

Adela Bajko

In the Shadow of the Almighty

Memoirs

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FOREWARD

“There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

Somehow for me the memoirs of Adela and Paul Bajko are associated with this verse. Although the life of Jesus on earth can hardly be compared with that of any other, it is also true that the Bajko’s many years, so rich in a variety of experiences, both beautiful and useful, cannot possibly be described in dozens of pages. Still, we are thankful for these few memories.

Without a doubt, the establishment of the Church of Christ in Poland, its development, activities, and possibilities would not be so visible and significant today if not for the organization, toil, and dedication of Brother Bajko. As one of many who experienced his immense help, support, encouragement and love, I deem myself privileged and honored that for more than forty years I have known Adela and Paul personally. I could see up close how they lived and served God and people with devotion. Many times they were guests at the Church of Christ in Kolobrzeg and in our home. I also had the personal satisfaction and joy to stay in their home and to visit the Slavic Church of Christ in Baltimore.

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth: “For though you might have 10,000 instructors, yet you do not have many fathers” (I Cor. 4:15). For many workers of the church in Poland, Brother Paul was, is, and remains a good teacher and ‘tireless in work’ missionary, but above all a caring father. But he could not be such without his brave Adela at his side. Of such the Bible says: “...consider the outcome of their life, imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7). This publication will certainly help with this. I am sure that the reading of these memoirs does not need special prompting, for the testimony of faith will be a great inspiration for us today and for our posterity. It is an example of two lives worthy of imitation; for me – an unprecedented pattern.

Presbyter Piotr Karel

Church of Christ in Kolobrzeg

PREFACE

A few years ago at Christmas time my granddaughter, Naomi, gave me a big album entitled, “To my grandchild with love.” She asked me to answer the questions in it so that she could have a clear picture of our lives. This project pleased me very much. I had always tried to familiarize our grandchildren with our family’s past, but the distance between us made our personal contacts impossible at times.

To this day I can remember my mother's stories about her father who was baptized in secret one cold night in an ice-hole because the Russian Orthodox Church was persecuting Protestants. My mother's father was a forest ranger. They lived on the edge of a huge forest and oftentimes at night, especially in winter, they heard the howling of wolves nearby. Once they found the boots of a man eaten by hungry wolves. There were still fragments of his legs inside that the wolves could not eat. One time when my mom and her siblings were picking raspberries in the forest, an enormous bear came out of the bushes. They were paralyzed with fear but the bear looked at them and went back into the forest. My mom's stories fascinated me and I constantly asked for more.

Indeed, I did not have such amazing stories for my grandchildren, but family stories are always enticing, so I completed the album and added some pictures. Then I prepared a copy for each of our grandchildren. I realized, however, that the album included only small snippets of our lives. Perhaps it would be good to write something more extensive?

Lo and behold, a letter came from Nina Hury in Warsaw with the suggestion to write down the memories of our lives. I did not need another incentive. At once, thoughts in my head began to flow one after another and the concept was ready! Writing about myself and recording my husband's memories, my intention wasn't just to acquaint the reader with our past, but also to show how the story of our lives confirms that God keeps His promises. He promised, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). “Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you ... I will carry and save” (Isa 46:4). We have experienced it many times in our lives. We have always trusted the Lord and He has never failed us. And now as we stand on the threshold of eternity, the Lord God still supports and refreshes us, just as the Bible assures, that “those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa 40:31). Hence, the title of these memories is: “In the Shadow of the Almighty,” using the words of Psalm 91.

I cannot finish without thanking Nina Hury and Michal Weremiejewicz. The idea to publish these memories was first born in their minds. I would like to thank them for their encouragement, suggestions, and all their efforts invested in preparing and editing the manuscript. However, most of all I would like to thank our wonderful, matchless God!

Adela Bajko (2013)

PSALM 91

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation."

ADELA'S STORY

In Lodz

Lodz is my home town. I spent my happy childhood and carefree adolescence there. In the church on Abramowskiego Street, I was growing and learning the Truth. I fell in love with the Savior, and in 1936 I was baptized. I was born elsewhere, however, under the “hammer and sickle.” I was born on October 21, 1920, in Saransk in the Soviet Union. My father, Hugo Burghart, was sent to Siberia during the First World War. After the war, he came to Moscow, and while he was working in an office he met Marta Mosalkowska – my mom. They got married there. Since there was a famine in Moscow, they went to Saransk, where I was born. Shortly after my birth, when



I was nearly two, I came back with my parents to my father's homeland – to Lodz.

