

It's OK to Die

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Where to Start?

“In the beginning....”

◆ August 1980



Background

- ◆ Always primarily interested in the church of North America, but...
- ◆ Always drawn to the “intensity” of overseas work like Adventist Frontier Missions.

The Influence of History

Adventist History

- ◆ **Sacrifice and dedication of our pioneers.**
- ◆ **The “inner battle” of competing influences within the Church.**
- ◆ **The need for something that we’ve never attained, not even back in the days of Ellen White.**

The Influence of History

Anabaptist History

- ◆ *Fire in the Zurich Hills,*
by Joseph Stoll
- ◆ *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren,*
by Leonard Verduin

The Influence of History

Moravian History

- ◆ *Behold the Lamb*, by Peter Hoover



2006

- ◆ **January...**
- ◆ **May...**





2007

◆ **March...**

October 2007

“Entire surrender to the Lord is something that is revealed in the daily life, and it exerts an influence upon other lives.”

—*Bible Training School, May 1, 1904*

To make a long story short...

- ◆ **December...**
- ◆ **March...**
- ◆ **June...**

To make a long story short...

- ◆ **December...**
- ◆ **March...**
- ◆ **June...**
- ◆ **July...**

Why Am I Doing This?

“Entire surrender to the Lord is something that is revealed in the daily life, and it exerts an influence upon other lives.”

—*Bible Training School, May 1, 1904*

And then...

- ◆ **What if I succeed?**
- ◆ **They'd all head off to the Philippines...
or South America...
or wherever...**
- ◆ **and North America would still be here...**

Somebody needs to...

- ◆ **Show that God is just as powerful in North America as He is in the mission fields.**
- ◆ **Show that “extreme faith” isn’t only for brave souls in the third world.**
- ◆ **Show that when God says something needs to be done, He guarantees the result—as long as we go about things His way.**



Two Obvious Problems

- ◆ I'm pretty much a nobody, and what I do or don't do wouldn't have the kind of impact that a project like that would need to have.
- ◆ I don't have any money.

One Real Problem

- ◆ I'm pretty much a nobody, and what I do or don't do wouldn't have the kind of impact that a project like that would need to have.
- ◆ I don't have any money.
- ◆ **My house is too small.**

Larry Cook

- ◆ **Is a contractor/real estate developer**
- ◆ **Had been a serious Christian much of his life**
- ◆ **Became an Adventist about seven years ago**

July 19, 2008



What I Thought...

- ◆ **This guy has no idea what he's biting off**
- ◆ **If you take his ideas, and put them together with my one little idea, you're getting really close to what the Lord has called for "in every city"!**





















d'Sozo

Sunday

10:00–6:00

Monday–Friday*

8:00–8:00

***Friday Closing**

Two hours before sundown

Closed on

Sabbath

(Saturday)









