitar. For several years he practiced on the Paris banks of the River Seine. There were many musicians, poets, and artists in the "*Quartier Latin*" (Latin Quarter) in Paris. When he later discovered classical music, he became especially moved by the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and taught himself to read and play classical guitar music.

When they met, Françoise was sixteen and had been playing guitar for three years, so Daniel was not her teacher. Daniel romanced her with his guitar; they fell in love and were subsequently married five years later, in 1968. Their son, Oliver, was born two years later.



*Daniel and Françoise*



*Oliver*



*Oliver, The Early Years*

## *India*

During this time, they were both searching for meaning in life, for the purpose of life, a journey they began together. They felt that there must be more to life than the humdrum monotony of day-to-day living. A very popular thought at that time in France was that “wisdom comes from the East.” So their search took them to India, Daniel a couple of times, Françoise once, the second trip after they were married and with Oliver when he was a child. The trip they took together to India at the end of 1972 was the climax of an active search that lasted several years.

Their search included the study of Eastern religions, the practice of yoga and reading any materials related to religion that they could get their hands on. One of the books that they came across was the Bible.



*Oliver in India*

### *Return to France and Finding God*

After they returned to France, they felt strongly that they had not found the answer to their search while they were in India. Daniel continued to read the Bible more intensively, as he felt that something was different about this book. After reading through the entire Bible, he felt compelled to read it again, but this time more slowly and more carefully. At some point in this study, he began to have a dialogue with God, questioning Him about the things he was reading. In the end, he became a Christian while he was reading the story of the Magi in the Gospel of Matthew. Simply by believing the Bible, and as a result of his dialogue with the God of the Bible, Daniel came to realize that God was the Creator of the world, Jesus was the Son of God, and the Bible was God's Word to mankind.

Following the life-saving pattern in the Bible, Daniel confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior and believed in his heart that Jesus arose from the dead, "...for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (cf., Romans 10:9-10). Meanwhile, Françoise was on a parallel track. She had since childhood always believed in God the Creator because of the beauty of nature, even though she had never heard anything about Him. At one point she prayed to God the Creator and received assurance that Jesus was answering her, not by spoken voice but by imparting knowledge to her mind and assurance to her heart. Her immediate conclusion was: "If Jesus can answer me, it means that He is alive! If He is alive, it means He is God. If He is God, it means the Bible is Truth and is the Word of God."

Daniel and Françoise became Christians within days of each other. Without knowing other Christians or Christian terms or jargon, they both came to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and that the Bible was God's Word.



Oliver was three years old at the time. Later in their ministry as they traveled with Oliver and played music and testified in churches, their story of how they became Christians through only the Bible, without knowing other Christians, captivated and encouraged people wherever they ministered.

### *From Darkness to Light*

After having had their encounters with Jesus, Daniel and Françoise felt very strongly that major change had occurred, that their hearts had been changed, that their personal lives, their lives as a couple and as a family would never be the same again. They like to express those changes by saying; “We passed from darkness to light.” At this same time, they were also eager to find out how and where they could meet other people who also believed in Jesus and in the entire Bible as God’s Word. So, they started looking for other believers. It took them several months to find other Christians who believed in the Bible, “nothing more, and nothing less.”

They eventually became acquainted with other Christians and evangelical churches. Their experience with a small church in the town of *Palaiseau*, just south of Paris, became a defining moment in their lives. Alfred, the pastor, and his wife Heidi and their two sons, a couple years older than Oliver, became like family. The people of that church accompanied the pastor when he baptized Daniel and Françoise in the sea near *Abbeville*, in the *Somme, Picardie* region, northern France.

But Daniel first encountered believers in a little Bible bookstore in Paris, called *La Maison de la Bible* (The House of the Bible). “Surely they believe in the Bible,” he thought. So, Daniel went there and, sure enough, he met and had, what was to him, an amusing discussion with one of the young ladies who was working there. It went something like this: Daniel, “Do you believe this...?” Lady, “Why yes, it’s in the Bible. Of course we believe it.” Lady, “Well, how about this...?” Daniel, “Of course I believe it’s true, it’s in the Bible.”

So, they had a great reunion of sorts based on their common beliefs without having really known each other.

### ***Bible School in Geneva***

That particular bookstore, “The House of the Bible,” was affiliated with “The Bible School of Geneva,” in Switzerland. Geneva, the second most populous city in Switzerland after Zurich, is the largest city of the French-speaking region of Switzerland and is situated on Lake Geneva (*Lac Léman*), which is part of the border between France and Switzerland. Oliver, born in 1970, was five years old when they moved to Switzerland for one year so Daniel and Françoise could attend that Bible School.

### ***Amboise, France***

After finishing Bible school, they moved back to France, near *Amboise* in the *Loire* valley region about 220 km (~140 miles) south of Paris. The area is well known for its castles and is a beautiful tourist destination. They moved there to be near Daniel’s mother who had remarried after the death of his father when Daniel was a young boy. Daniel’s mother and her husband lived near the small town of *Amboise*. This neat little town is also well-known for its castle and because it is where Leonardo da Vinci lived. Oliver used to ride his bicycle by Leonardo’s house nearly every day on his way to classes when he was in middle school. At that time, Oliver didn’t think much of it, but now he says, “That was pretty cool!”



*The Castle in Downtown Amboise, France*



*Leonardo Da Vinci's House, Le Clos Lucé, in Amboise, France*

While Oliver attended school Daniel taught classical guitar and Françoise took care of their home. Daniel was an accomplished guitar instructor, having traveled to several countries as a professional musician before becoming a Christian. He had played at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1969 with a French singer and another classical guitar player. The world's finest orchestras and musicians have always been exhibited at Carnegie.

While living in *Amboise*, Daniel didn't make a lot of money teaching private guitar lessons. This was by choice, as he could have accepted and taught more students. Teaching fewer students gave him more time to spend with his family, a great deal of it with Oliver, which left a lasting impression upon him. Oliver recalls, "If there's anything I remember from my early years about growing up it's that I had a lot of time with my parents. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had a lot of family time." His parents' nurturing time, Godly counsel and tender care during his formative years, a heritage of inestimable value, may have shaped Oliver's laudable character more than any other foundational influence.



*The Dossmanns in Amboise, France*

### *Albertville, France*

During these formative years, they also traveled regularly to *Albertville*, France, situated in the Alps, where the Winter Olympics were held in 1992. A Christian recording studio was located in *Albertville*, on the same campus with a French language school for missionaries. Before the time of digital recording and CDs, recording was done with reel-to-reel tape recorders and the musical arrangements were reproduced and distributed on cassettes. Oliver's parents organized music camps there. Daniel directed a choir with friends from different churches in France and Switzerland. Françoise oversaw logistics and Oliver participated in the singing. The singers and musicians spent the first week rehearsing, living in chalets in the mountains, then, during the second week they went to the studio every day to record. The Dossmanns and those who played instruments always stayed a third week to add the instruments and "mix" (assembling music, chorale, etc.) and finalize the recordings. The trips to *Albertville* contributed lasting impressions on Oliver and were also defining moments in his life.



*Albertville*



*Oliver*

### ***Geneva Kid's Camps and Music***

Also during this time, they returned every year to the Geneva Bible School for kids' camps. Daniel and Françoise were involved as counselors while Oliver attended the camps. *Samuel* and *Hélène Grandjean*, the camp Directors, were held in high esteem by the Dossmanns. Oliver reminisces, "They were wonderful camps and I can't imagine my life without them. *Samuel* and *Hélène* were tremendous storytellers, counselors and they really loved the kids." Three camps were held each summer. Due to popular demand, children were allowed to attend only three camps during the period when they were eight to twelve years old. However, because Oliver's parents were counselors, he was permitted to attend a camp for five consecutive years.

The Dossmanns returned regularly to Geneva to work with *Samuel* and *Hélène* who composed engaging children's songs. Daniel composed arrangements for the songs and played the guitar while Françoise played the recorder (a wooden flute-like instrument that produces tones similar in sound to a flute). Oliver would often participate in the recordings by singing, many times with solo parts.

### ***Granville, Normandy, France***

Oliver's other grandmother, Françoise's mother, lived in *Granville*, Normandy, France, about twelve feet from the edge of a cliff facing west overlooking the sea (or *la Manche*, which means "the sleeve", better known to the English as the "English Channel"). They visited her often and Oliver gazed out over *la Manche* at resplendent sunsets from the edge of the cliff. About an hour's drive from his grandmother's home, Oliver could visit *Mont St. Michel*, a spectacular, well-known island monastery, and very popular tourist attraction, overshadowed in France only by the Eiffel Tower in Paris.





*Granville, Normandy on The Channel (La Manche)*



*Le Mont-Saint-Michel, France*

### *Jesus Finds Oliver*

A crucial milestone in Oliver's life occurred while attending the little church in *Amboise*, population of about 15,000. The congregation was about twenty people at the time. He was six years old when they moved there. They lived in an apartment near a forest with many trails where Oliver would often hike with his dad. On one such occasion, when he was about ten years old, Daniel asked him, "Do you think you are a Christian?" Oliver answered, "Yes, I do, because you are". That was the perfect opening for Daniel. He couldn't let that go by unanswered. So, Daniel explained to Oliver that, as is true for everyone, he must have his own relationship with Christ Jesus. That night, guided by his parents, Oliver accepted Christ. "I remember that night vividly and I have nothing but respect for my parents for those years, for they were wonderful years. I think I had an amazing childhood growing up in that environment."

Oliver did indeed have an amazing childhood; wonderfully nurturing years that he recalls fondly and that no doubt left lasting impressions that would influence his love of natural beauty, people, and travel, for the rest of his life.

### *Impending Change*

During this same period, Daniel and Françoise began to feel that God was once again touching their hearts. They sensed that something was about to change and that they were going to embark on some new adventure, something different, and something important. They didn't know what it was and speculated that perhaps going back to India would make sense because India had been part of their initial search to find God. They had discovered several influential Christian books about India, especially those by Amy Carmichael, who lived most of her missionary life in *Dohnavur*, in the southern part of India, and who rescued many young girls from terrible situations. Daniel and Françoise wondered if God was directing

them to return to India. They didn't have a clear direction at that time but continued to have the conviction that something was going to happen and that it would have a major impact on their lives.

### *Call to Missions*

It did! The little church in *Amboise* played a key role in the transition. Their pastor's wife, Virginia, was an American. She had traveled to France as a missionary where she became proficient in speaking the language and there met and married her husband, *Etienne Krémer*, the pastor of the little church. One of Virginia's childhood friends was Tom Fulghum. He and his wife Lois were missionaries with HCJB (Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings) World Radio in Ecuador, South America. "HC" are the international call letters for Ecuador. At the time, HCJB was one of the largest radio stations in the world, broadcasting via shortwave in about twenty different languages, reaching about eighty percent of the globe. One of HCJB's goals was to recruit native-speaking Christian believers to broadcast radio programs from Ecuador to their native countries and to other countries that spoke their language; German to Germany and German-speaking countries; Russian to Russians; Japanese to Japanese; Latin American Spanish and Portuguese to Latin Americans; French to French-speaking peoples, and so on.

HCJB was a large missionary operation that included an impressive radio station, a hospital across the street and another hospital in the jungle, a hydroelectric plant and much more. The organization included about 1,000 staff and missionaries at the time. There were two American women who spoke French but none that were French nationals. HCJB was broadcasting programs to France and other French speaking countries that had been recorded in France, Switzerland, Quebec, Canada and mailed to Ecuador, but as yet, they had no French-speaking nationals on site. When Tom asked Virginia for help in finding some French nationals to send to

Ecuador to help with broadcasting, Virginia kept saying, in effect, “We don’t have a lot of Christians in France and we’d like to keep them. We don’t want to send them off.” Virginia, however, began to feel that God was telling her that she should talk to the Dossmanns about Tom’s request and HCJB in Ecuador.

Not knowing where they were to go, and sensing the importance of impending change, Daniel and Françoise decided that they needed to talk with their pastor and his wife about their concerns and invited them to their home. They told *Etienne* and Virginia that one of the reasons they invited them over was because they felt that God was calling them somewhere to serve in missions, but they didn’t know why, and they didn’t know where they were to go. All they did know was that they felt that God had indicated the change to come in their lives was related to a Scripture, “Enlarge the place of your tent; Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your pegs. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations, and they will resettle the desolate cities” (Isaiah 54:2,3).

Virginia then told them, “I’ve had something on my heart for you that God has convicted me of, which I feel I should talk with you about.” She then told them about HCJB World Radio and Ecuador. Daniel had no idea that Ecuador was even a country because the French word for Ecuador (*Équateur*) is the same as the word for equator (*équateur*). When they looked on a world map they found a very small country, Ecuador, on the west coast of South America, and they discovered that it was on the other side of the world from France. Their reaction was, “WOW! That is very, very far away!” Thus began their realization that God was calling them to HCJB in Ecuador.

### ***Texas, United States of America***

After a couple years of fundraising and planning, the Dossmanns gave away most of their belongings and left France with seven suitcases, nothing else, for a country, the United States of America, which only Daniel had been to previously. Oliver recalls, "I didn't think about it at the time, but now that I look back, I realize how much faith my parents had. We were just going to go. Take these seven suitcases and go...I thought it was the greatest thing ever! And I was excited about getting to fly in a Boeing 747. Now I'm about the same age my dad was when we left France -- would I do that now, would I have the faith to take my family and travel to a mission field in another country? I don't know."

The Dossmanns left France and were greeted in Houston, Texas by one of the worst storms recorded for that area, Storm Alicia, where they were stranded for a couple of nights. Their destination was Rio Grande Bible Institute, or RGBI, in Edinburg, Texas, a language school for missionaries headed to Latin America. Daniel and Françoise studied Spanish. Oliver attended a private Christian school supplemented with some tutoring that year and studied English. RGBI is also a Bible school where Latin Americans can study the Bible; where missionaries and Latin Americans mingle together. One of the requirements was that Latin American Bible students had to help missionaries learn to speak Spanish. Further, just being near the Mexican border also helped Oliver learn the Spanish language, which he now speaks fluently.

### ***Ecuador, South America and HCJB***

After a year at RGBI, the Dossmanns traveled to Miami, Florida, then headquarters for HCJB, and from there they took off for Ecuador. Oliver says of those years, "They were amazing. I absolutely fell in love with HCJB, to the point that it became a passion. I remember thinking, coming from France where so few things were Christian, and then seeing all this equipment

and these buildings, and these missionaries and these transmitters and antennas and hydro plants and all this stuff, and all of it for a Christian purpose! It just blew me away!”



*Quito, Ecuador with Cotopaxi Volcano in the Background*



*HCJB's Transmission Facilities in Pifo, Ecuador*

Oliver was an okay student in high school and was voted most likely to be successful in a ministry career. This included being awarded a scholarship that ended up helping to pay for his first year of college, Moody Bible Institute in Chicago (more about this later). However, he just lived for HCJB. The minute the classroom bell would ring at three o'clock he would go straight across the street to HCJB where he had various jobs that were new to him. For example, he worked as a PACS (Program Automatic Control System) operator, which was an engineer-designed system that was ahead of its time. He also worked in the English Department, in the Engineering Section and in Construction. He was enthralled with HCJB, loved being so involved with it, loved the missionaries, and thrived in the HCJB environment.