My daddy was a bookkeeper, managing the department of musical notes. When I was learning to play the piano, I admired him. Though he did not play any instruments, he knew all the composers, their works, all the etudes and opus numbers. He knew all the professors and music teachers and he chose the best ones for me. I learned to play the piano but I never became a virtuoso. I am very grateful to my father for my music education. It proved very useful to me in life. I played for our choir at church in Lodz, then in Germany and America. However, my musical background was mostly useful for translating songs. Without the knowledge of notes and the ability to play the piano, it would be impossible.

In the spring of 1939 I passed my A-level exams at E. Szczaniecka middle school, and in September the war broke out. My carefree years were over. I had plans to study Polish in Warsaw because there were no universities in Lodz at that time, but the war ruined all my plans. In Lodz there was a three-year college called Pedagogium which prepared teachers to teach in primary schools and I entered that school. I remember how proud I was of our hats. In middle school we used to wear berets.

Unfortunately, this joy soon ended. Polish schools were open only until Christmas of 1939, and they were all closed down after New Year's. They wouldn't have survived anyway because even during the first three months of the German occupation almost half of our professors were taken to concentration camps. Germans started the “purge” with the intelligentsia. The deportations



began. Using Polish in public was forbidden, including in the church. Fortunately, our preacher was Brother Wolanski, a Czech. He began preaching in Czech. It's a Slavic language, similar to Polish, so somehow we could understand him. At that time, lots of refugees from the eastern parts of Poland occupied by the Soviet Union were coming to Lodz. There were many preachers among them; they spoke Russian and Ukrainian and they taught in these languages. Only the youth spoke Polish when they had their meetings in the upper room.

Youth is youth. Whether at war or in peace – young people are bursting with life. Shortly before the war, our youth “got old.” They got married, started families, and the new generation was just growing up. In 1936, some of our young people got baptized, including me. In Lodz there was a German Bible Seminary where there always was a group of Slavic students. In the last group before the war there were six of them; one of them, Brother Koretko, vigorously took care of us. He called us his “children” and we called him “uncle.” Under his leadership our “young youth” became very energetic and enthusiastic. Brother Koretko also led a choir and I began translating new songs from Russian and German. I knew Russian from home – from my mother, and German from school where we learned it as a foreign language.

Though I was not a Catholic, I never experienced anything unpleasant at school. I remember when I was in 1st grade a nun who taught us religious class (which was obligatory before the war) tried to convince me that the Catholic Church was the best. But then I did not care about it much; I knew little. My mom told me that I did not have to make the sign of the cross when we prayed the “Our Father” prayer before the lessons. That was the difference between me and the other girls. In the middle school, when my Polish teacher learned I wanted to be a Polish teacher, she warned me that as a non-Catholic I might have problems becoming one. The war changed everything.

I remember such an event: it was the summer of 1939, right before the war. We went on a trip outside the city. We played some games and then sat down to sing some songs. We were a large group and our singing attracted some listeners. Encouraged by that, we kept singing and one young brother took out the Gospel and started preaching and sharing testimonies. Then the mood changed. People began whispering, whistling, and some picked up stones. We heard them yell, “They are Nazis! German agents! Go away!” Stones kept falling. The police came to rescue us. Though we were scared, we felt warm in our hearts. It happened because of Christ and we were “in the shadow of the Almighty.”

The war was still on. Color bands were introduced to label different nationalities and the star to distinguish Jews. Displacements, round-ups, and transports to forced labor camps in Germany began. Food was rationed. Ghettos and concentration camps were created. Life became harder and harder. With great longing we were expecting the end of war.

The end of the war

Finally in 1945 the war was over. The Germans left Poland and another army entered from the other side – the Russians. Plunders and rapes began. Grocery stores, clothes shops, and shoe shops were empty in just a few days. Watches and vodka were the most desired goods. Russian soldiers had a real party!

One power was gone; the other had not come yet – it was a lawless time. There was no one to complain to, no one to look to for help. We lived on the edge of the city; it was the worst there.

I recall someone knocking on our door one night before midnight.

“Open!” More shouts in Russian. We had been asleep. My father got up and opened the door. Two Russian soldiers came in. Ferocious faces, slanted eyes. They walked directly into the room where I and my sister slept. They came to my bed.

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-four,” I answered.

They came up to Kazia, my younger sister. She was terribly scared of them. Her whole body was shaking, and since she was very skinny, she looked sick.

“And you?”

She, poor little thing, was trembling with fear and could not say a word.

“Leave her alone. She can hardly breathe...” replied my father. “She has tuberculosis,” he added, lying.

It saved us. The soldiers got scared of tuberculosis and left. They went to our neighbors and raped their two teenage daughters....

On another occasion they came looking for vodka.