The Final Piece

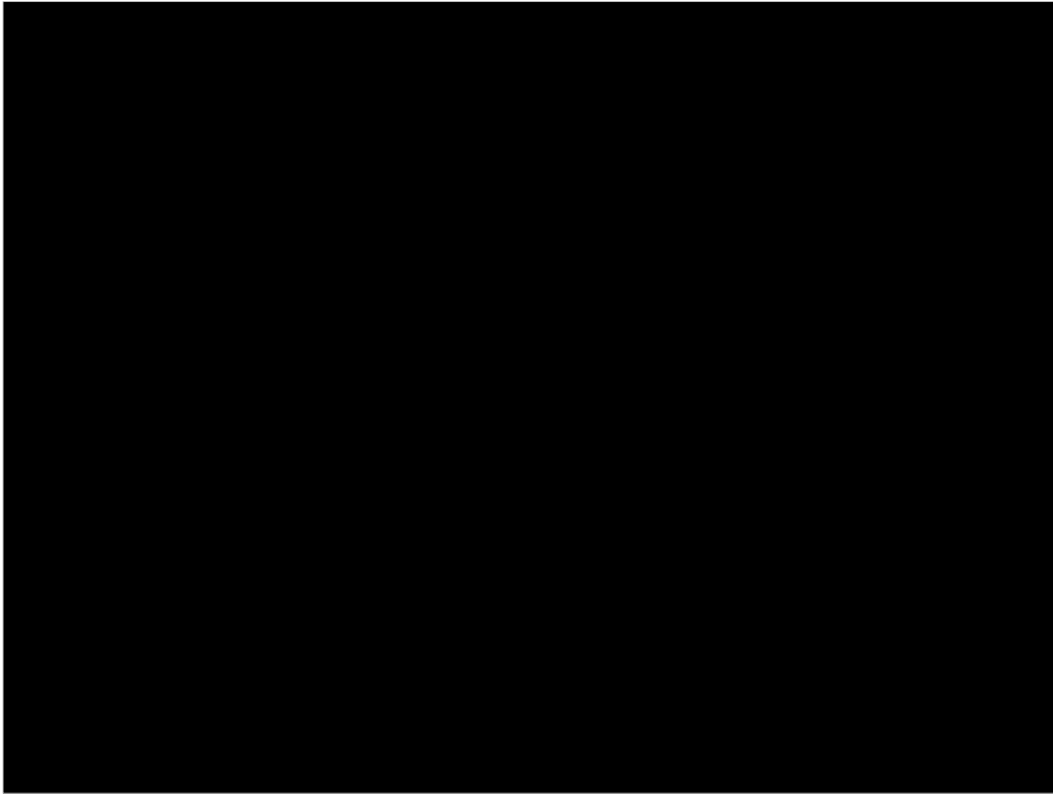












This file was originally prepared by Dave Fiedler, but you are welcome to use, share, or adapt it. Just don't make it heretical. Seriously—don't do that.

If you happen to find additional information that somehow improves this presentation, please be so kind as to email a copy to me at dfiedler@AdventistCityMissions.org. You may also enjoy checking out our website at www.AdventistCityMissions.org.

My book on Adventist History, *Hindsight*, should also be available through that address if you want to plug the book for me. (\$5 +s/h; free s/h on 5 or more copies)

Questions and comments are also welcome, but please don't deprive yourself of sleep or food while waiting for a reply.

Blessings,
Dave

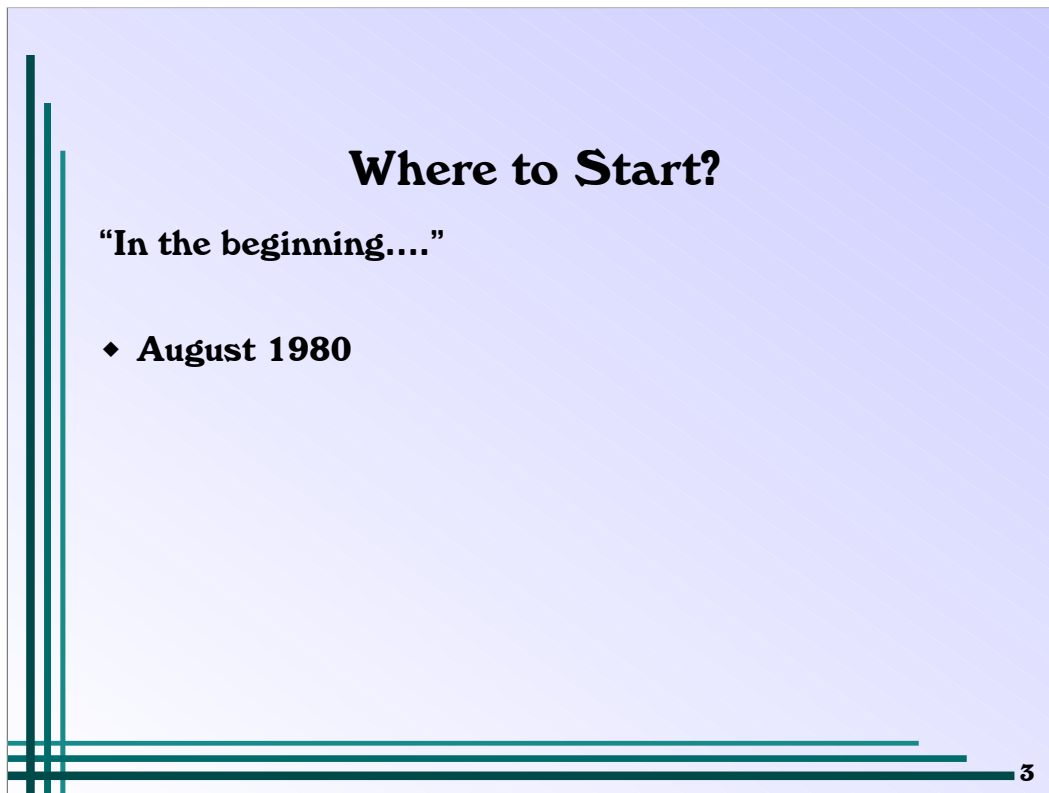
This first page is intentionally blacked out to provide a “blank screen” to be shown before a presentation starts.