*Oliver Running Sound at HCJB*





*Oliver's Graduation from the Alliance Academy*

### ***Among the Auca***

During his high school days Oliver had an opportunity to visit an *Auca* Indian village in the Ecuadorian jungle. In 1983 his parents, while at Rio Grande Bible Institute (RGI) in Texas, discovered through other HCJB missionaries that there was a close relationship between HCJB and the *Auca* story.

Operation *Auca* was an attempt by five evangelical Christian missionaries from the United States to bring Christianity to the *Waadani* (also known as *Huaorani*, *Waorani*, or *Waos*) people of the Ecuadorian rainforest. The *Waadani*, also known by the pejorative "*Aucas*" (a modification of "*Awqa*," the *Quechua* Indian word for "savages"), were an isolated Amazonian region tribe known for their violence, against both their own people and outsiders who entered their territory. With the intention of being the first Christians to evangelize the previously un-contacted *Waadani*, the missionaries began making regular flights over *Waadani* settlements in September 1955, dropping gifts.

After several months of exchanging gifts, on January 3, 1956, the missionaries established a camp at "Palm Beach," a sandbar along the *Curaray* River, a few kilometers from *Waadani* settlements. Their efforts came to an end on January 8, 1956, when all five—Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian—were attacked and speared by a group of *Waadani* warriors.<sup>1</sup>

Later, Marj Saint, Nate Saint's widow, married Abe Van Der Puy, also a widower. Abe had been the President of HCJB for twenty years until 1982. The Dossmanns met Marj and Abe when the Van Der Puys came to visit RGBI to get acquainted with the new HCJB missionaries heading for Quito, Ecuador.

Nate Saint was a missionary pilot to Ecuador. Rachel Saint, Nate's sister, after her brother Nate's death, continued the missionary efforts to the *Waadani*, which eventually resulted in many of these natives becoming Christians, including some of those who had killed Nate and the other missionaries. Rachel and Elisabeth Elliot, Jim Elliot's wife, went to live among the *Aucas*, and Elisabeth later became the famous author of the missionaries' story.

When the Dossmanns arrived in Quito, they had an avid desire to meet Rachel Saint. But they were told that she didn't come often to Quito and that nobody knew in advance when she might return. Months later, Abe and Marj, then retired, arrived in Quito for a few weeks. The Dossmanns invited them for a meal. Less than an hour before their arrival, Marj called and said: "I have something to ask you. I don't see my sister-in-law, Rachel Saint, very often, and it just happens that she is in Quito for a few days. Would you mind if she came to share the meal with us at your home?" That evening was the start of a wonderful friendship with Rachel. After that, the Dossmanns met with her each time she came to Quito.

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<sup>1</sup> Background information for the section "Among the Aucas" obtained from Wikipedia and the Dossmanns.

While visiting, Rachel invited the Dossmanns to visit her in the jungle, in the village of *Toñampare* (or *Toñampade*) where she was living among the *Waadani*s. About a year later the Dossmanns were able to accept her invitation. They reached the village by flying in a small Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) airplane via Quito then on to the community of Shell.



*Oliver, Rachel Saint, and Françoise with the Waodanis*

Rachel had organized an Easter gathering with the *Waadani*s and invited people from surrounding villages. Some had to travel for two days by canoe (without a motor) to come to the gathering. Daniel gave several messages in Spanish, which were translated into the *Waadani* language by Rachel. Rachel told the Dossmanns afterwards about the natives' reaction to the messages, how receptive they were and eager to move forward "on God's trail" as they themselves define their life with God.

The Dossmanns stayed several days, visited the site where the missionaries were killed and experienced extraordinary dialogue with some of the natives, now Christians, who had participated in killing the missionaries.



*Waadani Indians at Palm Beach on the Curaray River*



*Mealtime at Rachel Saint's House*

When Daniel and Françoise were planning this trip, Oliver did not want to go with them at first. He was apprehensive about becoming sick from the heat, having had a bad experience during one of their trips to Mexico when they were in language school. But they eventually convinced him that it would be the trip of a lifetime and he finally agreed to accompany them. He had an absolutely wonderful time and had many interesting stories to tell about that trip. Today he considers the trip to have been a unique “trip of a lifetime.”



*Daniel Preaches to the Wadani as Rachel Saint Translates*





*The Dossmanns Minister to the Waodani with Music*

One of Oliver's memorable experiences from this trip is about "*chicha*," a fermented drink of South and Central America. Among the *Aucas*, *chicha* is made from manioc root (also called yucca or cassava) and is a fermented drink in which human saliva is used to activate the fermentation process. In other regions or countries *chicha* can be made from maize (corn), grapes, apples or various other fruits and may or may not be a fermented drink.

One morning Oliver and his parents witnessed *chicha* being made by the village women and girls. They cut yucca in pieces, chewed it, and then spat it into a common bowl. After several hours of fermentation, it becomes one of the *Aucas'* favorite drinks.

Rachel asked Komi, one of the village leaders and the first *Auca* who became a Christian, if he would take her three guests, the Dossmanns, to another settlement by canoe. When they arrived over an hour later, about 20 Indians gathered in a hut and started to drink *chicha*. Though very thirsty the Dossmanns dreaded being offered the drink because they

knew how it had been made, on the one hand, and on the other hand, they didn't want to offend their hosts. But the angels smiled on the Dossmanns. The Indians, knowing by experience that visitors were not eager to imbibe *chicha*, offered their guests Coca-Cola, warm Coca-Cola, in place of the *chicha*. Oliver doesn't care for Coca-Cola. Even when it's ice cold, he "never" drinks it. But he says of that experience, "That was the BEST Coke I have ever had!"



*The Waodani Preparing Chicha*

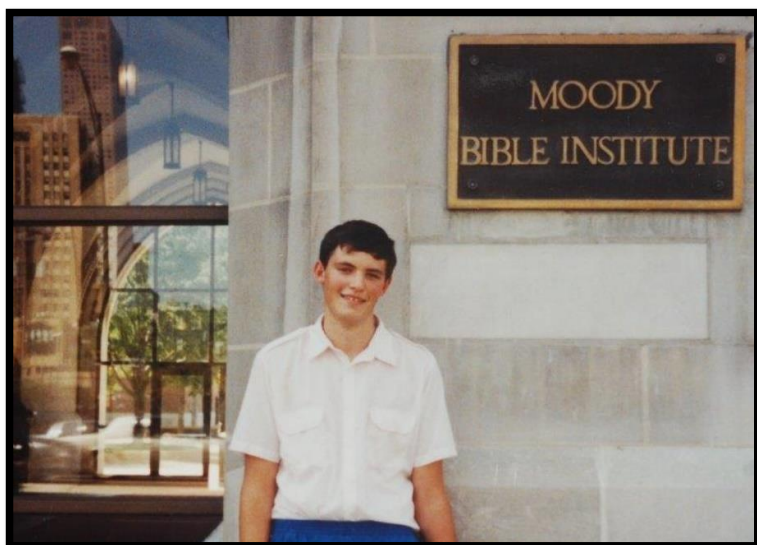


### ***Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, USA***

Oliver was exposed to Moody Bible Institute while living in *Amboise*, France; long before he had any idea he would be going to North America and to the mission field. The little church in *Amboise* would meet on Sunday afternoons once a month or once every two months to watch Moody science films. Françoise, however, had a conviction or a premonition from God that Oliver would one day attend Moody Bible Institute. Oliver began learning to speak English during his year in Texas and perfected his English language skills at the Alliance Academy in Ecuador, where all of his friends were Americans, and all of his teachers were Americans. He now speaks Midwestern American English with virtually no noticeable French or Spanish accent.

Oliver's parents were missionary musicians and involved in HCJB dinners and conferences, which took their family all over the United States for some of those functions during Oliver's high school years. So, by the time Oliver was ready for college, going to an American college seemed like the most natural thing in the world to him. He loved America and thought, "This is where I want to go to college." He recalls, "There's no way I would not go to Moody. I never really thought of going anywhere else." About a year before Oliver graduated from the Alliance Academy high school, he and his parents visited Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Oliver applied and was soon admitted as a freshman student.

The years at Moody were another memorable and consequential experience for Oliver. In addition to his academic studies he worked first in the cafeteria and then at Moody Broadcasting. To land the job with Moody Broadcasting Oliver obtained a letter of recommendation from Ron Cline who was the President of HCJB at the time and a well-known and respected Christian broadcaster. Oliver's duties with the satellite-based network at Moody were similar to the work he did with PACS at HCJB in Ecuador. His college experience "was just a great time. Moody was wonderful."

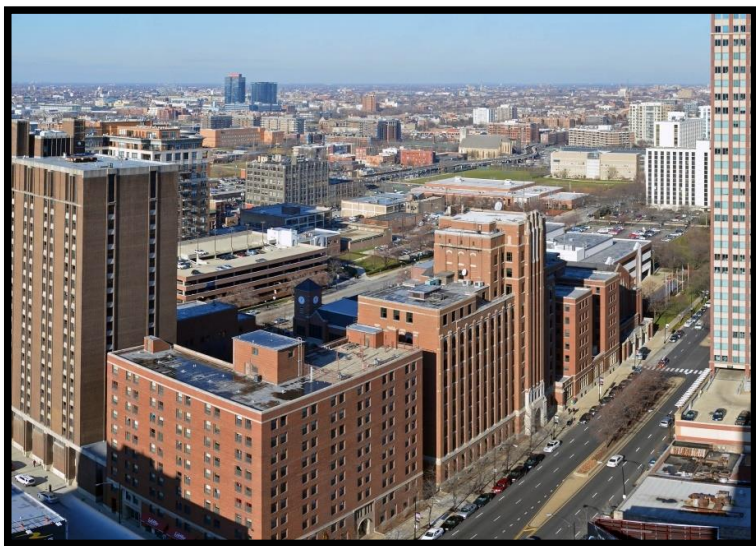


*Oliver Visits Moody Bible Institute*



*Lakeshore Drive, Chicago, Illinois*

After acceptance at Moody, his parents took him to Chicago, then returned to their mission in Ecuador. While attending the Institute, Oliver had a room on the 18th floor of his dorm and on some weekends visited family friends Roger and Crys Crocker, who lived in the suburbs of Chicago. Oliver came to think of Roger and Crys as his American “parents.” Roger was an airline pilot and captained a Boeing 727 and later a Boeing 747. Oliver thought that was pretty cool! He reminisces, “I loved the Crockers very much...they would call me from time to time to see how I was doing. On many occasions they came downtown to pick me up and go to lunch. They were great.”



*Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois*

The time at Moody was the first time that Oliver felt that he was beginning life on his own. He thought, “This is the beginning of my adult life.” “Home” began to have a new meaning for him. He still loved his parents, of course, and communicated with them frequently. Initially, they telephoned on a strict budget of thirty dollars per month. At a couple dollars per minute, that allowed about 15 minutes per month for telephone conversations of short duration, “Hi, Mom.

Yes, Mom. Yes, my classes are going well. Yes, we're still dating. No, we're (whatever). Bye-bye!" There were also "ham" radio-operators in both Chicago and in Ecuador that they used a few times, which was a new and interesting experience for Oliver. Then they tried extending their information exchanges by mailing cassettes back and forth, but it took about three weeks to receive a response by snail mail at that time.

There was no question in Oliver's mind that after college he would return to HCJB. His intention was that his lifelong work would revolve around HCJB. But he couldn't decide whether to focus on radio broadcasting or television broadcasting. In order to decide, he took a semester off from Moody, which extended to about eight months, and moved back to Ecuador in 1990 to live with his parents and to work for HCJB again. He wasn't in school, so he focused on work full time, which is exactly what he wanted to do. Once again, he worked in all sorts of different departments; two months in radio, two months in television and a couple of months in computer programming. He found that he was drawn to computer programming in a big way and learned that HCJB needed someone to write a program to keep up with listeners. He took on that task and completed the project and ended up preferring computer programming to broadcasting and decided to go into that field instead of broadcasting for his life's work.

In the fall of 1990 Oliver returned to Moody thinking, "I'll just learn computer programming on my own." He had a computer but realized that he would need a business quality computer for programming, which he purchased and started learning computer programming on his own. It didn't take long for him to conclude that if he was going to make his living in the computer science field that he should probably get a degree in Information Systems.

Having made that decision, he began to look at schools that offered the degree he felt he needed. He came across a

Southern Baptist school, Union University, in Jackson, Tennessee. The first question entering his mind was, "Do I have to be a Southern Baptist to attend this University?" The school's response was, "No, no, no, no, you don't have to be a Southern Baptist!" So, during one of his parent's trips to the United States, they drove to Jackson, a town that most of their acquaintances had never heard of, with a population of about 68,000 (estimate based on the most recent census), about 70 miles east of Memphis, Tennessee. They visited Union University and loved it! So, Oliver moved to Jackson.

### ***Kalispell, Montana to Portland, Oregon by Bicycle***

In 1991, during the summer between attending Moody Bible Institute and Union University, Oliver and close childhood friend, John (*Jean Hervé Vernat*), went on an extended bicycle trip from Kalispell, Montana to Portland, Oregon. John and Oliver grew up together in France fantasizing about a long bicycle trip in America, wondering if it could ever happen. It did! They cycled nearly 2,000 miles in five weeks by taking less travelled roads and making numerous side trips along the way. Oliver reminisces, "We had the most amazing time. I can't say enough good things about that bike trip. It was life changing. I had never been out west before, so it was a wonderful way to see the country."

While Oliver was at Moody and his friend John lived in France, Oliver was responsible for establishing the itinerary for their bike trip. One day Oliver visited a friend in his room to "pick up a book". His friend had a calendar with photos of Glacier National Park by his bed that caught Oliver's attention. Oliver said, "Wow! Where is that?" His response was, "That's my home. I'm from Kalispell, Montana." Oliver flipped through the calendar photos and thought, "I don't care what it takes, we're going through there somehow on this bike trip I'm planning." And that's where they began their bike odyssey, Kalispell, Montana.

Oliver reminisces, “John and I had a wonderful trip...a fabulous trip, loved it!” To this day it is probably a toss-up as to which is Oliver’s favorite National Park in the United States, Glacier in Montana, or Zion in Utah.



*First Euphoric Victory: Logan Pass in Glacier National Park*

They enjoyed their adventure so much that during the last week of their trip they began to feel a little crestfallen that they were nearing the end. “This just can’t be over. We planned this for years, since we were kids. We have to do something bigger.” So, they started dreaming about options: A trip in Europe? Crossing America entirely? Then it hit them, “Riding bikes to Alaska! That’s what we want to do.” They thought, “One day we’re going to do that!” Five years later, they did.