“Give us vodka!”

“We don’t have it. We don’t drink,” says my mom.

“You’re lying!”

They searched all the cabinets and shelves. Found nothing.

“How come you know Russian?” they asked my mom, because she spoke to them in Russian.

“I am Russian.”

“What are you doing here in Poland?”

“My husband is Polish.”

“You are a traitor of your homeland! We will deal with you later. We’ll be back.”

In liberated Poland things were not going better, either. One day a friend of mine from the middle school visited us. She was disappointed, bitter, literally in despair. She was in the Home Army.

“The entire war we were hiding in the woods, freezing to death and starving. Now we come home and what? We are being chased and have to hide again...”

There were no prospects for a better life. My parents decided to leave. Many people were moving west; most of them were looters (I learned that new word “looter” then, or maybe it was created then). First we went to liberated Wroclaw. One brother from our church opened a tailoring business in a partly bombarded factory building. Wroclaw was getting on its feet quite fast. Apparently trade between Poland and the Russian zone in Germany was thriving because trucks were constantly going in that direction. Therefore, we got across our western border without any problems. We could notice the difference right away. In Poland there were no problems with buying food; here there was a shortage of food. When my sister and I tried to go back to Poland to buy food, we were not allowed.

In Germany

We had no intention to stay in the Russian zone. We heard that refugees like us were signing up for the American zone. Daddy went to sign up our family. I don't know what made the officers put us on the list. Perhaps it was because they saw a distinguished, serious, older man who spoke to them politely? True, Daddy made a very good impression; people called him "Professor." Anyhow, we were going to the American zone. I remember that trip very well – bombed towns, destruction everywhere. We were going across some river on a bridge. It was nighttime. The bridge had no barriers on the sides. I looked through the window. The train seemed to be flying in the sky. Above us there was dark sky and below us there was black water....

And thus in 1946 we found ourselves in the American zone of Germany in the transitional camp for displaced persons. Life seemed to come to a standstill; we were waiting. Boys and girls from forced labor were waiting for an opportunity to go back home. Those who were escaping the Russians or who did not want to go back to Soviet-occupied Poland were waiting to emigrate. Nobody knew what the next day would bring. We were waiting and with longing in our hearts we were singing:

"Here we lead a wandering life

There in the East our country remains

Sometimes the heart in bitterness cries

When the grove rustles its sad refrain."

But as believers we could make the most of that time. In the camp there were a few preachers from different parts of Poland. They organized a Bible school with a regular curriculum. The teachers included: Brother Gutsche, who was the director; Brother Gordiejew, who graduated from a Bible school in England; and Brother Galustjanc. Brother Gutsche lived in a nearby town and Pawel, who was a student, would bring him to the camp site on a bike. Brother Gutsche was an elderly man with a stiff leg, but somehow he endured those trips on the crossbar. A Polish school was organized. Brother Iwanow, one of the preachers, became the headmaster and I taught the Polish language, mathematics, history, and music. There were also sewing and cooking courses, as well as English courses, of course. The initiators and organizers were usually believers. There were many of them in the camp, both from Poland and the Soviet Union.

We had great services with many unbelievers visiting. There were over a dozen preachers, including Bible school students. They spoke one after another. We had two choirs. One was directed by Brother Poliszczuk and they sang in various camps in Germany. The other one was directed by Brother Byczkowski. We sang really well. On the 3rd of May camp authorities organized a grand celebration. Our choir was invited to lend class to the ceremony. We were wondering what to sing. Our repertoire included only religious songs; we did not have any patriotic songs. Therefore, Brother Kaplicz, a member of our choir, changed the lyrics of one song. Instead of "He has risen, He has risen," we sang "Third of May, Third of May." There was one song we performed with the original lyrics, "Salvation has dawned over Poland.... God is calling us to His great work...." I do not recall the rest of the words but I remember the audience's reaction. People were moved to tears. They interpreted the song calling us to work in God's field as a patriotic call to rebuild the country of Poland!

Paul in the audience

A new stage of my life began. Paul Bajko appeared in the audience – dressed in black – long and thin as a stick. “He is going to break in two at any moment,” I thought when I first saw him. Little



did I know that it would be my job to take care of him in the future.

We were longing to begin a normal life again. Those who wanted to return home had already gone back. The rest were waiting to emigrate. Some were working in the administration; others in a school or in the kitchen. Still others were studying in schools. In our camp there was one primary school, but in other places there were also high schools. We organized trips and church services in neighboring villages where there were similar camps. To some of them you could get on foot. Thus we had youth groups walking from village to village singing songs and preaching the Word of God. Paul Bajko organized all of these mission trips. That's what attracted me to him. He was all over the place, and I didn't miss a chance to go on those trips. And somehow we clung to each other...