The notes for this file are typed out in some length so that readers can more or less re-create the full message of the presentation.

Sometimes there are notes intended to be read **before** the text on the slide, though usually the notes come **after** the text. How can you know? Just look for **CLICK** in the notes. If you see the bright red word, it means that you should read the notes down that far **before** clicking to display the additional content of the slide. In such cases, when you move on from the previous slide you'll see just the heading of the new slide. That's when you read the notes. When you get to the **CLICK**, you hit the button to display the body text of the slide. Any slide with no **CLICK** in it means that you read the slide first, then read the notes, and move on.

It's OK to Die

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY



The problem with stories is figuring out where to start.
It seems like there are always things that have to be understood before you can get on with the tale.
There's really only one perfect opening line for a story, but Moses used it a long time ago.
CLICK

So I'll start with a long story with all the details cut out.
CLICK for 1980

I was in Colorado, and I believed the Lord wanted me to move—at least temporarily—back to Washington. So I packed 14 boxes to be mailed later, and planned to hitch-hike.

Continue with notes on next page



At the last minute, some friends needed help so I agreed to stay an extra day.

Gentleman driving from Corpus Christi to Seattle—by way of Moab, Utah; Mentone, California; and Santa Barbara.

Didn't have time. Needed another driver. I was packed and ready to go. Threw my boxes in the van and took off.

In Mentone we spent a day and a night at the home of an older lady with a heavy German accent. Her name was Leah Schmitke. I didn't know her from Eve. *Hold that thought!*

CLICK

Background

- ◆ Always primarily interested in the church of North America, but...
- ◆ Always drawn to the “intensity” of overseas work like *Adventist Frontier Missions*.

Ever since I decided that Christianity was worth my thought and effort, I've had two sort of conflicting interests.

CLICK for two items.

And my thinking has been molded a great deal by the...

The Influence of History

Adventist History

- ◆ **Sacrifice and dedication of our pioneers.**
- ◆ **The “inner battle” of competing influences within the Church.**
- ◆ **The need for something that we’ve never attained, not even back in the days of Ellen White.**

For me, History has been a blessing.

CLICK

From Adventist History, I suppose I’ve been impressed with three main things.

CLICK—Sacrifice and dedication

CLICK—In other words, “Politics.” Glad I read *Life Sketches* when I was first getting serious about Adventism. There’s a battle going on! and the idea of a huge, peaceful, happy group of people all marching calmly to heaven’s drum-beat is pretty much a myth.

CLICK—unless something changes, everything will stay the same. And that’s failure, so far.

The Influence of History

Anabaptist History

- ♦ *Fire in the Zurich Hills*,
by Joseph Stoll
- ♦ *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*,
by Leonard Verduin

Fire in the Zurich Hills tells the story of the first “Anabaptist” Church in the village of Zollikon, a few miles from Zurich, Switzerland.

Good people who just wanted to follow Jesus and the Bible. But their leaders were killed, and they were imprisoned. They recanted, and were released. Conscience made them stand for truth again, but again they were imprisoned, and again they recanted. Still, some tried to stand. But they failed. Though the Anabaptist movement spread to all Europe, the church in Zollikon died, and never rose again.

Reformers tells the story of the Anabaptists who lived during the later Reformation, persecuted mercilessly by Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists alike.

The Influence of History

Moravian History

- ◆ *Behold the Lamb*, by Peter Hoover



And then I found *Behold the Lamb*. The story of a single church full of refugees who had fled their homeland on foot. In 1732—less than ten years after establishing their new community in Germany—they became missionaries. The first was Leonard Dober, a 22-year-old who went to the Caribbean.

