

Nov. 11, 1988

Dear Prayer Partners,

Ralph had hoped to write you this time, but once again he hasn't quite been able to do so. In a few hours he should be getting on the plane to return home from Switzerland, where he has been teaching a Dallas Seminary extension course all week on *The Evangelization of the World*.

(*Ralph: I got home just in time to add the little headings—to help you get through this excellent letter.*)

#### **Centers for World Mission now are 40**

The week before he was in Switzerland he was in Singapore for the conference on Centers for World Mission around the world, of which there are now something like 40. Isn't that wonderful? All of these except for two were begun after we got started. One exception is the Scottish Centre for World Mission which was started about the same time as ours but hadn't heard of us nor we of them. The other is a Korean Center. But it is the existence of all the new ones which confirms that God is in this movement, and we are so glad!

#### **Aftermath of the Campaign Miracle**

These last months have been rather strange ones for all of us here. We are still rejoicing in the marvelous miracle God did for us last year, and we are reminded just how much of a miracle of God the whole thing was when we get calls asking us "how we did it." It's hard for people to grasp that we didn't do it... God did! I'm sure the video tapes we sent out all over helped, as well as the meetings, but the most important single thing was that so many, many of our friends were praying for us and showing the video to others, etc. Even so, that still could have fallen flat, as those of you in ministries like ours well know. So there really is no sure answer but God. (Ralph's note: I think it was also in great part the impact of the latest edition of Roberta's book, *I Will Do a New Thing*.)

The situation reminds me of the parable of Jesus about the one trying to get into the sheepfold by going over the wall or around, etc. The only sure way is to be in the will of God and pray and work like crazy. At least that is what seems to me to be true.

However, ever since January a number of us have felt a bit numb. Oh, we've been working hard. I've never had so many speaking engagements so close together in my life, and I come home to a desk piled high with other responsibilities with time limitations on them. (I can understand why Ralph hates to go away!) But a spiritual numbness has been widespread, I feel. It hasn't been a lack of obedience, or anything like that. Just a sort-of "never-never-land" feeling, if you know what I mean.

And then Satan began his three-pronged attack on Ralph. You may remember about his terribly painful neck that he had the first week in May, requiring a neck brace and traction and more medicine for pain than he has taken in his entire life together. As that was beginning to subside—in a few days, actually—he had what the doctors called a minor stroke, for which the cause is still unknown. Although most people would not have noticed any difference at all, it took quite a bit longer—like about two months—before he felt his speech, handwriting and walk were back to normal. (Even yet his walking is sometimes not quite what it used to be.) Then, strike three: we don't know why, but perhaps as a result of some of

the tests or medication or something, along in July he lost most of his hearing. That frustrated him more than anything. But praise God, that too has now returned. Whew!

### **Murder in our midst!**

Meanwhile, our staff has also been going through it: falls requiring considerable medical care in some cases, a run-away daughter who has still not returned, heart catheterization for a young man of only 30 for a possible heart attack (It turned out to be a bad case of flu.), deaths of parents of several staff members, the death (due to cancer) of Jim Stewart, the business manager of Mission Frontiers, and most tragic of all, the brutal murder a few days ago of the 26-year-old daughter of Elsie and Herb Purnell, OMF missionaries on our staff.

(Dr. Purnell is in charge of the Applied Linguistics/Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages department of our university. Several hundred young people who studied with him are now are serving in so-called closed countries overseas.)

Lois Purnell Haro had gone out to buy a baby-shower gift at 7:15 p.m. in the Pasadena mall, and on the escalator there was accosted by two eighteen year olds, who pulled a gun, abducted, raped and murdered her. The shock of all this left us reeling for awhile. But even in this tragic situation God has been gracious, bringing good out of terrible sorrow.

### **We still are in a spiritual battle.**

I guess I'm telling you all this to remind you urgently to not assume that we no longer need prayer. Apparently, we have really just begun to fight. And because of that we realize that the attacks of Satan will get worse, not easier. Ernie Heimbach, also loaned to us by OMF for a number of years, gave us what I believed then, and realize even more now, was a real word from the Lord last December when he warned us that the days and months ahead were going to be very difficult... perhaps not financially, but in other ways. And so it has been.

### **So, PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO PRAY.**

To make our situation more vivid, it might help to read a recent novel on spiritual warfare called *This Present Darkness*. Another called *Angelwalk* has been widely advertized, but I felt it was weak by comparison. But *This Present Darkness* makes very clear the strategic importance of the prayers of even ordinary people like you and me in this battle against the forces of evil. I really mean it when I say we need you to surround all of us with prayer—Ralph and me, all our staff, their children and families as well as ours, our campus, houses, plans and dreams, our work, travel...everything. *Don't fail us. Please pray for us every day. It is our lifeline and our protection. We need you!* As Ralph has often said, these days, we don't want to win the war and then lose the peace.

As far as the campus payment is concerned, though, the peace has come. The final pledges are still coming in. Usually in a campaign of this sort there are a number of unfulfilled pledges, but so far, about 98% have been filled. Even those who because of reverses just can't seem to fulfill their pledges have been more troubled by this than we have been, but we do appreciate their faithfulness to us and to God. But the One who brought in the almost \$8 million last year is certainly able to complete the little yet to be paid. Don't you believe?