But actually it all started with volleyball. Paul Bajko was one of the students at the Bible school in our camp. The students did not study the Bible exclusively. They would get up at 5:00am to play volleyball. Volleyball was the most popular sport, and not only among the students. I was on the field, too. Once I was on a school volleyball squad and volleyball was my passion. And so Paul and I first met each other on a volleyball field. We always played on opposing teams. Paul was the hitter and somehow the ball always hit me. He explained that I was getting in the way of the ball.

In the camp, people were falling in love and building life-long friendships. Some were getting married. Once there were four weddings at one time, including our two conductors, Byczkowski and Poliszczuk. Bible students were sent for an internship to other camps during different holidays. Not all the camps had as many preachers so they gladly welcomed our young brothers. I remember when Paul came back all in bruises from one of those mission trips. What had happened? He was going to the American zone (our camp was located in the British zone). Train transportation was in service, but the train stations had been bombed so the waiting halls were underground. When Paul was in Hannover he went underground, opened his Bible, and started reading. There were lots of people around. A group of youngsters was watching him and began whispering, “A Pole, a Pole,” among themselves. He didn't like it so he decided to go to the platform. He walked up the stairs and they followed him. They surrounded him and started hitting him. Paul was trying to protect himself by swinging his suitcase. Passers-by were looking and nobody even tried to help him. Somehow he managed to escape and got to the platform where there were police and the young people went away. We had heard about an organization “Tod for Polen” (Death for Poles), but this time Paul experienced it in his own skin. What a blessing to be “under the shadow of the Almighty”! Hatred produces hatred. During the war, hurt and tortured Poles promised themselves that one day they would take revenge on the Germans. After the war, defeated Germans were burning with hatred for Poles.

Weeks and months were passing by and finally emigration began. England was the first to open its doors to immigrants. The British needed workers, especially in the textile industry. They announced that single ladies could sign up for a transport to England. Most people were waiting for an opportunity to go to America, but some girls from our camps, including me, my sister, Kazia, and two other believing girls, signed up. At that point Paul Bajko had to overcome his shyness. We liked each other, but no declarations had been made. When he found out that I had signed up to go to England, he probably got scared that I would disappear from his sight. He decided to propose. Sometime later he confessed that he had come close to my house a few times before but every time he turned back. He was either shy or cautious. After all, it was a life-time decision.

He came in the evening, as he often did, but not just him. In two rooms there were four girls and the mother of one of them. Our house was called a 'nunnery' and the boys visiting us were called "monks." We were sitting in the garden. I gave him some pears. I don't know if it was the pears or the moon on a starry sky, but that night we promised each other to spend eternity together. Even as a young girl I used to say that I wanted to marry a preacher. My uncle Mosalkow, who was a preacher, warned me that life with a preacher would not be the easiest. He was right. However, having lived almost my whole life, I can say I would not trade it. We have always felt that we have been "under the shadow of the Almighty."

Shortly after that, I left for England and Paul spent almost five years wandering from one camp to another. But he used his time very wisely. He worked as an evangelist, preaching the good news about salvation in Christ.

In England

We got a job in a textile factory in the weaving and spinning sector. The difficult time of adjusting began, and especially trying to learn English. Together with my sister we lived in a widow's house. She had a daughter our age so we had lots of opportunities to practice our English. One day I tried to describe a picture to our hosts. In that picture, Chopin was composing the Revolutionary Etude. He was sitting at a grand piano and had a vision – the world in flames and in the sky a procession of human skeletons. I was doing quite well until I got to the skeletons part. I got stuck there. I had no idea how to say "skeleton" in English. I tried to explain it – "You know, just bones without people." Evelyn, our host's daughter, burst out laughing. The next day the whole town knew about my "bones without people," and I heard people greeting me, "Hi, bones without people." Such was my English.

At first all the girls from our camp stuck together. There were eight of us: four believers and four unbelievers. We had a chance to speak to them, to witness about God, and to share Bible stories. They willingly listened and often asked, "Ms. Dela, could you tell us some more?" Once during our lunch break we went outside to breathe some fresh air. Suddenly, a strong wind started to blow and it got dark. Within seconds it became completely dark. The girls were screaming, "Ms. Dela, is it the end of the world?" "I don't think so," I replied, but I was staring in the sky, thinking I could see Christ coming on the clouds. After a while it was getting lighter, the girls calmed down and everything went back to normal, but I felt sorry that Christ hadn't come.