In the next 31 years, that one church sent out missionary after missionary. Seventy-nine died of tropical fevers or were murdered.

But they started churches on St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John's, Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados, and St. Kitts. They baptized more than 4,800. That's 60 converts for each of the casualties.

I learned something important from that book: it's OK to run a risk; it's OK even to die. Some things are worth it.

2006

- ◆ **January...**
- ◆ **May...**



9

George Vigneron, a friend from Oklahoma Academy, went out to Banning, CA, to attend the last session of the Desert Hot Springs school started by Dr. Charles Thomas.

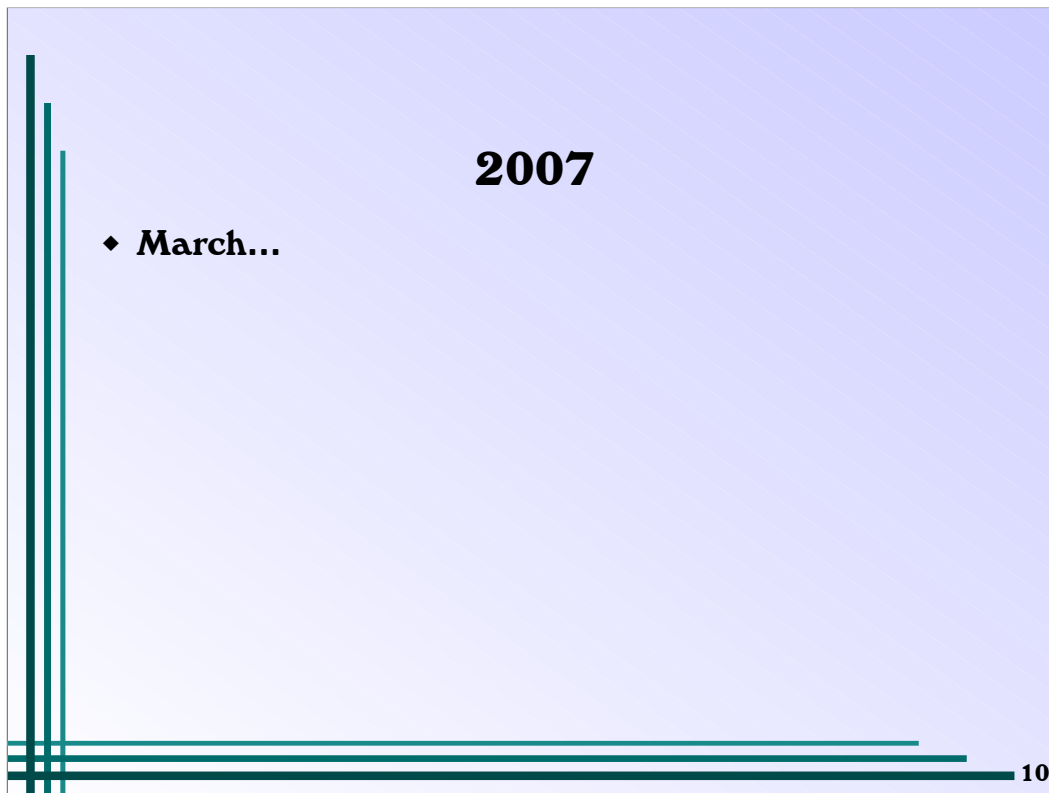
CLICK

When the term ended, and the school was closing down, Mrs. Thomas came to George with a problem.

28 boxes of “stuff” from a “little, old German nurse” who had given her lifework to Dr. Thomas just before she died.

But then he died, and Mrs. Thomas had no idea what to do with it all. Now the school was closing, and she had to get rid of them. Would George take them and see if they could be used to help the Lord’s work somehow.

George hauled them all back to Oklahoma, looked briefly in one box, and stashed them all in a warehouse.



I spoke at OA, and told the story of John Burden purchasing Loma Linda. I happened to mention that the site was originally called “Mound City.”

That reminded George of one of the few things he had noticed in that one box of “stuff” he had looked at. There had been a picture of two guys standing on either end of a sign that said “Mound City.” Now George knew where “Mound City” was.