## A Horse and Missions

And that reminds me. Those of you who like to watch the Rose Parade on Jan 1st (Jan 2nd this year), watch for the beautiful white with black spots Walkaloosa (cross between a Tennessee Walker and an Appaloosa) horse which will lead the Western equestrian unit in the parade. That horse is the sire of a new breed, and the proceeds from its sale (pray for that) are promised to three different mission groups. I've seen the horse, and what a beauty! And promised to the Lord by the retired minister and his wife who bred him.

## Personal news—for prayer

Can you believe it! For one amazing week we had our entire family here in Pasadena at one time! **Becky and Tim** and their 3 boys and 1 girl are assigned to the international office of Frontiers and also for a short period to relieve the General Director a bit. Tim is working awfully hard, trying to supervise all the teams around the world (there are more than 200 people under his care now) as well as help the General Director here. And with 4 children under 7, it goes without saying that Becky is busy. She is home-schooling Abe, which she will no doubt have to do when they return overseas, wherever their new post (as International Field Director) will be. And she seems so tired so much of the time. They need prayer too.

And **Beth and Brad** with their three are also here, for six months only, I believe. She is also home-schooling Jonathan, who still needs a bit of speech and allergy therapy (He's the one so many have prayed for for so long.), but otherwise is doing relatively well, for which we praise the Lord. The doctor has found two large nodules on Beth's thyroid. (You will remember my story about something similar with me.) I'm praying that the Lord will just heal everything. How wonderful that would be! It is such a drain on one's ministry to have to cope with all kinds of physical problems as well. But then God allowed Paul's thorn. Beth and Brad are increasingly convinced that it is crucial for Muslims to experience divine healing in order for them to believe. I remember the verse which says something about these signs and wonders being poured out in the latter days as a witness to unbelievers. And I can't help but feel they're right. Pray for guidance in this also.

Next Monday **Linda and Darrell** and their two little ones should be coming home from the Centers for World Mission conference in Singapore, which Darrell coordinated. What a blessing it has been for us for God to allow them to stay and work with us at the Center. Linda is one of our best trainers in accounting, and Darrell is virtually indispensable, as Director of Communications, in production of literature as well as a number of other responsibilities which he carries.

And then there are **Todd and Tricia** and precious little four-month-old Laura. They are on YWAM assignment for a year in Singapore.

## The Awesome Countdown of History

Did you read Todd's 32-page article (in *Mission Frontiers*) on A.T. Pierson and the mission goal for the year 1900? The parallels to today are really incredible. And yet, will we be faithful, or like so many Christians in those days, let "the cares and the riches and the pleasures" distract us from the ripe harvest fields all around the world? How easy it is for that to happen.

I should know. In my skimpy spare time I've been trying for months to get things done at home. I feel guilty that I haven't had you over for an evening—or anybody else, for that matter. But I felt I couldn't until certain basic repairs were made. During these last twelve years, I've worked more than a five-day week at

the office, and usually long days at that. And my house shows it. I confess that, for me, housekeeping is not the easiest thing in the world. And our house seems to attract piles of second class mail which takes hours to sort through and toss. But it's the repair, necessary remodeling, etc. that I just can't seem to get to. I don't think it would be wrong to pray for me in that too, please.

But most of all, pray that the Spirit of God will move on our nation and our world. In a time of profound revival God can do in 10 minutes what would otherwise take ten years to do. Indeed, we will never see the world evangelized unless the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of judgment and of righteousness. Oh, that He would do this soon, and in mighty power.

### Here's something unusual

One last little item. A Berber girl from Beth and Brad's town in North Africa has asked to come and visit them while they are here. She is a devout Muslim who makes the trip to Mecca every year. She is also quite sophisticated and well-to-do, a relative of the queen in that country. And according to the terms of Middle Eastern hospitality, they cannot refuse. Yet they live in a missionary community in a two bedroom house with their three children. Her mother insists that she stay with them. Their visas there list them as "rug merchants", which Brad also does. But if she visits there here, will it eventually mean their ouster as missionaries? We don't know. So pray again.

God is on the throne. He knows the answers to all these perplexing questions. I have to believe the day of Muslim response is just around the corner. Dr. McGavran told me yesterday that within the last three years, thousands of Muslims in Bangladesh have turned to the Lord Jesus. And we know that people all over want to know more about Him. They're not that impressed, usually, with the idea of becoming aliens to their own people as "Christians." But they are fascinated with Jesus.

Yours, for the Kingdom's sake,

Roberta and Ralph Winter

**Ralph, now:** I have gotten home just in time to add a note to this letter. I wonder if you have time to read long letters like this. I am the one who has inserted the little headings—so you can follow the drift of the letter.

I have just been looking at a special edition of the Assembly of God's mission monthly, *Mountain Movers*. It focuses on the year 2000 and what ought to happen by then, committing their group to a final push in the next few years. Then, this morning, our pastor, Paul Cedar (at the Lake Avenue Church in Pasadena) told of his special concern that we all live for and live to complete the Great Commission by the year 2000. That is the striking theme that made my course in Switzerland, and the conference in Singapore worth all the trouble. (With Zurich fogged in and diversion to Geneva and then to Zurich again, then to Bern and then to Beatenberg, it was 26 hours straight getting from Singapore to the Bibelschule at Beatenburg to teach this past week!)

Let me add one more item of prayer: at the Center we are undergoing a special renewal effort. I meet first thing tomorrow morning with seven key people who compose a task force to help us pull up our socks—spiritually and in several other ways. More on this next time.