*Oliver and John near Mount Hood in Oregon*

### ***Union University***

Soon after arriving at Union in 1991, Oliver landed a job in the computer science department. He didn't know a lot about computers yet, but neither did most of the other student workers; they were all in it together. They were helping the computer department, setting up computers, tearing them apart, cleaning them, that sort of thing. Oliver figured, "This is perfect. I'm going to learn some basic computer skills and get paid for it!" At first, he was worried about being in over his head with work and classes but, loving both, he applied himself and did exceptionally well. As is typical of everything Oliver does, his work and classes became his passion.

While visiting his parents in Ecuador over Christmas break in 1994, his supervisor quit his job. When Oliver returned, the manager of his department called him to the office and said, "Your boss has quit and we'd like to offer you the job." Oliver about fell off his chair! He thought, "Wow! My own office! My own job! This is amazing!" They continued with a couple more enticing incentives, "First of all, you'll make more money..."

Second, we'll take care of your healthcare insurance." This was very timely because Oliver was about to become ineligible for health coverage under his parents' insurance policy. "Third, you can still take classes, finish your degree and your classes will be almost free." Oliver responded with a resounding, "YES, YES, I would love the job!" He was so excited because he considered this to be his first "real job."



*Oliver in his Office at Union University*

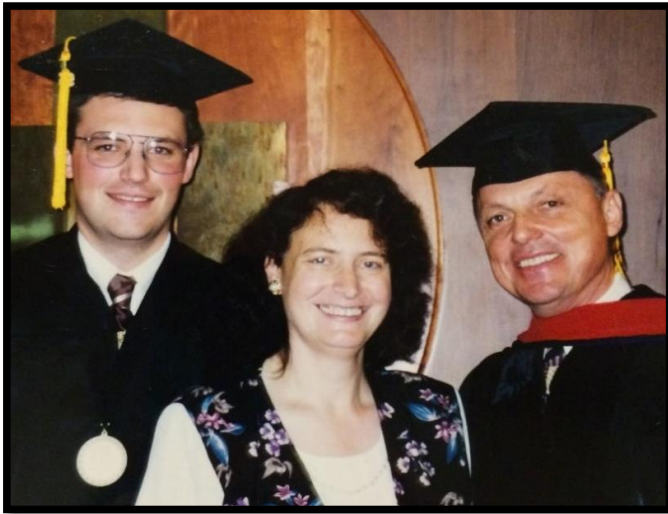
Oliver was responsible for helping to keep the University's computers running smoothly. His new supervisor, David Porter, was the Network Administrator and "was a wonderful guy; we worked extremely well together." At the time, the University's President was Dr. Hyran Barefoot. Oliver greatly respected him and worked well in his administration.





*Union University in Jackson, Tennessee*

Oliver still lived on campus for a little while longer and excelled in working full time for Union in the computer department. Supervising his former fellow students took some getting used to. Though it was sometimes a difficult and challenging adjustment for him because they were his friends and buddies from school, he learned how to be an effective supervisor. It worked out well and Oliver was soon promoted to Assistant Network Administrator, working directly with David Porter.



*Oliver and his Parents on Graduation Day*

The Internet was new at that time and universities were just starting to get connected. The next major project that was assigned to Oliver was setting up the Internet for Union. "I didn't know what I was doing," says Oliver. "I was still learning as I went. And I think in the world of technology, that's just what we do. We keep up and learn and never say we can't do something; we just figure out how to do it. Back then you couldn't just Google it." His supervisor said, "You know what, Oliver, this is a project that you are going to take on. This is your baby. Order whatever you need. Put together a budget and we'll present it to the Administration. You just do it, and don't worry about anything else. Your job now is to set Union University up on the Internet." Can you imagine? Oliver was 25 years old, would manage his own project, a project he considered challenging and fun, had his own budget and, as with everything he sets his mind to, he was exuberant all over again. And he did it. Four months later Union was on the Internet.



*Oliver and his future wife, Rachel, on Graduation Day*

## *Denver, Colorado to Anchorage, Alaska by Bicycle*

In January 1995, after Oliver returned from Christmas break in Ecuador, when Union University offered him the full-time job, Oliver told the administrators conducting the interview that he would love the job, but that he had a bike trip planned for the summer of 1996. In the business world, for a position like that, it would be tough to ask for three months off during an interview for a job that required so much responsibility. In the academic world, however, it wasn't that crazy, even though Union staff usually did not get the summers off. Oliver says, "They didn't look at me like I had three heads! They just replied, 'That will be fine, we'll work with that'."

So it was in the summer of 1996 that Oliver and two friends fulfilled their dream of traveling by bicycle from Denver, Colorado to Anchorage, Alaska, a distance including side trips of nearly 5,000 miles. Joining him on this trip was John, from their first bike trip, and another friend, Eric Zimmerman, from their years at Moody, whom Oliver had stayed in touch with.

At that time, John was a chef in England, and would be the designated chef on the trip. Eric, an aircraft mechanic and pilot, would be the designated mechanic on the trip. Oliver was the administrator in charge of finances and pulled it all together. Oliver also acted as interpreter as John and Eric had never met before the trip and John did not speak English well and Eric did not speak French. But the three companions spoke one tongue very well together...the universal language of laughter! After their epic trip, when they reminisced about some of the humorous moments they experienced on the trip, they laughed together until they had tears in their eyes. Unfortunately, at the time of this writing (2022), John has passed away.

At first, Eric was reluctant to commit to the trip because he was elbow deep in his aircraft mechanics courses and money was tight. Oliver really wanted Eric to join them and finally convinced him that it would be the trip of a lifetime.



*Oliver with his Bike at Grand Teton National Park*



*Camping near Banff National Park, Canada*

They all met at the Denver airport, the starting point of their great adventure. Along the way they met interesting and wonderful people including many fellow cyclists. They followed the continental divide from Colorado through a series of National Parks: Rocky Mountain, Colorado; Grand Teton and Yellowstone, Wyoming; Glacier, Montana; Waterton Lakes, Banff, and Jasper, Alberta, Canada.

They traveled up the Cassiar Highway through British Columbia, which joins Yellowhead Highway 16 at Milepost PG 298, Skeena River Bridge, and traveled north to the junction with the Alaska Highway. After many new experiences, which Oliver has chronicled in a short dissertation, and after hundreds of miles traveling north on the Alaska Highway, they took a side trip by car to Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean.



*Oliver, Eric, and John at the Arctic Circle*



After returning for their bikes, they cycled the rest of the way to Anchorage. Their bike trip over, they took an additional nine days, obtained a car, and did some traveling and sightseeing in other areas of Alaska.

By this time Eric was an aircraft mechanic and loved Alaska so well that during the last week that they were there he decided to look for a job. He went to the Anchorage International Airport and received several job offers and accepted one. He flew back to Phoenix, where he lived at the time, packed his belongings and in just a few days drove back to Alaska along the same route that had taken them nearly ninety days to traverse by bicycle.

While they were traveling around Alaska they had been introduced to a church in Anchorage. When Eric returned for his new job, he decided to visit that church again. It was there that he met his future wife, Casey. Oliver likes to remind Eric that it was thanks to the bike trip that he met his wife.



*Camping near Tok, Alaska*

After the bike trip, Eric and his wife Casey moved to Papua New Guinea where they served with New Tribes Mission (now Ethos 360) for over a decade. They now reside in Washington State and Eric works for Boeing.

### *Mexico*

Soon after Oliver completed the Internet project at Union, he became involved with Mexican officials over an industry in Mexico that processed harvested cacti. The industry was important to the Mexican government and was struggling to remain solvent. Mexican officials wanted to preserve the industry and approached an organization called “Students In Free Enterprise” (SIFE) for help. The government officials suggested that SIFE put together some college groups from all over the country to develop proposals indicating how to salvage the struggling industry. Even though Oliver had no experience in that field he got involved with Union’s group because he could speak Spanish, along with one of the young women in the group. The rest of their team members were business majors. So the Union team developed a proposal and was one of the top four finalists who won a trip to Mexico to present their findings in Spanish to officials from the Mexican government.

On this trip, Oliver became well acquainted with a man named Robert Wyatt, Dean of Union’s School of Business at that time, a respected leader who is now President of Coker College, a private, four-year liberal arts college in Hartsville, South Carolina. They had met before and were able to sit together on the airplane on the way back from Mexico. In effect he said to Oliver, “You have an aptitude for business, so you bring more to this team than just Spanish. I’ll tell you what, I have some scholarship money and I will pay for you to get a second major in business.”

That was around the time when Union hired Oliver and his computer science classes were winding down. What Dean

Wyatt offered Oliver, a second major in business, Oliver turned into a master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). Oliver thought, "Well, if someone is going to pay for it, why not?" He reasoned that he was almost finished with his other classes, was working for Union and the scholarship money would help with his other expenses. It was an opportunity he felt he could not pass up, so he studied for an MBA, which he was eventually awarded. He started taking MBA courses while still an undergraduate; as it turned out, the two programs blended well together.

### *Kirkland's*

Eight months or so before the year 2000, when Information Technology (IT) fears about Y2K (more about that later) were running rampant, Kirkland's, headquartered in Jackson at the time, a 130 million dollar-per-year home retail company with about 130 stores around the country, approached Oliver. The company was not publicly traded at that time but was planning on going public. The founder, Mr. Carl Kirkland was from Jackson, Tennessee.

The President of Kirkland's was Mr. Robert Alderson. Mr. Alderson's wife was on Union University's Board of Directors and needed someone to work on her personal computer. Oliver had been recommended to her and went to their home. Mr. Alderson wasn't there when he arrived, but Oliver visited with his wife and fixed her computer. Mr. Alderson came in before Oliver left and during their discourse, he indicated to Oliver that Kirkland's was looking for someone to take over their IT Department. He was aware that Oliver had a degree and was finishing up his MBA studies and said something to the effect that he thought Oliver might be a good candidate for the position. Their conversation led to a first interview for the position at Kirkland's; then a second interview; and finally, a third. In what seemed like no time at all, Oliver was working at Kirkland's making three times the wages to start than he had been making at Union University. To Oliver it was an



amazing opportunity. It was during his tenure with Kirkland's that Oliver's vision of a missionary retreat center was given birth.

The first two years at Kirkland's went very well as Oliver completed some major computer projects to get the company through the Y2K problem. The year 2000 problem (also known as the Y2K problem, the Millennium bug, the Y2K bug, or simply Y2K) was an issue for both digital (computer-related) and non-digital documentation and data storage situations, which resulted from the practice of abbreviating a four-digit year to two digits. This made the year 2000 dates indistinguishable from the year 1900 dates. The former assumption that a twentieth-century date was always understood caused various errors concerning the display of dates and the automated ordering of dated records or real-time events.

Kirkland's acquired another company at that time and Oliver also helped with the transition and merger. Oliver was enjoying the corporate life, flying in the corporate jet, and the many other perks that came with his position. He felt like he "had it made." He was nearly thirty years old and a director, one of the 14 leaders of the company, which included the CEO, the President, four Vice Presidents, and eight Director level positions. Oliver relates a couple of examples, "I need to go to San Diego for something. 'Take the corporate jet.' How cool is that! I need to go to Chicago for the day to view a warehouse with someone. 'Take the corporate jet.' How awesome is that!"

But in spite of his "success," deep inside Oliver began to feel uneasy, frustrated. He would get together with the other company leaders in one of the expansive boardrooms and think, "What am I doing here? I'm one of the Directors of a 130 million-dollar-per-year company. I'm leading the company's technology section. Why? What is so exciting about all of this? Is it the job, the perks? We sell candles and rugs

and other things so people can decorate their homes. And that's nice, but what does it all mean? How important is all that?" He wondered if he could be doing something more significant with his life. He felt that God had given him skills and abilities that he was using in a corporate environment to please the owners of the business and himself. At the end of the day, he would ask himself "Why am I doing this? Just so we can sell more rugs and candles and bags of potpourri?" There is nothing wrong with that, but it began to bother him.

### *Birth of a Vision*

During this time, Oliver had a meaningful conversation with two very good friends from Union University, Chris Blair, and Ashley Fitch. Oliver and Ashley had been friends for a while, and she was engaged to Chris. In that conversation, Ashley asked Oliver, "What would be your ideal job?" Oliver replied, "I want to do something that revolves around four key things I care deeply about: missions, business, travel, and nature. As much as I enjoy working at Kirkland's, I just don't see myself doing that my entire life. I'm 28 years old, have a great education from Union, have an MBA and I'm working in a great business job. This is the perfect time for me to make some serious career decisions about what I really want to do for the rest of my life." It was then that Ashley said something to Oliver that God would use to plant a seed that would begin to shape his vision and lead to his life's passion. She said, "If you want to do all those things, you should build a retreat center for missionaries." As Chris, Ashley, and Oliver talked, it became clear to Oliver that this was a great idea. He thought "I would be doing something meaningful for missionaries and meeting a specific need that they have. It would require business skills to pull something like that off and it would require some travel. Further, I would be surrounded by nature."

As a missionary kid (MK) Oliver traveled extensively with his parents. Missionaries serve on foreign fields all over the world. Periodically, maybe every year, maybe every two or three

years, they must return to their home base to meet with sponsors, raise support funds to replace diminishing resources, and reconnect with family and friends and others they haven't seen in years. Missionary organizations refer to these trips as home ministry assignments (HMAs). As rewarding as these trips home are, missionaries on HMA must meet demanding and exhausting schedules in preparation for returning to their mission fields. Oliver was a teenager during his parents' HMAs, and he loved the travel and the excitement of it all. But he also observed how exhausting it was for his parents. So, when Ashley said, "retreat center for missionaries," Oliver thought, "Oh, Yes! This would actually meet a very real and specific need that missionaries have!"

The idea of meeting this need made sense to Oliver, not only because it covered the four things he wanted to do with his life, but also because it would meet an important need in the lives of missionaries. So as part of their planning, the three friends did some research pertaining to the need for missionary retreat centers. It was discovered that there were very few real retreat centers for missionaries. There were a few small ones and some larger ones but none of them seemed to be specifically focused on the needs of missionaries; they might offer discounts to missionaries, but they were, for the most part, Christian programs focused primarily on encouraging ministers through events at scheduled conferences. Oliver wanted a place where missionaries could rest and be renewed to better enable them to bring Christ to the world.

### ***Easier Said than Done!***

"Unless God builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Ps. 127:1a).

One day after Chris and Ashley were married, they sat together at the dining room table in their home with Oliver, looked at each other and said, "Let's do this! What do we need to do?"

Well, we need a name and we need to get incorporated to get tax-exempt status so people can receive a tax deduction for their donations to our not-for-profit ministry. We need to get organized so we can raise funds so that in a couple of years we can buy property and build some cabins. It's a great vision! Everyone is going to want to give to a missionary retreat center."

Looking back, Oliver ruefully admits that they were thinking, "We aren't going to know what to do with all this money!" They were a little naïve during this planning meeting, assuming that it would be easy to raise support funds for a ministry that did not yet exist.