More importantly, he had a really good idea of how to get rid of 28 boxes of stuff. “Dave likes history. I’ll dump it on him.”

He told me it was all from a little old German nurse who lived by Loma Linda. That rang a very faint bell in my head. And sure enough, it was Leah Schmitke.



October 2007

“Entire surrender to the Lord is something that is revealed in the daily life, and it exerts an influence upon other lives.”

—Bible Training School, May 1, 1904

11

While preparing a series of sermons on practical lessons for today from Adventist history, I used this quotation—

CLICK and read

That got me thinking. I was teaching church school at the time. It was actually my 20th year in the classroom, and I began questioning whether or not that was the best thing for me to continue doing.

Maybe I could do more good by setting an example of something closer to “entire consecration” for my former students than I could by teaching a new batch of kids.

Maybe I should do something a bit more risky.

To make a long story short...

- ◆ December...
- ◆ March...
- ◆ June...

I never had time to look through those boxes. I just stashed them for later. I was busy thinking about doing something other than teaching.

CLICK

Sometime in December, I told the school board that they should look for a new principal. “What are you going to do?” “Probably go overseas....”

CLICK

In March, I called an old friend, Jeff Reich, the director of Laymen Ministry News. Leaving for six weeks, happy to talk with us.

No sense of urgency.

CLICK

School ended in May. By June, it seemed like I really should be figuring out what to do next. Called LMN and GMI....
But no urgency, no desire to get something locked down.

Amazing thing is that my organized wife was still putting up with me.



To make a long story short...

- ◆ **December...**
- ◆ **March...**
- ◆ **June...**
- ◆ **July...**

13

On the 5th of July, I had a Sabbath evening vespers program at church. Told about possible plans. Showed pictures of the Philippines and Guyana.

Still no clear decision.

A few days later, standing at the sink doing dishes, a really basic question came to mind. It probably wasn't the first time I had asked it, but this time it seemed more important, somehow.

It was a simple question, really...

CLICK

Why Am I Doing This?

“Entire surrender to the Lord is something that is revealed in the daily life, and it exerts an influence upon other lives.”

—Bible Training School, May 1, 1904

Not, “Why am I heading off to do mission work,” but
“Why am I leaving North America?”

Again, my mind went back to that quotation from
months before.

CLICK

My real reason for going overseas wasn't the foreign
mission field—as much as I knew that was a good
thing. My reason was to try and inspire my former
students. What I really wanted to do was to “exert an
influence” that would shake up North America.

CLICK

And then...

- ◆ **What if I succeed?**
- ◆ **They'd all head off to the Philippines...
or South America...
or wherever...**
- ◆ **and North America would still be here...**

15

It was nice to have a logical explanation for what I was doing, but it wasn't long until another question popped into my mind...

CLICK

What if my family and I managed to inspire 50 or 100 former students to get really serious about serving the Lord? What would they do?

CLICK 4 times

Not necessarily an inescapable conclusion, but that's what came to mind. And that's when a nearly brand new idea hit me...

CLICK

Somebody needs to...

- ◆ Show that God is just as powerful in North America as He is in the mission fields.
- ◆ Show that “extreme faith” isn’t only for brave souls in the third world.
- ◆ Show that when God says something needs to be done, He guarantees the result—as long as we go about things His way.

READ heading, CLICK 3 times and read items

And then I realized why people *don't* do all this in North America.

In the mission field, you might get some weird tropical disease, or be eaten by a giant snake, or die in a plane crash. But that's all honorable!

If things go really wrong in North America, you don't die, you end up living in a culvert. The effects here are financial more than anything else, and living in a culvert isn't honorable. Nobody wants to embarrass themselves or the gospel. So... we don't take risks.

Continue with notes on next page



Still, I thought, “Somebody needs to do all that.”

And right then I *knew* that what *somebody* needed to do was to revive Company-based Gospel Medical Missionary Evangelism. It was plain as day. I ***knew*** that’s what needed to be done.

God had called for that work (which I’ll spend a good chunk of tomorrow explaining) to be done especially in North America. It was the perfect project!

Somebody ***really*** needs to do that!

And then, *another* new thought—“Why don’t ***you*** do it, Dave?”