So, they started the process of incorporation. Then someone told them that to get tax-exempt status they would have to hire an attorney for about \$1,000. They didn't have \$1,000 to spare. They thought, "But what can be so hard about getting tax-exempt status? We'll just order the forms and fill them out ourselves." They reasoned that if they didn't know the answers themselves, they wouldn't be able to tell a lawyer what they wanted anyway. "So, let's just fill out the paperwork ourselves and see what happens." They did. They filled out the paperwork, went back and forth with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) a few times, and their application was approved under the name *Epanoui* Ministries on March 22, 1999.

*Epanoui* is a French word that does not appear to have an exact English translation; but in this case means something like being at peace about a situation, or enjoying something and being relaxed about it, a state of being. So, they registered the Internet domain *epanoui.org*, which was available, of course! Chris, having artistic talents, created a beautiful logo for them. And they were off and running!

What they discovered over time was that people who saw "*Epanoui*" written down had no idea how to pronounce it, people who heard it had no idea how to spell it, and no one

had any idea what it meant. So, they decided after a couple of years that it would make more sense if they had a name that was more recognizable and easier to remember. They wanted a name that would answer the question, “What is this ministry?”

Kina Mallard, PhD, was a Board member and Chair of the Communication Arts Department at Union University at that time. She later became President of Reinhardt University in Georgia. Kina stopped in one day while Oliver was meeting with Ashley and Chris in their office at Union and suggested, “What about ‘Mission to Missionaries’? That would just say everything.” And it stuck. “That’s it, ‘Mission to Missionaries’,” thought Oliver. “That’s a name that is recognizable, it says who we are. Our mission is a mission to missionaries.” So, they came up with a new logo and rebranded their ministry “Mission to Missionaries.”

Next, they started telling their story everywhere. Peoples’ reactions to the idea were lukewarm at first, which surprised and disappointed Oliver. During these formative years, they didn’t really have a lot to share with people other than a vision. Oliver would tell people, “We’re going to build a missionary retreat center. I don’t know where it is going to be located. We don’t have any land yet. We don’t have designs for the cabins yet.” Further, they had few concrete answers to questions from potential donors, just ideas. Responses were enthusiastic in words, but not in financial support. So, of course, they found it very difficult to raise funds, which Oliver had at first naïvely envisioned would be easy. Many people thought it was a great idea, but without anything tangible in place it proved very difficult for them to raise money for their vision. It was decided that they had to come up with something, some tangible product, which they could sell to raise funds to get the project started.

Oliver was adamantly determined that they were going to build the retreat center, whether it took two years or twenty

years, “We are going to do this!” The idea they came up with involved Oliver’s parents who were skillful musicians. They would record, produce, and sell classical guitar and recorder CDs of Oliver’s parents’ music and dedicate proceeds to their missionary project.

At that time Oliver’s parents were still in Ecuador. They communicated frequently because by this time it was much cheaper, and they had email. They also saw each other regularly. Daniel had wanted to record their instrumental music on a CD and Oliver had talked with him specifically about Mission to Missionaries (*Epanoui* at the time). They needed \$3,500 for that project, \$1,500 for the recording studio fee in Ecuador and \$2,000 to duplicate 1,000 CDs. At that time, \$3,500 was a lot of money that Oliver didn’t have to produce the CDs and didn’t know where it would come from.

To this day the story of how God supplied those funds amazes Oliver. After they determined that the project would cost \$3,500, the very next day, payroll day at Kirkland’s, Oliver noticed that his pay stub indicated that an additional \$3,500 had been added to his check voucher. He thought it was a mistake because he had no idea why it could have been added. When Oliver checked with his supervisor, he discovered that he had received a \$5,000 bonus as a result of Kirkland’s acquiring another company. After taxes and deductions, \$3,500 was added to his check. “Wow, how awesome is that!” Oliver had helped earlier with the merger and transition, but he had no idea that he would receive that bonus. Kirkland’s owners had taken it upon themselves once the transition was complete and everything was working to give Oliver a \$5,000 bonus for his part in the transition. He had no idea it was coming. To Oliver, “It was a sign from God. If that’s not a sign I don’t know what is.”

Oliver was not in Ecuador when his parents recorded their first CD at HCJB’s professional multi-track recording studio facilities. When Oliver got the master CD, he was so excited

that he couldn't sleep at night. Oliver's mind is usually going about ten to the twentieth power anyway so whenever he gets that excited about something, he just can't sleep for a while. "We had something with our logo on it! That was so cool! A CD! It was the first tangible thing we had to help raise funds for Mission to Missionaries."

Their goal was to raise funds through selling CDs, receiving donations and any other legitimate means they could think of. And when they had \$100,000 in the bank, they would then start looking for land. In the meantime, they conducted a lot of research trying to determine just where the retreat center should be built.

During this time the Dossmanns traveled as missionaries showing pictures of their ministry in Ecuador, speaking, and playing music. They would sell the CDs after services at tables in the back. Mission to Missionaries also sold CDs through its website. Next, they purchased their own recording equipment and produced their CDs at much lower cost; a second CD, and a third, and a fourth, and then, eventually, ten CDs. By the time they purchased land for Mission to Missionaries, they had raised over \$150,000, in large part through their CD program!

### ***Dossmann Tech***

Oliver had been considering starting his own business while at Kirkland's. He was just starting his new business, shortly after leaving Kirkland's, when he married his sweetheart, Rachel Tiedemann, on December 16, 2000. He's very appreciative when he expresses his gratitude and admiration for Rachel, "Special thanks to Rachel for marrying a guy who had no job! I had no money saved up, I didn't have a job, I was just starting my own business, and it was a little scary for me to have my own business." Imagine how Rachel felt about that. Being married to Rachel also made it considerably easier for Oliver to eventually become an American Citizen.

Rachel's reflections, about marrying a guy who had no job at the time, are insightful: "Maybe I was naïve, but I didn't really think about it until after we were married. Oliver didn't have a job at the time, and I was uneasy about him starting his own business, but I knew he would take care of his own family. I wasn't worried about him providing for us, he was a provider, and he would always be working. I knew he wouldn't compromise his values. So, we lived for a while on my measly little teacher's salary.

"But considering what Oliver was faced with, he was going to marry someone who had a maxed-out credit card, student loans to pay off, and monthly payments for a bedroom suite! I was the one in the negative, in the red, financially. And Oliver does not like to be in the red. So, over the next three years Oliver taught me how to be more financially responsible while all the time maintaining a calm demeanor, even though at times I drove him crazy. Like when we would go to Walmart, and I'd fill the shopping cart. Then, attempting to be more frugal, I would re-evaluate what I thought we really needed and go back through the isles replacing nearly everything I had put into the cart. It drove him crazy!

"So, Oliver managed our finances while patiently teaching me. He was so good with numbers. I just had confidence that Oliver would take care of us financially."

After Oliver left Kirkland's to start his own Information Technology (IT) Consulting business, "Dossmann Tech," he wrestled with whether to start his business out west or in Jackson. He loved it out west but felt that he couldn't just move to Colorado or Montana since he was pretty heavily involved with businesses in Jackson. It made sense financially to start where he was already located and known in the business world.

Oliver was soon providing IT services to some medical clinics in Jackson. Soon after, he hired his first full time employee,



then continued to grow his business over the next few years. His business has done very well and is now established as an IT company and a website development firm serving clients nationwide.

Dossmann Tech has grown to the point now that Oliver is no longer involved with the day-to-day activities, which have been turned over to his staff. "It's a wonderful blessing because my business allows me to focus my time and energy on the ministry while at the same time affording enough income for us personally to provide for our family needs and for the ministry." Oliver's family consists of his wife, Rachel and four engaging young children, two boys and two girls, and his mother who lives nearby. Oliver's father, Daniel, passed away August 8, 2018.

### ***Missionary Retreat Center Land Purchase***

Through the Dossmanns' fundraising efforts, they were able to save over \$150,000 for the purchase of land for the retreat center. They were excited! After doing a little online research for land they estimated that they should be able to find and purchase, with their savings, about twenty to thirty acres somewhere. But they wanted a parcel that was in a completely remote area, yet not more than a thirty minutes' drive from an interstate. Further, they wanted the land to be near a park or recreational attraction. A series of events beginning with an invitation to a free breakfast at a Wyndham Resorts presentation led Oliver to the parcel of land that they were seeking.

Wyndham Resorts is a time-share organization. Representatives of Wyndham offer free breakfasts and information to prospective buyers of time-share properties. They also give them free incentives for providing names of other people who may be interested in purchasing a time-share property. Some of Oliver's friends attended one of the Wyndham sales events at Fairfield Glade, Tennessee and

provided Oliver's name. Soon afterwards Oliver received in the mail an invitation for a three-night stay at Wyndham Resort in Fairfield Glade.

Fairfield Glade is a 12,000-acre resort and recreation community just six miles north of Interstate 40 near Crossville, Tennessee. Fairfield Glade sports rolling forested hills with beautiful homes and townhomes, eleven lakes for boating and fishing with two beaches for swimming, five golf courses with 90 holes of golf, award-winning racquet sports facilities, recreation and fitness complexes, miles of wooded hiking trails and paved walking paths, and much more, all close to three major metropolitan cities: within an hour's drive from Knoxville and an hour-and-a-half drive from Nashville or Chattanooga, Tennessee. Oliver had never heard of Fairfield Glade, but he thought, "Couldn't hurt to check it out." They didn't have children yet, so it was easy for them to travel.



*Fairfield Glade, Tennessee*

So, they went to Fairfield Glade and listened to Wyndham's presentation. They were not really interested in a time-share, but they were impressed with the Resort and the area.

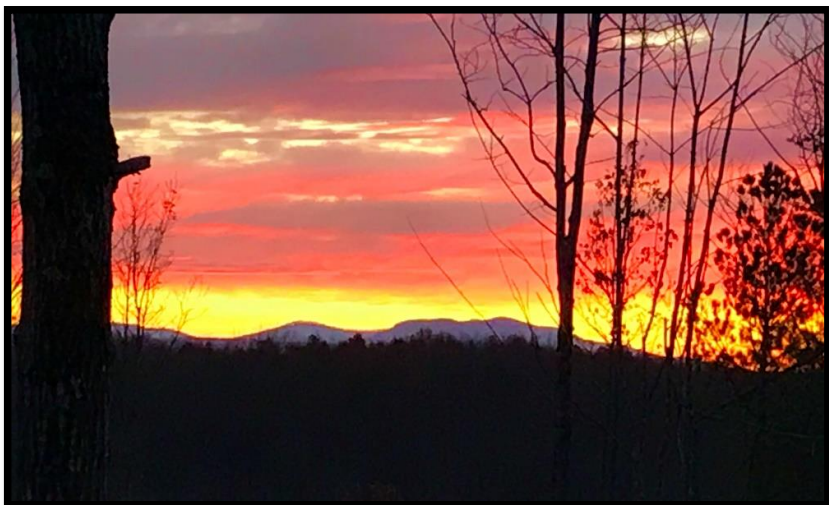
They thought, "This has potential." It was within driving distance of Oliver's business in Jackson, and he could make a round-trip in one day. He thought, "A resort and recreation community. How perfect is that? We would potentially have hundreds of residents who live in Fairfield Glade that could get involved with us. Surely a good many of them would love to be involved in what we are doing." (Oliver often uses hyperbole when enthusiastic or excited about something. His natural vivacity inspires others.)

They met with a realtor and indicated that they were interested in property that would be within about thirty minutes from Fairfield Glade and within thirty minutes or less from Interstate 40. And they also wanted it to be in a pristine area with a sense of being quietly off the beaten path. They looked at a few properties but didn't find any that interested them.

A few weeks later, the realtor contacted Oliver and said, "I'm getting ready to list a property that has 130 acres and is in your price range." Oliver asked, "Wow, what's wrong with it? Why is that much land so cheap?" The realtor's response was, "There's nothing wrong with it. It's just because it's in a remote place, and it's about ten minutes east of Fairfield Glade and about ten minutes north from the interstate." Oliver said, "It sounds perfect. Let's go see it."

It was the autumn of 2005. Oliver and Rachel went camping at Fall Creek Falls State Park with close friends Mark Maddox and his fiancé Heather. Rachel was an elementary school teacher and Heather was one of her co-workers. Oliver asked them if they could swing by the property on the way back. "Great!" They explored the property together, solid forest, pretty much. But there was one rocky place with a view through all the trees. The Joy Cabin (actually a well-appointed log home) now occupies that same spot. Then and there, Oliver began visualizing what they could do with that property. Oliver says, "And this was God." He was thinking, "This is it. This is the place. It's exactly what we want. It has great views, bluffs

throughout, and a seasonal creek bordering the south side. We are close to Fairfield Glade and the interstate. And it's completely remote. It is absolutely perfect."



*EdenRidge Sunset*

So, Oliver signed the preliminary paperwork to purchase the property that day, contingent upon approval of the Mission to Missionaries Board of Directors. The rest of the board would have to visit the property before the purchase could be officially approved.

Chris and Ashley visited the property the following week and were as excited about it as Oliver. By this time their Mission to Missionaries bank account was about \$120,000, after expenses, slightly less than the final purchase price, the balance of which they chipped in. So, they went from \$120,000 to zero balance in their bank account. But this was the first major tangible asset for the retreat center, an amazingly exciting milestone to all involved.



*Mission to Missionaries Acquires Beautiful Land in Tennessee*

### ***God Expands the Team***

After purchase of the property, progress slowed down for a couple of years. They had land. Great! Now what?

Oliver and Mark Maddox, an architect, now married to Heather, and several other friends would go camping on the property. They had a great time dreaming about where they would build retreat facilities. But how would they raise the needed funds to continue?

Not long after the purchase of the land, Chris & Ashley felt the time was right for them to resign from the board. They loved the ministry and believed in the mission, but with two young children and additional responsibilities in their faculty roles at Union University, the timing seemed right, especially since the next phase of the ministry's growth would require leaders that had different experience and expertise.

About this time several board members resigned leaving a leadership void that Oliver had to work through. Rachel contemplates, "Whether it's a business, or an organization or your life, God brings people into your life that you build close

relationships with and later you have to say goodbye to them. It's hard to say goodbye but that's just how life is." When key board members resigned, it seemed like a setback to Oliver; but this also afforded opportunity for additional people to become involved in God's ministry, which is exactly what happened. The Lord provided people with hearts for the ministry at virtually every level of expertise when they were needed.

### *EdenRidge*

When the property was just starting to be developed it was decided that naming the retreat center "Mission to Missionaries Retreat Center" sounded a little awkward, a little too long for a name. Oliver wanted a specific name for this retreat center, especially since he could easily envision additional retreat centers in the future (more about this later). While Mission to Missionaries would remain the parent organization it was felt that the first retreat center should have a more appropriate and unique name.

So, Oliver made it into a "board game," a Board of Director's game, that is. He asked everyone on the board to come up with all the names they could think of, "good ones, bad ones, just list them." Oliver collected all the names submitted by everyone onto a spreadsheet, hundreds of names. He then mixed them all up and had each member pick ten names and put them on a list. Several were on most peoples' lists, which narrowed it down considerably. Then he had each one pick two of the ten names. One name, Eden Ridge, showed up on everyone's abridged list. "It was a perfect name! It immediately struck a chord and everyone loved it, Eden being a Biblical name and place." Gary and Kathy Meier enjoyed brainstorming for the ministry and they were the ones who came up with the God-inspired name.

They didn't know it at the time because the property was so heavily wooded, but there actually is a ridge or bluff that runs

east and west near the southern portion of the property where planning for Phase two construction projects were proposed. This ridge intersects an entry road near the southwest border of the property. Oliver felt that it was quite fitting that there was an actual “ridge” in Eden Ridge. So, the center’s official logo title became EdenRidge, making it a single word or brand.

### ***Infrastructure Development***

It was slow going for a few years. The ministry had to rebuild its financial resources after buying the land. The first major project was construction of expansive infrastructure. A road had to be built, water and electrical power had to be brought on site and an adequate sewage treatment system had to be installed. There was an amusing exchange about that last item. When the property was first purchased, someone asked Oliver, “How are you going to deal with sewage?” His response was, “I don’t know, what do you mean?” “You have to have some way to treat and dispose of your sewage.” Oliver had no idea; he had never thought about that. As it turned out, the lower ten acres of the property were ideal for the drain field of a standard on-site sewage disposal system adequate to serve the development for years to come. Fortunately, God knew about that all along! Sewage was definitely not on Oliver’s mind when the ministry purchased the property. He just thought it “looked pretty.”

By 2009, about four years after purchasing the property, little had been accomplished to improve it in preparation for construction. The ministry had a couple of *faux pas* (false steps). A short temporary road was cut in to reach an area where a large cadre of their work teams from Jackson, friends who would come for camping, cleared small areas near the creek. These areas were later abandoned as potential sites for initial development. The ministry was trying to figure out how the property was going to be developed; there was really no plan to follow. But the workers had a great time together and the people involved became excited about the project.

To get started the ministry hired a local civil engineering company to work on a development plan, an infrastructure plan, and to determine where the road should be located. By this time, they again had a substantial sum of money in the bank, a little more than \$100,000. The infrastructure plan included bringing in water and electricity, installing an on-site sewage treatment system, and surveying the location and construction of the entry road. All these tasks were completed in 2009.

### *The First Buildings*

The year 2009 was an important year, the year of initial construction of infrastructure and buildings. The first retreat building constructed was the pavilion. It was built first so a construction team would have a place to take breaks, cook, eat, and have devotions while constructing the Utility Building, which was the second building completed in 2009.

Part of the cost of the pavilion was paid for using a \$10,000 donation from Grace Evangelical Fellowship in Fairfield Glade. Unfortunately, this church was closing its doors, but they made donations to a few local ministries from funds left after liquidating their assets. Jim Smith, a key Mission to Missionaries Board member at the time, and his wife Karen, were members of this church and were instrumental in obtaining the \$10,000 donation to the ministry.



*The Grace Pavilion*



Gary and Kathy Meier were also very active Board members at the time and organized the team who constructed the Utility Building, the second building completed, where heavy equipment and supplies are stored and where some of the maintenance work is done. Costs were kept to a minimum by using an all-volunteer team for construction.

During construction of the pavilion and the Utility Building Oliver was agitated! He lived in Jackson, almost an eight-hour round trip drive away. Construction had begun on the first retreat center buildings! And he could not be on site during construction. "I couldn't stand not being there. So, I made as many trips as I could over there." Again, kudos should go to Rachel, Oliver's very understanding and supportive wife, for encouraging Oliver to take the time to be there as much as he was.

### ***The First Guest Lodging Facility***

After the Utility Building was completed, no further construction was started until 2011. In this year construction began on the "Joy Cabin," more like an immaculate two-story log home than a cabin, the first guest lodging facility for the retreat center.

Otto Builders, a Mennonite company, completed construction and it was ready for guest occupancy in 2012. The ministry used a five-person team approach to complete this project. Mark Maddox, the architect, and Mission to Missionaries Board member at the time, was the design architect. Oliver felt that Mark's design was "great, well designed, well thought out."

Rachel, Oliver's wife, and her sister Lisa were responsible for all interior decorating, selecting complementary colors, furnishings, artwork, modern and up-to-date appliances, entertainment accouterments, and so on. The Joy Cabin is indeed modern, very comfortable and well-appointed!

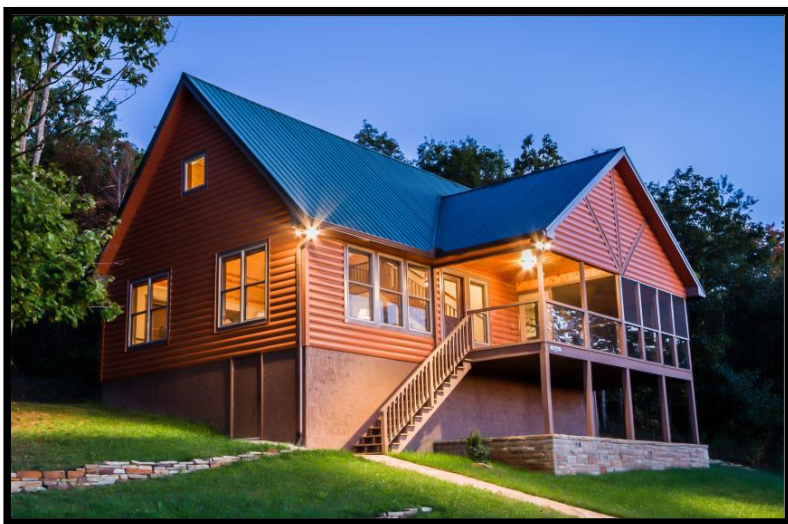
An anonymous donor made a one-time gift of \$50,000 to help support construction of this building. It was that donor's desire that the "cabin" be named the Founder's Cabin. And it was so named upon completion in 2012. In 2015 this cabin was renamed the Joy Cabin as part of the plan to name all cabins in Phase One of development after the Fruit of the Spirit.



*The Joy Cabin*

### ***The Peace Cabin and Further Development***

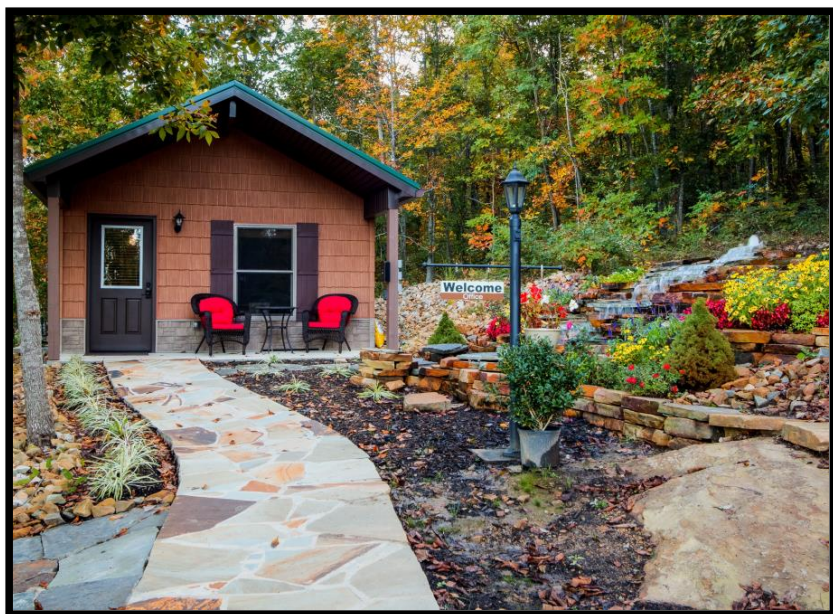
The following year, 2013, the second major guest facility, the Peace Cabin, basically the same design as the Joy Cabin, was constructed and made ready for occupancy. This guest facility is also modern, very comfortable and well-appointed.



***The Peace Cabin***

In 2013 additional construction projects were begun, which included an office/welcome facility; a rock and water feature that complements that building, which has since been converted to another guest lodging facility; a small park and children's playground area; and a fire pit and other accouterments to an outdoor gathering area for guests. These were all completed in 2014.

Further, in 2014, construction began on two more guest lodging facilities, both one-bedroom cabins. These also are furnished with modern conveniences and are well-equipped and very comfortable.



*Welcome Office and Water Feature*





*Playground*



*The Love Cabin*



*The Faithfulness Cabin*

### ***First Guests Arrive***

Another major milestone for EdenRidge was reached in 2012 as guests began to arrive for the first time. Only one cabin was ready for occupancy at the time and Oliver wasn't ready to think of the project as a retreat "center" yet. But he was excited about guests beginning to book reservations.

Soon after the second cabin was opened the ministry began to get enough bookings to justify Oliver contacting missionary organizations from around the country informing them about EdenRidge, which started growing a base list of guests. Oliver wanted them to know "who we are, where we are located, what it costs, all the details about the ministry and the cabins." About the same time, he also set up an EdenRidge website providing missionary guests with facilities information and reservation capabilities, including a calendar showing available vacancies.



*EdenRidge Entrance*

Over the next two and a half years EdenRidge welcomed over 1,000 missionaries from all over the world. In each cabin there was a guest book, and all guests were encouraged to leave personal notes, pictures, brief stories of their families and ministries, and their experiences and impressions of their stay at EdenRidge. It's heartwarming and encouraging reading their comments, some of which are in the epilogue of this book, confirming how this is a place for missionaries to be renewed and refreshed.



*The Phase 1 Site at EdenRidge*

## *In Retrospect*

Countless people have supported EdenRidge's vision with prayer, substantial financial contributions, and with countless hours of volunteer help. Already these facilities have had a tremendous impact on missionaries. As evidenced by statements made by missionary guests recorded later in this book, EdenRidge is meeting the needs of those who stay here. And the best part is, they are so appreciative! This is very encouraging and heartwarming to all those who have invested so much of their lives in Mission to Missionaries and EdenRidge. It motivates Oliver and the others involved to look to the future.

As Oliver explains, "We want to be more than a small retreat center for missionaries. We want to extend our core value of excellence to become a world-class retreat center, always focused on missionaries, as God will allow us to respond to their needs, which will help to enable them to reach the world for Christ."

The situational needs of missionaries have changed considerably over the last century. For example, Ramona Mercer and her late husband were missionaries to Japan for 38 years. She now lives in Jackson, Tennessee and is a close friend of Oliver's. She was one of the first Mission to Missionaries Board members. Years ago, Oliver had the privilege of going on a mission trip to Japan with her. "She's an amazing woman, a wonderful friend. I see her as often as I can." They often had meals together when Oliver went to Jackson. When she and her husband were missionaries in Japan, they had to travel by ship for three weeks to return to the States on home mission assignments (HMAs) or to get back to Japan. At that time airfare was too expensive for them to fly. Those three weeks, however, were a welcome break from the hectic and demanding life of a missionary in Japan. It gave them time to rest, refresh, adjust to "jet lag", regroup and prepare for the tasks and obligations required while on



HMA; likewise, during the return trip to prepare for and begin to adjust to missionary life and duties upon arriving back in Japan.

Missionaries on HMAs may face much more exhausting demands today. They can catch a flight in Japan and be back in the States in about twelve hours, or in many places from Europe be back in about seven hours, with little or no time to adjust to jet lag and virtually no time for rest and recuperation before jumping into the demands of their stateside itineraries. At most it's a day's trip from just about anywhere in the world now. Missionaries get thrown back into their own country, which may not seem like their own country anymore because of cultural changes and because their "new" country is where they are serving. They may struggle with the question, "Where is home?" While on HMAs their schedules are hectic. Even meeting family and friends, that might otherwise provide pleasant interludes, can be fraught with stress because of appointment demands on their very tight schedules. They typically must meet personally with home support groups like sponsoring churches and individual supporters. They may have to develop new sources of revenue to account for increased expenses and the inevitable loss of support. Today missionaries tend to travel more often; one factor, airfare, may be relatively less expensive. But the pressures they must deal with on HMA today are no less demanding than they were years ago.

Another reason EdenRidge must continue to expand its facilities is to meet increasing demand based on requests for family reunions from missionary families that want to facilitate getting together in one place for a few days, as well as the need for providing indoor meeting areas for other groups.

Oliver avers, "We don't want to turn missionaries away, and right now we are turning a lot of them away because we just don't have enough facilities. Our goal is to be able to welcome all Christian missionaries that want to come to EdenRidge."

EdenRidge welcomes all guests who agree with the Ministry's statement of faith. Oliver affirms, "Yes, EdenRidge is, and will always be, missionary-focused. That is the essence of our Ministry's very name. But non-missionaries are welcome and encouraged to come here and enjoy their stay with us."

After formulating the vision for a missionary retreat center, it had taken until 2015, about seventeen years, to establish EdenRidge. The first five years focused on making the ministry known and establishing a base of supporters. The next five years focused on buying land, developing infrastructure, and starting construction of cabins.

By 2018, the ministry had completed construction of six cabins and was welcoming over 1,500 missionaries per year. At that time, Oliver was thinking, "Where do we go from here? How do we start planning for the future?" Shortly after, EdenRidge engaged Missionary Tech Team to assist in developing a Master Plan for future development.

### ***Completion of Additional EdenRidge Facilities***

The Master Plan was soon crafted, and is dynamic, designed to be modified or altered to be able to meet future unexpected or changing circumstances or requirements. During formulation of the plan, the concept of building clusters of cabins was considered and adopted. All six cabins that had been built up to that point are considered to be the first completed "cluster." So instead of continuing to add cabins randomly throughout the EdenRidge property, the concept of "clusters" became part of the design of the Master Plan.

In terms of future growth for the near term, construction of five more cabins was initially considered as the next step to address the pressing demand and need for more cabins.

However, before the ministry proceeded with construction of additional cabins, it was decided that it would make sense to

orient current and future guest facilities relative to a centrally located common area. The common area would be called the EdenRidge Village. It would be located in the heart of the property and more accessible to current and future guest lodging, which would radiate spiderweb fashion from the center of the Village.

So, development focus then shifted to, “What would be the one building to construct next to develop the core of the Village? What would meet the needs of larger groups as well as the needs of the ministry?” For example, EdenRidge needed indoor meeting space for church or business groups, kitchen facilities, a store, a guest reception area, offices, a workshop, clean laundry, and supply storage areas.



*The Welcome Center*

So, Oliver introduced the concept of a multi-purpose building, the Welcome Center, which would “serve as the place where guests could arrive and be welcomed and could hang-out. We used to have to go to the cabins or the pavilion to interact with our guests because we didn’t have an indoor meeting space.”