Two Obvious Problems

- ◆ I'm pretty much a nobody, and what I do or don't do wouldn't have the kind of impact that a project like that would need to have.
- ◆ I don't have any money.

18

Now, both of these points are valid.

The problem, though, is that those are the kind of objections that “extreme faith” just laughs at... and then goes ahead and ignores.

So... what was I going to do?

Maybe I could start small. Get a real job somewhere so I could earn some money and then get some volunteer Bible workers. Hey, if there are people crazy enough to pack their whole family off to the Philippines on an unpaid volunteer basis, there must be somebody who would come to Wichita!

Room, board, gas money (\$4/gallon)... maybe... but there was one real, practical problem. CLICK

One Real Problem

- ◆ I'm pretty much a nobody, and what I do or don't do wouldn't have the kind of impact that a project like that would need to have.
- ◆ I don't have any money.
- ◆ **My house is too small.**

19

But the good news is that we were only renting. I didn't need to sell a house, I just needed to find a bigger one for rent...

Out in the country... But not too far out...

With space for a garden... And about six cars...

And four or five bedrooms...

And two or three bathrooms...

And really low rent.

I needed to talk to Larry Cook—he knows real estate.

Larry Cook

- ◆ Is a contractor/real estate developer
- ◆ Had been a serious Christian much of his life
- ◆ Became an Adventist about seven years ago

READ

CLICK for 2 items

And he was the only person I knew who might have any clue about how to find a house that just doesn't exist around Wichita.

That next Sabbath, July 12, there just never was the "right" time to talk to Larry. And maybe I was a little chicken. I'd been telling people for months that we were going overseas... it seemed a little pathetic to say, "Well, maybe we'll just move to a new house, instead."

But, a week later, CLICK



July 19, 2008

21

I watched all day for the right time to talk to Larry.

Spent all day at church, went to an afternoon study group he was involved in, but no good opportunity.

Vespers that evening. All done. People going home.

Larry and another gentleman were carrying a table out of the sanctuary to put it away, so I followed them.

As they went through the church lobby, Larry looked back and saw me. Thought I was heading out the door, so he said, "Hey Dave, hold on a minute. I've got a question to ask you."

Seemed like a good opening, so I said, "And I've got a question for you to."

Continue with notes on next page



As long as I've been here, I've heard people talk about country living, and health food stores, and vegetarian restaurants—but nobody's doing it. I don't do well with talking, I'm more of a "get on with it" kind of guy.

So I want to start a vegetarian restaurant. And it's got to be done right, because it's the Lord's work.

But I don't know how to do that, and I don't know all the counsels. I haven't even read the *Testimonies* all the way yet.

In my business there are lots of things I don't know how to do.

But I don't have to know everything; I just need to know how to hire guys who know how to do what I need done!

So I've been asking the Lord who could help me get this off on the right track, and your name keeps coming to mind. I know you're going overseas, but if you're going to be around for even another week or two, could I hire you to help me get started?

And I want to start a sanitarium out in the country. I'm closing on 160 acres about 65 miles east of town this next Wednesday.

So, what do you think?

What I Thought...

- ◆ **This guy has no idea what he's biting off**
- ◆ **If you take his ideas, and put them together with my one little idea, you're getting really close to what the Lord has called for "in every city"!**

23

Now, for better or for worse, I've pretty much spent my life in Adventist institutions of one sort or another ever since I went away to school when I was 13.

Along the way, I've learned a few things in regard to institutional administration, and the first thing that popped into my mind was...

CLICK

But my second thought was...

CLICK and READ

And so we worked for a year and a half to take...