For some time now, EdenRidge guest cabins are nearly or completely reserved for weeks or even months in advance. The demand is far greater than the ministry's ability to meet those needs. Oliver remembers, "We had not initially planned for space or a building for larger groups." The first time Oliver began to be aware of this need was when one family reserved two cabins so they could all be together. Oliver thought, "That's pretty cool. That family booked two cabins so they could all be here at the same time. But what we didn't have was a place where they could all be gathered together indoors." This need was brought to the ministry's attention when multiple cabins, and occasionally, all the cabins were reserved by a single party.

So, design criteria were added to the concept of the Welcome Center to address this need, a meeting room wing, which could accommodate groups of forty to fifty people, and could be used for family reunions, luncheons, church meetings, business groups and others, just for the day or for extended stays at EdenRidge.

Another wing was added to the design criteria for the Welcome Center to address the ministry's administrative needs. Up until that time the ministry never had a building from which to operate. There were no offices or boardrooms, for example. Oliver had handled administrative tasks from his home or wherever he could throw down his laptop. At that time EdenRidge also did not have a centralized laundry and supply space, nor a space for a clean workshop, for woodworking, for example. To address these needs, spaces were added to the design criteria for the lower level of the Welcome Center. Final design of the building included five sections that would allow the ministry to do things that previously either could not be done or had to be improvised in some way.

The Grand Lobby is the focal point of the building, with a chalet-type glass front entrance facing north and floor to

ceiling glass on the south end of the lobby. The lobby includes a large inviting fireplace, a reception desk for receiving guests near the entrance, well-appointed furniture, a large saltwater aquarium, and, from the covered outdoor deck, a panoramic view of World Missions Park with its three waterfalls cascading over a natural outcropped rock ridge.



The Grand Lobby

The west wing houses the meeting room and adjoining kitchen. The east administration wing includes administration space, offices and boardroom, restrooms, a store, and a resource room. The clean workshop, laundry and supply storage space is found on the lower level. Oliver accurately projected, "This particular building will very much be a game-changer for the ministry." One major reason is because of anticipated substantial increased income from rentals of Welcome Center facilities to accommodate pressing, large group demands, which we could not possibly have met until now.

It took about a year to complete work on the Welcome Center design, and about a year and a half to build it. The Welcome Center officially opened in the summer of 2021.



*Welcome Center Grand Lobby*

## *The First Staff House*

Timing for building the Welcome Center coincided with God's provision for EdenRidge of additional key people, volunteers, part time and full-time employees, initially arriving in 2019, who have helped the ministry move into the next level of excellence. The number of volunteers continues to grow, a supportive force that the ministry had never had before. This was substantially the result of the efforts of Vaughn and Maralee Groen, the ministry's Hospitality Directors, full-time positions, who also coordinate volunteer activities.

In the words of Vaughn and Maralee, they grew up "in the same church in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. Their families knew each other for many years before they were married in 1976."

They "lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan most of their married life where they worked for various Christian organizations, including Zondervan Corporation, Radio Bible Class (now known as Our Daily Bread Ministries), Honey Creek Christian Homes, and Wedgwood Christian Services. Vaughn has over twenty years' experience working with youth, having served in Christian residential treatment agencies and as a youth pastor. Maralee's focus has been administrative, particularly in music production coordination."

They moved back to Wisconsin in 2006 "to serve in a pastor/missionary care ministry. For 12 years we were the hosts, caretakers, and managers of Shalom House, a ministry retreat in New London, Wisconsin. Shalom House was part of Pinnacle Ministries in Mosinee, Wisconsin until it was acquired by Rawhide, Inc. in October 2015." The Groens continued to serve under the new ownership. "Rawhide served at-risk youth, which included intensives [more-involved family therapy] called Parent Weekends for the boys and parents, two weekends each month. [The Groens' role] was serving as hospitality couple/hosts for the parents as [they] welcomed them to

Shalom House, preparing and serving them meals, and engaging them as an evangelistic outreach. God had broadened the ministry of Shalom House from serving His servants (pastors, missionaries, and church leaders) to also serving broken, hurting families without Christ."

Vaughn and Maralee continued to serve at Shalom House until it was closed in 2018. Shortly after Shalom House was closed they began their ministry at EdenRidge as Hospitality Directors and volunteer coordinators.

For some time after the Groens arrived, they had to commute to EdenRidge to carry out their responsibilities. This made the need for staff housing on the EdenRidge property even more pressing. Working closely with the Groens, the ministry designed the first Staff House. It was constructed near the flats on the lower west portion of the EdenRidge property, a beautiful 1,400 square foot, two-bedroom, two-bath house with an expansive view to the west.

### *World Missions Park*

The Welcome Center was built immediately adjacent to a ridge on the property that runs roughly from the higher ground to the east, and westward to a lower elevation. As mentioned earlier, when the property was purchased, Oliver was not even aware that there was a "ridge" on the "EdenRidge" property, a prominent boulder outcrop running through the property at higher elevation. On the ridge near the heart of the property was a relatively open area, the ideal place to develop the Village. The Welcome Center is the first building constructed in the Village. It sits right next to a prominent boulder outcrop on the bluff. This outcrop gave birth to the idea of a park, which grew into what is now World Missions Park, with its own unique identity, in a way. The Park is a tribute to Christian missionaries serving the world over, at home in the United States and abroad.





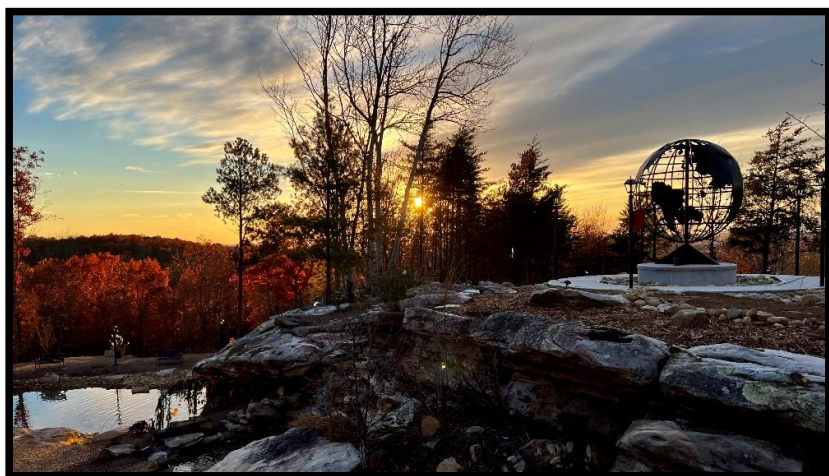
### *World Missions Park*

The Park is landscaped to blend with natural surroundings and includes three waterfalls, a pond, a fire pit structure, and a creek. A prominent world globe accents the Park on the top of the ridge, as a tribute to Christian missionaries, and provides photo-enticing views of the park and its surroundings from the Welcome Center, especially from the covered deck. Visitors are encouraged to enjoy a stroll along the park walkway around the pond with its benches and old-fashioned streetlamp lighting features.



*Eight-foot steel globe at World Missions Park*

At the time of this writing (2022), construction of the Welcome Center, the World Missions Park and the first Staff House are fully functional, and have either been completed, or are undergoing finishing touches such as complementary landscaping.



*World Missions Park*

### ***What's next? Build Five More Cabins***

At teatime (the time of this writing), the next goal for EdenRidge is to construct the second cluster of desperately needed cabins, five more, as tentatively laid out on the development Master Plan. A fundraising initiative has been established and is under way to meet this goal.

Mission to Missionaries' credo pertaining to future expansion might best be expressed in the words of Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver during his inauguration as Union University's 16th president in a special Nov. 7, 2014, ceremony in Jackson, Tennessee: *"Let us not settle for small plans that we can accomplish ourselves and let us not rest on the excellence that has already been achieved. Instead, let's envision a ministry that can only be a reality with God's help and with our sustained best efforts."*<sup>2</sup>

Oliver envisions future expansion on three fronts. First, is expansion of the retreat center to enhance the Village environs near the Welcome Center. Second, to continue developing EdenRidge according to the master plan, which includes building six more clusters of cabins throughout the property and expanding other common use facilities in the Village. Third, a Retirement Village for missionaries, not necessarily on the current EdenRidge property.

This third front is a very real and important need for a great group of people—retired missionaries. It is not unusual for missionaries to make considerable sacrifices to serve life-long assignments and commitments on foreign fields. Invariably, they are people of tremendous character. Typically, they have made choices at great sacrifice to themselves and their families. For example, some have forsaken a life that embraced management positions in corporations and turned down lucrative careers to follow their God given visions. Others have

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<sup>2</sup> Used by permission

left a comfortable life in the suburbs to meet the needs of the poor. Still others have chosen to serve the needy rather than some secular, political or social movement, which may have been noble causes in themselves.

Each story is unique and inspiring and there are many of them but typically not easy to live out. Further, many retiring missionaries have not been able to acquire enough resources to build or acquire a home. Even if they have saved for a house, they may need those funds for other expenses or other purposes. Oliver's thinking is that as missionaries retire, EdenRidge could offer them a very beautiful and comfortable rental place to live in at realistic rates in its Retirement Village that would not only welcome them into a missionary retirement community but also provide opportunity to continue to be involved in missionary work.

Many people who retire from a career typically don't want to just stop working, missionaries perhaps even more so. Some may wish to work as volunteers, while others may have to earn supplemental income. In the future, as EdenRidge continues to grow, staff needs will expand accordingly. EdenRidge will need additional help and could offer amazing relationships between retired missionaries who can be involved with administration, hosting, counseling services, grounds work, maintenance, special projects, or whatever will be needed that involves operating a retreat center. "What would be better for a retired missionary than to be involved in a retreat center for missionaries, by visiting younger missionaries from all over the world?" asks Oliver. "Imagine the attraction to someone like that who would be able to live, retire, and earn a portion of their housing costs by being involved in a missionary retreat center that's on the same premises or close by! As EdenRidge grows the ministry it will also need more and more faithful and dependable volunteers and staff."

Parallel to the continuing development of EdenRidge, Mission to Missionaries is open to opportunities to develop

partnership affiliations with other ministries that have similar values and goals. For example, the ministry is affiliated with Shekinah Ranch near Winter Park, Colorado. Oliver is a current member of that ministry's Board of Directors. Please see the EdenRidge website for details about Shekinah Ranch.

### *Connecting the Dots*

As Oliver reviews the past events that have already made Mission to Missionaries a viable ministry, he thinks of major contributing accomplishments along the way as the dots of a picture puzzle, whereby one cannot see what the image may be like until the dots are connected. He says, "It's hard to see the dots when you're in the dots because you aren't seeing the big picture." He remembers specific defining moments, the "dots."

"I can look back now and see how God has connected dots, the major events leading to where we are today. It starts with my parents learning about God through just the Bible. *Amboise*, France, where our pastor's wife was a missionary and how that led us to the mission field as a family. Then to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and then Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, where I met Chris and Ashley. The great employment opportunities that were offered and accepted. Marrying Rachel. How God gave us each of our children. How we built my business and how it grew to the point that it now supports me and my family and EdenRidge so that I don't have to depend on income from the ministry. How we found the property, which is close to a recreational community and the interstate. Results of our fundraising efforts were amazing. How the various stages of construction were planned and completed. How we obtained Fairfield Glade amenity rates for our guests. And now, we are writing the second edition of the book about the story of EdenRidge. God has connected all the dots so far.

“But the way I see it, we are just getting started. We have a very bright and promising future. I’ve always seen this as my career, so it’s not going to end. Even after I’m gone, we are setting things up so the ministry can continue regardless of who is at the helm. There are a lot more “dots” still to come. We don’t see the other ‘dots’ yet, but God does. Each time we open a new facility or achieve a new milestone, those are more ‘dots’ on the tapestry as the picture continues to grow and we begin to discern what God sees from above. It’s very exciting to be involved with something like this. It doesn’t feel like ‘a job’, it’s not a job, it’s not even a career, but it’s a passion. I feel blessed that I get to come here every day and ‘work’ and meet missionaries from all over the world. And I realize that we are just getting started and we have many more plans ahead for this ministry.”

***Rachel Dossmann***

This story would not be possible or complete without nuances from Rachel, Oliver’s wife. Rachel is tall and slender. She is the kind of person who holds it all together, one who shies away from the limelight yet is a courageous anchor in the storm, encouraging, emboldening, revitalizing, enheartening. You have to see her in action with her four young children to begin to appreciate her quiet strength and patience in the midst of four adorable, young, twirling cyclones. When you enter her home, happy kids full of life and action immediately surround you, greet you and welcome you. Rachel is an attentive and gracious hostess, adroitly juggling the needs of each guest and her own family members like a master of ceremonies. A teacher by trade, she is, in addition to everything else, a skillful homeschool teacher and administrator.

Oliver realizes, “I couldn’t imagine being involved to this level with the ministry if I didn’t have my wife being as supportive as she is. When we moved from Jackson to Fairfield Glade, we left hundreds of friends, hundreds! For Rachel that was especially difficult.” Their children also left many friends, which



must have added to Rachel's angst and burden. Oliver says, "I just want to recognize her as being the pillar that she is. That seems like an intangible concept, but it is very tangible; because of her, I can have my heart in this. It would be much harder to do this if my wife was not behind me and as supportive as she is. Rachel takes care of our four children and homeschools them. She has by far the hardest and most difficult job of the two of us."



*Oliver and Rachel*

## *Petra*

A very significant chapter in the EdenRidge story occurred under its music ministry. As the music ministry continued over the years, under *Epanoui Productions*, EdenRidge continued to record and sell new music albums as well as those that were initially recorded. The last music album that was recorded was a collaborative effort with Bob Hartman, the founder, lead guitarist and songwriter for Petra. Petra is “an American rock music group regarded as a pioneer of the Christian rock and contemporary Christian music genres and was, for many years, regarded as the world’s most popular Christian rock band. Formed in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1972, the band took its name from the Greek word for ‘rock’”.<sup>3</sup>

When Oliver and his parents were missionaries in Ecuador, and Oliver was attending the Alliance Academy, Oliver became aware of Christian rock music, which he had never heard before. At that time, his parents were leery of Christian rock music. To them, that style seemed incompatible with their concept of music. They couldn’t quite get it; how can rock music, which is secular, too loud, and not musically edifying, be Christian? It just didn’t make sense to them.

Oliver’s parents knew that he was listening to rock music with his friends at school, but they didn’t want him to bring it home. There were many Christian rock bands in the 1980s at that time, and the biggest one, the most popular one with stadium-packed events, was Petra.

One day a friend of Oliver’s, Peter Heck, a missionary kid, invited him to his house for dinner and to hang out with his family. Peter’s family had just received a copy of a mini movie that Petra had produced to accompany their latest album entitled “Beyond Belief”. They watched the movie together. The story line was about two brothers, teenagers. The older

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia



brother died of cancer and the younger brother rebelled against God, thinking, “How could God do this to my brother? How could he do it to me?” And the theme of the story focused on the way God restored the younger boy’s faith in Christ.