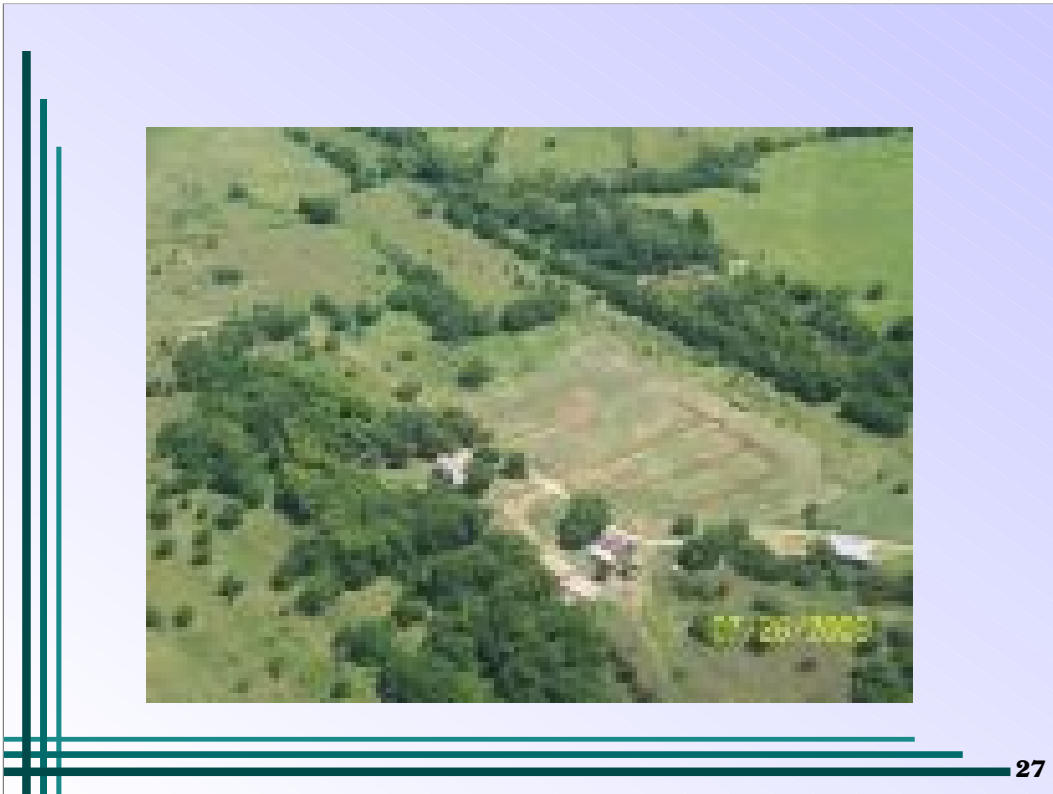
...this house, and turn it into...



...this house, which sits on...



...this farm.



Here's a shot at the time we were putting in the irrigation system. For scale, the irrigated field is probably about eight acres, and the whole farm is 164 acres.

But Larry also had a building in town all ready to lease out to customers since that's the way he made his living...



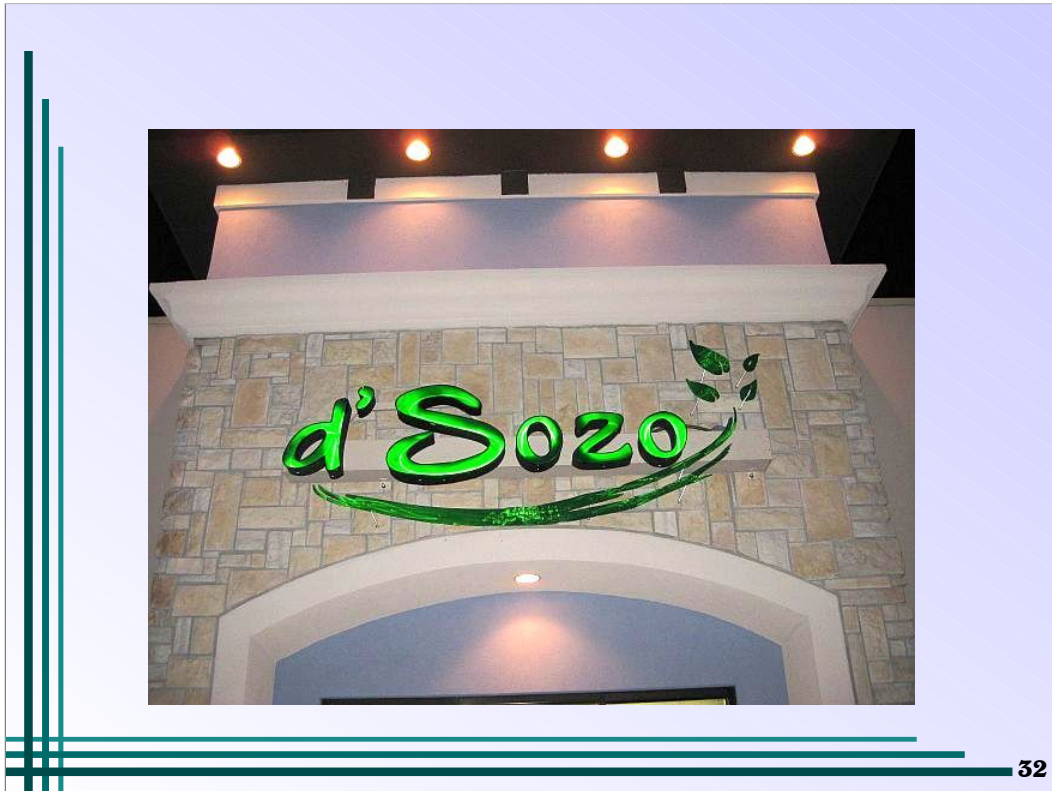
...and we thought it might make a good restaurant.