Oliver felt that the movie was very well done, and throughout the video there were several scenes of Petra musicians performing their Christian rock music. Oliver thought the movie was amazing, “I just loved that movie.” So, he asked his friends if he could borrow the video and take it home to show his parents, as a kind of test case for his folks. He remembers telling his parents, “I know you don’t like Christian rock, but sit down and watch this.” “I just knew they’d like it.”

They did. “They were just blown away. They thought, ‘Wow, what a powerful Christian message.’ The quality of the music was impeccable, the harmony, the powerful lyrics, the video, everything was very professional, very well done, and had a very strong Christian message. That video changed my parents’ minds about rock music. They thought, ‘Wow, that is really awesome!’” That was the point at which his parents began to appreciate the Christian rock music genre, especially Oliver’s dad, Daniel.

Now, fast forward about thirty years. Oliver is checking out of Food City, a grocery store on the western edge of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee. He had befriended a cashier there and would always try to go through his check-out line to chat with him. They’re having a conversation and he asks Oliver where he is attending church services. Oliver tells him the name of the church, then asks where his friend goes. The guy tells Oliver that he goes to a church in Crossville where a musician from Petra plays in the church band. Oliver remembers thinking, “Wow! Really?!”

The next Sunday, Oliver is at that church, by himself, to check it out. At that time, the church was holding services in a movie

theater in Crossville. So, Oliver is seated and looking at the stage wondering, “Which one?” Which one of the musicians was formerly with Petra? There are several young people on stage, but Oliver is thinking that the one he is looking for is probably somewhere in his sixties. There are a couple of guys that might fit that description. Then he’s astonished! One of them resembles Bob Hartman, founder, lead guitarist and songwriter for Petra! So, Oliver pulls out his smart phone and searches for “Bob Hartman.” A picture pops up, and sure enough, the guitar player in the church’s band is Bob Hartman. So, they met after the service and later ended up becoming friends.

A short time after that first meeting, Oliver and his wife Rachel invited the Hartmans, Bob, his wife Kim, and their son Jeff, over to Oliver’s parents’ home so they could become better acquainted. Oliver’s mom, Françoise, suggested that he ask Bob to bring his guitar. After the meal, Bob and Daniel, Oliver’s dad, got out their guitars and began playing together. They were both professional musicians and played together as though they had been playing together for years.



*Kim and Bob Hartman, Françoise and Daniel Dossmann*

That was when it hit Oliver. He thought, “CD! My dad and Bob could make a music album together for the EdenRidge ministry! They played together perfectly, like the professional musicians they were renowned to be. They improvised together as though they had been playing together half a lifetime.” Oliver reminisces, “It was beautiful, just beautiful. Bob had brought an acoustic guitar, even though his primary instrument was electric, and Dad played his classical guitar. They were both in obvious admiration of each other, watching each other as they played, and it was just a very special moment.”

So, here was the man, Bob Hartman, who thirty years prior, had written the songs that ultimately convinced Oliver’s parents that Christian rock music was a legitimate worship genre. Daniel and Bob ended up recording a music album on CD together, entitled, “*Guitar Legacy*,” produced and marketed under *Epanoui Productions*.

That album turned out to be Daniel’s final musical contribution before he succumbed to cancer. Bob Hartman presented a eulogy at Daniel’s memorial service. Daniel’s favorite classical guitar is now on display, enshrined in a glass case in the Grand Lobby of the Welcome Center at EdenRidge. It is a fitting tribute to God’s faithfulness in providing a creative way for the ministry to raise funds when the fledgling ministry had nothing and realized that money could not be raised for something that did not exist, and as a tribute to Daniel’s remarkable life and contribution to Christian worship music.

### ***Bob Hartman***

On July 2nd, 2021, Bob Hartman gave a presentation to the staff in the Welcome Center Meeting Room at EdenRidge. He shared how he came to know about Christ. Then he summarized the story of the founding and metamorphosis of Petra as a Christian ministry. He then illustrated, or drew a word picture, a parallel, between the ministries of EdenRidge

and Petra, and closed by incorporating similar experiences he believes are common to all people who are called by God to establish life-changing ministries. He effectively captured the audience's attention and brought the house down in laughter when he said, "My stage name is Bob. I got it by spelling my name backwards."

### *Bob's Introduction to a Relationship with Christ*

Bob was thirteen years old when he started playing the guitar. He learned from books and by ear, "And boy, it really hurt my ears, too!" In the 1960s the Beatles made their debut and that birthed his desire to learn "pop" songs. So, he was in a lot of bands growing up in high school. At that time, he attended a church that did not preach the gospel, that did not talk about knowing Christ, and did not talk about being saved. But he still had "an acknowledgement of God." He believed God gave him the ability to play the guitar. So before playing, he would thank God for that ability. "I don't know how much that had to do with my calling, or not, but it was the right thing to do."

Bob was in his second year at Kent State University in Ohio when "they started shooting students." The Kent state shootings, also known as the May 4 massacre and the Kent State massacre, were the killings of four and wounding of nine other unarmed Kent State University students by Troop G of the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, in Kent, Ohio, 40 miles south of Cleveland.<sup>4</sup> That summer was the first time someone told Bob about knowing Christ and that he could have a relationship with Him.

A couple of weeks later he was thinking, "Is there really a God?" He thought that as a college student he should be able to make an intellectual argument as to why there could not be a God. But when he realized how foolish that was and just let it go, he said, "Ok, God, if you are still there, I want you in my life." From that moment on he changed. Other things began to change in his life, and he began to see his music in a different

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia, Kent State Shootings, May 4, 1970

light. He thought, "This is something God gave me, and I should use it for Him." So, he started a Christian band. Not long after, relationships in the band fell apart and the band flopped. Then he thought, "Maybe God doesn't want me to play rock music. Maybe God just wants me to play acoustic guitar and have a Bible study." He even sold some of his musical equipment.

### *Bible College*

Sometime later, he received God's call on his life. It was a surprise and had a huge impact, a different call and direction than what he had envisioned—A call to attend Bible college. "I had just finished college. I had a degree in psychology, and I had a fantastic job offer in the County Social Welfare Department. That's something that just doesn't happen right out of college." But the weekend before they called to offer him the job, God called him to Bible college. He declined the job offer, explaining, "God has called me to Bible college." It didn't seem as scary to him then as it does now. Now he thinks, "Was I crazy? Was I nuts? But I knew it was God. So, I moved. I went to Bible college."

When Bob enrolled in Bible college, there were other student musicians who also had played rock music. So, several of them got together and said, "Let's jam." This was during the Jesus movement and the Holy Spirit was moving among these people regardless of their backgrounds and appearances.

While in college, Bob and others attended services at a very "progressive" church, where they did not close their doors to the "hippie movement" people. There were a lot of churches during that time with an attitude toward hippies, "Well, they're not coming here, not until they get cleaned up. If God wants to save them, He's got to clean them up before they get here!" On the other hand, the church that Bob was attending was of the attitude, "We want 'em. Bring 'em. We don't care if they come in without shoes on. We're going to welcome them,

we're going to love 'em, we're going to grow 'em up in the Lord." And his church let them practice with his band, they let them jam. Bob remembers, "We'd be blasting away and I'd see the Pastor come in and he'd be in the back smiling and nodding and I could just read his mind. And I'm sure he was thinking, 'What have I done?! I don't get this.'"

### *Beginning Music Ministry Venue*

They played their rock music well together. And they began to have a dream. "What if we could play rock music for people who like rock but don't care for music that comes out of churches? Maybe traditional church music is a stumbling block for them to hear the gospel. Let's put songs together for the Lord and be prepared for an opportunity to witness to our faith as we go out to play for these people."

During that time there were many unique kinds of ministries, like coffee houses, that came out of the Jesus movement. Bob and his band played in a lot of those ministries in Indiana and Ohio and all through the Midwest area. They played on college campuses, in parks, and in high schools. "At that time, there were actually high schools that liked it." Wherever they played, they would draw a crowd, and they would witness to their faith in Christ.

### *God Expands Petra's Ministry*

As the band played in these various places, they began to receive invitations to play for Christian venues. This was a different situation for them because these audiences were primarily Christians. The band thought that their calling, their vision, was to be a Christian evangelistic outreach to non-Christians. They began to realize that for Christian audiences it would be necessary to incorporate some type of ministering element, ministering to the body of Christ, along with their evangelizing. So, they did, and they began to minister.

Then they began to see their audiences growing larger. Bob relates, "We know the difference between music that edifies and music that doesn't. But we saw a lot of Christians getting behind what we were doing." So, it became apparent to the band that there was a need for Christian rock music, not only for non-believers, but also for Christians, which encouraged them. The band had recorded an album by this time. It had been distributed across the country. As they saw their audiences grow, they began to receive invitations from faraway places.

### *Discouragement and Opposition*

But it wasn't too long before they began to receive some backlash from church people. Bob said, "You know, I have found in my life that one of the biggest obstacles in doing the will of God...is God's people. They often stand in the way of what you know God has told you to do. So, we got a lot of flak and if it wasn't for the fact that the church that we came from loved us and believed in us, we probably wouldn't have lasted. Sometimes it was really bad."

In one example, church people were praying against the band. Bob never imagined that a church could do that. The band saw themselves as a rock ministry, as evangelists, trying to reach people that were probably never going to hear a gospel sermon, but these same people might stand in line to hear rock music and hear something about faith in God. So, to have church people pray against them simply because of their style of music was a crushing blow to Bob personally. He began to realize that in the early days he had to prove himself as a person.

"If today somebody comes up to you and says, 'I'm a Christian. I'm a believer.' You wouldn't hesitate. You would welcome them and embrace them in the Lord. Back then though, we were suspect because of the style of music we played. The fact that we had come out of a Bible school didn't matter. The fact

that we were part of a church didn't matter. The fact that our lyrics were all about the Lord didn't matter. The fact that we witnessed about the Lord didn't matter. People watched us, every move, looking for anything that was inconsistent with our faith." It was disconcerting for them to be under that kind of scrutiny.

Bob recalls, "I can remember working at Goodwill Industries, driving their truck while we were going to Bible College. We were poor and there were a lot of days during those early times when we were really discouraged. At times, I thought, 'Is this really what God called me to do?' Because there was always discouragement and people saying bad things about us. Some said our work was of the devil, and all kinds of negative things. Some would say to us, 'This will never be big. Christian rock music will never work. You guys are just wasting your time. Tone it down! Tone it down! Then you'll be successful.' Sometimes these voices were loud. And when you don't do so well financially, you tend to listen more.

"But we eventually got through that and saw God provide. If it wasn't for the fact that God had called me, and how He always showed us how He was using us, no matter how bad things got, the discouragement might have been overwhelming. But He always showed us. Testimonies would come in, just in the nick of time. And we'd say, 'Ok. We'll go a little further.' Then we would see the fruit of the Spirit, people's lives changed, how people were being blessed by what we were doing. Then we'd say, 'This is what God is calling us to do.' The greatest thing is doing something you know God has called you to do. That's the greatest feeling you can have as a Christian."

### *Similarities of Ministries, Petra and EdenRidge*

Bob believes that all God-called and faithful ministries experience similar events in the process of the Lord's forming them to become effective ministries. We can identify similar parallel elements in the evolution of Petra and EdenRidge's ministries.



### *Receiving a Vision*

For example, Bob thinks that having a vision, “is the beginning of all ministry, where God gives you the vision, except that you don’t know that it is God giving you the vision.”

For Petra, Bob thought, “Wouldn’t it be great if we could be a band that would play and witness our faith to people who don’t know Christ; people who were just like we were before we became Christians?”

For EdenRidge, Oliver was talking to a couple of his college friends and said, “Wouldn’t it be great if we had a place where missionaries could hang out and just relax, where it wouldn’t cost them an arm and a leg, where they could just unwind?”

### *Discouragement*

After a person accepts and embraces God’s call on his/her life and begins to move in the direction of the vision, then comes discouragement. It seems to come right after a person has received a vision.

For Petra, right after Bob thought, “Ok, this is what God wants me to do.” Then the resistance to the vision, the disparaging remarks began. Even from, or perhaps especially from, “God’s people. People who you think are going to support you the strongest, turn out to be the ones who are against you the most. Some said, ‘Don’t do it. Christian rock music will never be big.’” History has proven them wrong. Nothing is impossible for God.

For EdenRidge, Oliver received similar resistance, even from leaders within the ministry. For example, Oliver was told by a particular Christian leader that a missionary retreat center was not a viable idea, that it would be impossible to accomplish, and that Oliver should use his abilities elsewhere. Another example, Oliver thought it would be wonderful if arrangements

could be made for EdenRidge guests to be able to use Fairfield Glade amenities. He was told by someone on the ministry's own board, "It'll never happen!" Not long after, those arrangements were made and EdenRidge guests were encouraged to use Fairfield Glade amenities.

### Confirmation

If you are doing God's will in accordance with the vision He has given you, then after discouragement, God provides confirmation that, yes, this is His will for you.

For Petra, after they experienced discouragement, after they were tested, they began to realize how God was using them. They began to see peoples' lives changed, and how God was blessing people and their ministry. They began to see the fruit of God's Spirit coming alive in the hearts and lives of people who had never before received or even heard about the gospel, the good news, Christ's free gift of forgiveness to anyone who believes in Him, and the promise of eternal life with Him.

For EdenRidge, confirmation came in the form of God providing the right people at the right time to help in specific roles with the ministry; the right people donating to the ministry with the right amount at the right time; anonymous unexpected support at crucial times; and assurance in so many ways that affirmed that, yes, the ministry had made the right choices in accordance with the vision that God had given to Oliver.

### Reality

Reality in this context means more than an extension of confirmation. It's more like a fulfillment of the vision as it has matured and is being lived out in the life of the one who was given the vision; in the lives of those who take an active part

in or support of the vision; and in the lives of others affected by the ministry, those who are ministered to.

For Petra, reality meant, yes, absolutely, “God has called us to this ministry. He has provided. We are conducting our ministry full time. Our ministry is successful. We are making a difference in the lives of people.”

For EdenRidge, reality is that the ministry is, in fact, meeting the needs of missionaries coming from the far corners of the world to be reinvigorated and more enabled to reach the nations for Christ.

### Legacy

Legacy. What we leave behind. “Do we inspire others by what we have done? Does our faith help grow the faith of others?”

For Petra, one band leader came up to Bob and said, “I started this because of you guys.” Bob remembers, “A number of other younger bands came up to us and said, ‘We’re doing what we’re doing because you guys paved the way. You guys made a path for us.’”

During one special event, there were several people from other bands that played heavy rock music that did not really play Petra’s style of music. They were people with metal rings in their noses, in their lips, in their eyebrows, in their ears. “There were no places on their faces that were off limits! Some of those people looked like they were victims of explosions at Home Depot.”