So we started from scratch, and turned it into...







...d'Sozo—which is based on a Greek root word used in the New Testament to mean both physical healing and spiritual salvation. We kind of like the name.

d'Sozo

Sunday
10:00–6:00

Monday–Friday*
8:00–8:00

***Friday Closing**
Two hours before sundown

Closed on
Sabbath
(Saturday)

33

This is one of our most effective witnessing tools, and we have never yet had a negative reaction to it.



It can seat about 60...



And has a nice, big open kitchen so all the customers can see what's going on with their food.

This is Veronica Jenkins, our head waitress and Bible worker.



And this is Jordan Fowler, our head baker and Bible worker.



And this is our Chef—Miguel Larcher—the only French-trained Chef in Wichita. And—since we are a vegan establishment—we like to point out that after three years of study in his native Martinique, he served a two-year apprenticeship in Nice, France, working under Jean Montaguard, the only vegan chef to ever win the Cordon d’Or.

Basically, that means he knows all about fancy-schmancy.

Plus he worked as a Bible worker for one year up in the Michigan Conference.

So the Lord pulled together a lot of pieces. But there was one more...

The Final Piece



38

About a month after starting in on all this, I finally got around to looking through those 28 boxes.

What I found was a gold mine of information about the development of Adventist “Medical Missionary Work,” largely through the skill and vision of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg. But it turns out that Kellogg faced bitter opposition from some elements of church leadership. (Ellen White says some of the ministers “made war upon” him.) That opposition eventually made Kellogg mad, and directly contributed to his eventual apostasy. And when he left the church, the church quite quickly abandoned most of the work God had used him to start. And that was a mistake.

Continue with notes on next page



It was a classic case of babies and bathwater.

So... why do I think “Wellness Reformation” is a great idea? And why am I thrilled to be here? Because God has a plan to make things happen on this old world, and I want to be a part of it! And you should too!



40

And that's more or less where my family and I are now. So far, we haven't been eaten by giant snakes, nor afflicted with tropical diseases, nor forced to live in a culvert.

We **have** been hammered with financial issues, because that's just the way things work. About a month after we opened the restaurant, the economy crashed. Larry went almost a full year without a single construction job.

That left the restaurant pretty much all on its own financially, which isn't really good in a business that all but guarantees you'll lose money for at least the first two years.

Continue with notes on next page



Larry put every piece of property he had up for sale, but the only thing that sold was his house. So he moved out to the farm.

Then the government told us it was illegal to have volunteer workers, so our labor costs shot up. The answer is to have a school, where work in the restaurant is just part of the hands-on training. And so is canvassing, and Bible work, and Medical Missionary work.

And when the students have learned enough, they go out and start... not a restaurant, but another school! And the only real product out of it all is souls won.

Continue with notes on next page



In the meantime, we're learning incredible lessons in faith. I have the dubious privilege of pretending that I know enough to be the bookkeeper for the restaurant, and week after week it's looked like we'd be going down for sure. But God hasn't seen fit to let that happen, and I don't believe He will. There's too much at stake.

So what's the take home lesson from all this? Simple.

God's plan for finishing His work on earth combines both physical and spiritual health. He's looking for people—anyone, anywhere—who will take up that approach according to His directions. Why shouldn't that be you?