Bob’s first impression was, “Are these people really Christians?” When he realized what he was thinking, he hit himself in the head to snap out of it. He thought, “That’s exactly what the church said about my guys when we first started! After sitting down with these people, talking with them, and discerning their hearts, it was obvious that they

believed that they were doing God's will. They were really loving people. And that was enough for me! We were leaving behind something others could build upon."

Similarly, God is using Mission to Missionaries and EdenRidge to expand its scope of influence by helping other organizations and Christian leaders implement their ministries. In some respects, EdenRidge has become a model for others to follow. Comments taken from guest books in the cabins and other correspondence are ample testimony to the efficacy of the EdenRidge ministry and the legacy that the ministry is building for the future. Please see the Epilogue later in this book. EdenRidge also partners with other ministries that have similar values and goals.



*Bob Hartman and Oliver*

### ***Afterword - Author's Note***

When God chooses a person to accomplish something great, it is always fraught with challenges, and that person may falter a time or two, he/she may even fail a few times along the way, for we all have our human frailties and personal character shortcomings to deal with during God's sanctification process. Whether he falters from time to time or not, I for one believe that Oliver Dossmann will ultimately be remembered as a man of God who was faithful to the vision that God gave to him, Mission to Missionaries.

From the time they open their eyes in the morning until they open them again the next morning, all true followers of Christ, that is, all true Christians are, in a sense, missionaries! All true followers of Christ Jesus would do well to post over the inside lintel of their doorways the reminder, "You are now entering the Mission Field"! The definition of "missionary" for those registering for a stay at EdenRidge, however, pertains more specifically to those who are serving or have served as missionaries around the world in a formal capacity.

One thing all true followers of Christ believe is this: "Now all things are from God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ Jesus and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God through Him. And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain, for He says, 'At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you'; behold, now is the 'acceptable time,' behold, now is 'the day of salvation'" (2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2).

How would you like to live in a place where there is no mourning, or crying, or pain, or sickness, where there is no longer any death? (Rev. 21:4). Christ Jesus promises that you can: "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son [or daughter]" (Rev. 21:7). How do we "overcome"? What is the first thing we must do?

First, we must agree with God. We must admit that we have inherited a sin nature and because of that we have all sinned. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Further, we must accept a gift from God, a free gift, the gift of life, real life, "for the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord...but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 6:23, 5:8). And finally, we must confess and believe, for "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation...for 'whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:9,10,13).

Remember, one major mission or charge that all true Christians have is to present the gospel to unbelievers who are willing to listen. Gospel is a term that means basically, the good news of Christ, the revelation of Christ Jesus. It is found in the Person Himself and testified to in the record of Jesus' life and teaching in the first four books of the New Testament Bible. In terms of presenting the gospel to others, be careful to include the following elements: "...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve...[then] He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). When Jesus willingly laid down His life and shed His blood for you, for me, for everyone, then took up His life again, He paid the ultimate price in our place and promised eternal life with Him, to all

who believe in and accept Him as their Lord and Savior and follow him in obedience to His commands and counsel.

There is no better day than today to receive God's greatest gift and enter into His family.

### *Epilogue*

Comments taken from guest books in the EdenRidge cabins and other testimonial correspondence evince how well EdenRidge is helping respond to the needs of missionaries so they may be more enabled to reach the world for Christ. Following is a partial list.

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We were beyond honored to be your first guests! Our stay was refreshing with many hours outdoors, napping, playing board games and spending time together. We would have never been able to get away with our family while on furlough like this under normal circumstances. We will take with us beautiful memories as we return to minister in South Africa. Thank you!

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We are so thankful for EdenRidge. The Welcome Center is so beautiful, and the staff is so friendly. The waterfall is gorgeous and so peaceful to watch. We loved our cabin and the playground. We loved going swimming at Fairfield Glade beaches and pool! We look forward to hopefully returning, Lord willing, next summer!

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We had a wonderful time at EdenRidge which included getting some much-needed rest before returning to our ministry in Haiti. This is a quality place and we will be back!



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We were refreshed and so blessed by our recent stay in the Goodness Cabin! It was so cozy, beautifully decorated, clean, and well equipped! We rested better than we have in years (with 3 little ones at home)! Thank you so much for making this financially possible for people like us! We pray that God will continue to bless this place and that more people can come and find deep rest like we did!

\*\*\*\*

My husband and I stayed at EdenRidge and absolutely LOVED it. The area is incredibly peaceful and conducive to rest. The cabin was spotless and had everything we needed (so that we were able to pack very lightly, another bonus!). We've already made reservations for a return trip. We highly recommend EdenRidge for anyone who needs to "rest and recharge."

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After a difficult year in Mongolia, we returned for the summer for a short visit. EdenRidge was such a beautiful, restful place. The staff people were so kind when we arrived and prayed for us in a way that touched my heart, even though they had no idea about our experience this past year.

\*\*\*\*

We returned from our second term in Haiti in October. In the past six weeks we have spoken in two colleges and about 14 different churches. We were in much need of rest. The cabin was a perfect place to rest and relax. We want to thank you for creating such a beautiful place for missionaries to recharge. Many times, missionaries get the leftovers, but here everything was done first class and we felt like royalty.

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Through EdenRidge, you minister to us providing us with much needed rest, refreshment, and a place to just be with and enjoy family and God. Your care, love, hospitality, and generosity are so appreciated and encourage us to press on. Together, with you, we can continue joining and being part of what God is doing in Uganda.

\*\*\*\*

This place is a haven! EdenRidge provided exactly the kind of rest we needed – time to be “just us,” time to relax and catch up on things that traveling makes complicated. Not only are the natural surroundings of this place beautiful, but also the Peace Cabin is just phenomenal! It is obvious that every intention was made to make EdenRidge top notch! It truly feels luxurious. No “cheap” stuff here! It really made us feel special and cared for.

\*\*\*\*

This was our last vacation with family before returning to Indonesia. Thank you for providing such a beautiful place for missionaries that can accommodate relatives too! This week will give us so many good memories to share for years to come. Being away from family is the toughest adjustment on the mission field.

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God is so good! He truly led us to this “Eden.” We served in former Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro). We have been literally running on “low” and were praying for a place to rest and get our feet on the ground. EdenRidge is the perfect place for that. Thank you to each one involved in this much-needed ministry.

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It was just a tremendous treat to stay in such an attractive, peaceful, well-appointed place...Here it seems everything has been designed to make us feel valued, and each detail has been thoughtfully provided for our comfort. It has been a rare treat and one we hope to repeat. Thank you! "For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do" (Hebrews 6:10).

\*\*\*\*

Thank you so much for your ministry! We have enjoyed such a wonderful time here over the past four days. Life has been crazy as we came back to the states from Africa, moved several times, and planned a wedding. We weren't sure if we could possibly manage going on a honeymoon, but you provided the perfect opportunity! We are abundantly blessed. Thank you for this beautiful space!

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We were so blessed by our time here. I believe with all my heart that our time here was a gift from God at a very hard season in life coming back from overseas. Thank you to everyone who pours into this ministry...I have so much love and respect for all of you and can't wait for our heavenly parties together! God bless!

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This is the perfect place to come and get quiet time with the Lord in a lovely environment. Thank you so very much for blessing us, and many others with this glorious ministry. It truly ministered to us. We pray that all the funds will come in for the next building phase.

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This place is such an amazing blessing! It was far beyond what I expected or imagined! It is so obvious that care, love, and thoughtful prayer went into everything about this place...from the location of the property to the placement of the cabins and even the layout and décor of the cabins! We felt loved and cared for and appreciated. We definitely felt the presence of the Lord here. Thank you so much for this wonderful ministry to missionaries and people in full-time vocational ministry. We will pray along with you that many people will catch the vision and support Mission to Missionaries and that this wonderful ministry will bless many, MANY more missionaries!

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Many thanks to those who put such thought, time and money into EdenRidge. The facilities are lovely—we are so glad we discovered you! The cabin is equipped in such a first-rate manner, complete with laundry soap, hiking chairs, beach towels, kitchen necessities, worthwhile books, and movies... The Joy Cabin feels just like a home. We will certainly recommend it to fellow missionaries looking for an affordable place to get away! Thank you for the thoughtfulness that is evident throughout every aspect of EdenRidge.

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What a privilege it has been to experience the ambience of this beautiful vacation home prepared so lovingly for missionaries. The attention to detail is so obvious and everything is first-class. We enjoyed preparing most of our meals here and loved the open layout, affording scenic views from almost every angle. This setting certainly promotes rest, relaxation, and freedom from the usual everyday distractions, yet provides all the comforts one would need. We're refreshed by the vision Oliver had to build this type of facility for weary missionaries and the way God has provided so abundantly through the

sacrificial gifts of many. We're thrilled to read the testimonies of others in this book and to hear how many have been served here in a relatively short period since it opened. We praise God for this vital ministry that meets the needs of so many!

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Your ministry was a real encouragement to us. It enabled me to do something memorable with my wife on our 25th anniversary. Our hosts were kind and great. I REALLY appreciated a nice kitchen with all the necessities along with the gas grill, a great touch. When the rain stopped, we enjoyed the water feature and the flowers scattered along the hillside. Everything about the place told me that it was built to last by people who care about quality, about their fellow Christians and about Christ. That's exciting.

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It's been a long time since we have been able to have a family vacation. These past four nights have been so refreshing. We have laughed more this weekend than we have been able to together for a long time. Waking up to a glorious mountain wreathed in morning mist, hiking at a waterfall, listening to the silence...Thank you for such a marvelous getaway. This is such a ministry you have for us missionaries, especially those of us who have had a long, tiring term. As you continue to serve, may you continue to experience the bounteous truth of our Savior's manifest presence. May your joy come from ministering to others as if they are Christ Himself, and may He BLOW YOUR MIND with His sovereign provision. Thank you again!

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EdenRidge is a gift from the Lord. The location is breathtaking. The cabin is gorgeous and has everything you would need and more. You can tell God has provided a detailed vision of this

place. It is peaceful and invites a personal connection with the Lord. We are grateful to the Lord and the Mission to Missionaries organization for allowing us to experience the Lord in this place. May the Lord continue to bear fruit in you and through you as you walk intimately with Him.

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Ps 121:1 "I will lift my eyes to the mountains; from whence cometh my help?" What a privilege to serve a God who is personable and knows our every need and what we need at the right time. Prov. 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." We can trust God for our every need and trust Him in the unknown. God is always there to hold my hand and walk with me. We are so thankful for EdenRidge, and Mission to Missionaries. It has been a special time for us to reflect on Him and enjoy each other. Thank you for the blessing you have been in our lives.

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We thank all who have been instrumental in this project of ministering to missionaries. We have thoroughly enjoyed our brief time here in the Peace Cabin. As we are in a time of transition after serving 20 years in Africa and Europe, this time here has been a time of reflection on years past and prayers for our future. We do serve an awesome God!! May our Lord richly bless all of your efforts as you minister to missionaries in His name. You have certainly been a blessing to us.

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Thank you so much for the way you have honored us as career missionaries with such beautiful and quality surroundings. The view is spectacular, and the way you have thoughtfully prepared this property is masterful. The quality of the building

materials, furniture, decorations, kitchen items, and fixtures honors us and says to us, “you have great value, and we appreciate your service in promoting and furthering the Kingdom.” It’s a labor of love in what you have done. We are most grateful for your service to Kingdom work by serving and caring for us! The peace and affection of Jesus rests on this property. We leave “filled up” and refreshed. May God multiply those who catch the vision of EdenRidge. We’ll be back!

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Thank you Mission to Missionaries! What a stunning facility! You’ve expressed the lavish love and provision of our Father through this facility and your hospitality. We want all those who serve as missionaries to know about this place...we pray for great blessings on you all!

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Love this place, truly God has His hands on this ministry. Thank you for following the dream and vision the Lord gave you for this place. The special touches send a beautiful message to missionaries. Thank you for expressing our worth and value through the quality in the cabin itself – we sense your high regard and feel honored by you. We loved breakfast and dinner on the porch and couldn’t get enough of the beautiful sights and sounds. The creeks, rivers, and hiking trails surrounding this place and this area of Tennessee added a lot too. Our time here was delightful and rewarding. Thank you, Thank you!

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A wise man once told me that the same letters in the word LISTEN were also in the word SILENT. Thank you for providing a facility in which to do both! We were able to find solitude in the whispers that surround us here: the sweet trees brushing



against the wind, the birds singing a morning song, and the lullaby of the bugs in the night. We are REFRESHED!

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The word that comes to mind is “extravagant.” This cabin is extravagant, and it has been a source of God’s extravagant love for me. I feel so fortunate to have been able to stay in such a calm and beautiful place. I was able to spend quality time with God in preparation for leaving for Japan. I was also able to step away from the “to do” list for a few days and find rest. Thank you for the extravagant hospitality.

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After reading the above testimonials, do you think EdenRidge is responding to the needs of missionaries so they may be more enabled to reach the world for Christ? We do! Please pray for this vital ministry and, if God so directs your heart, partner with us to expand urgently needed facilities at EdenRidge.

### *About the Author*

Chuck Hopkins was originally a native of Michigan but has lived most of his adult life in the Pacific Northwest. He is single and has one grown son by the same name (the third) and three grandchildren, Serenity, Jack Xavier, and Chase.

Chuck has a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Michigan and Master of Arts Degree in Biblical Studies from Regent University in Virginia. His primary career was overseeing a major environmental program for the State of Oregon.

Because of his profound appreciation for God's natural wonders, Chuck enjoys traveling and exploring. As a result of his travels, he has developed valued relationships with people from other countries.

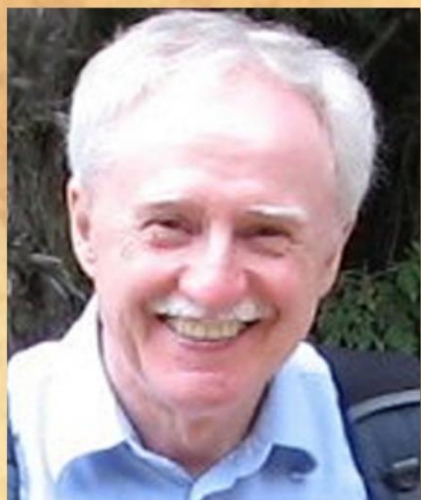
Chuck has a heart for missions and missionaries after visiting third world countries and living in Thailand after retirement. He moved to Tennessee where he was introduced to EdenRidge and Mission to Missionaries and caught its vision and found meaningful relationships with its families and volunteers. He is a member of the Board and author of the book that tells the story of EdenRidge and Mission to Missionaries.



EdenRidge is a missionary retreat center dedicated to providing facilities that offer comfort, rest, recuperation and restoration to missionaries serving around the world. This book is the story of Oliver Dossmann and EdenRidge and how Mission to Missionaries came into being through the vision and passion of a Missionary Kid. It is based on interviews with Oliver Dossmann and others, as recorded and written by Chuck Hopkins.



Oliver Dossmann  
President, EdenRidge



Chuck Hopkins  
Author

Mission to Missionaries

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