Meanwhile, England started accepting men, also. I became hopeful that perhaps Paul and my brother would come shortly. However, we found out that they needed men to work in the coal mines where they wouldn't get out quickly. We did not want my fiancé and brother to ruin their

health in the mines, so I informed them not to sign up for England but to wait until America started accepting immigrants. They did just that. They signed up to go to America, and soon my brother, Wiesiek, came to Canada where he was assigned to work at the construction of the dam in Ottawa.

Paul was still waiting to go. We had better and better news from Wiesiek. They were working in some wild place in Quebec, surrounded by vast woods where they had some barracks and a canteen for the workers. Wiesiek described their first meal on the new continent. There was so much food on the tables that they thought it was a special welcome for them from the Canadians. However, when on the second and third day the meals were equally bountiful and diverse, they understood that it was a normal way of life. In England they still had ration coupons. Comparing life in Canada and in England he wrote, "If you want the family to be together, come to Canada. I won't go to England. Save money for the trip and come. I will help you if needed." So that's what we did.

In Canada

After fifteen months in England, my sister and I went to Canada. We went by ship and then two days by train through wild, unsettled areas of Canada. I will never forget the first impression after the train stopped and we were told it was our station. We got off. It was January of 1949. There was snow everywhere and woods as far as one could see. From a small building at the station jumped a savage in a fur coat with a hood on his head. Was it an Indian or an Eskimo? No, it was our brother, Wiesiek!

"Wiesiek, you look like a savage from the North Pole!"

"Winter here is not what it is in Poland," laughed Wiesiek.

He was with a friend. We got in a car and soon we reached our destination. We noticed that the parking lot was filled with cars.

"What is this? A car station?" I asked.

"No, these are private cars."

"Whose?"

"What do you mean 'whose'? These are workers' cars."

"Workers? They can afford a car?" We were astonished.

"Everyone here owns a car. It's quite normal."

"Not for us."

We started work as waitresses in a temporary camp's cafeteria. We enjoyed it – three siblings together. God willing, Paul and our parents would come soon. We liked it there. The work was light, the food was delicious, and there was lots of noise and fun. There were about six hundred workers – young men, and only twenty waitresses. We were in demand! Two girls got married in a short time. Men were complaining about us, "You miss, won't even let us hold your hand." They wanted to date us. I explained that I had a fiancé.

"Where is he?"

“In Germany.”

“He has many ‘fiancées’ there,” they laughed.

“No. I trust him.”

A few years later, when Paul and I had already been married, I met one of those young workers in Toronto.

“Oh, it’s you, Ms. Dela! How are you?”

In response, I showed him my wedding ring.

“You got married?”

“Yes.”

“Not that ‘fiancé’ from Germany?”

“Yes. That’s the one, though I had to wait for him a long time.”



But let us go back to the Canadian forests. There was quite a large group of Poles. Our brother, Wiesiek, introduced us to an engineer, a director of town planning, a former army attaché and his capricious blue blooded wife, and a bookkeeper. Oh, and they said there was a descendant of the Czartoryski family who raised his little finger in a sophisticated way when he took a dish from the canteen. And there were ordinary young people with no career. We met boys from Yugoslavia. They were in the guerrilla army. They shared weird, terrifying stories. We stuck together. One day in the club room they showed a war film – Polish pilots in bomber airplanes. We heard a Polish anthem so we got up from our seats.

“What’s wrong?” wondered the Canadians.

“It’s our anthem!”

And I was still waiting for Paul. The medical board did not want to let him go – too high blood pressure, they said. In their opinion, he was not suitable for work. I got a letter from him. “Dela, forget about me. As you see, I am a sick man. The board doesn’t allow me to go to Canada.” I replied, “In that case, I’m going back to Germany.” And time was flying. Our parents came. What a joy. The whole family together! “When you left for America we were sure we would never see you again,” my mom confessed. But our merciful God had different plans. They came and even lived to see their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. “Under the shadow of the Almighty....”

Together at last

The dam was finished. We all left for Toronto. There were many believers there and two Slavic churches: Polish and Russian-Ukrainian. We got involved in church life – the choir, youth group. Paul was still in Germany. Finally, after almost five years of separation, I received a message: “The American board gave me permission to go to the US!” And he came – with one suitcase, half of which was letters from me that he had collected over five years. Later, when we had been married for a few years, we had a special ceremony and we burned his letters and mine, for I had also collected all his letters.

He came, but we hadn't met yet. Paul was in Bible college at Eastern Christian Institute in Orange, New Jersey. He was planning to come to Toronto at Easter to meet me. I can still remember that day as though it were yesterday

Easter has come. I leave work early to meet him at the train station. My heart is pounding. After almost five years we will see each other again! How will it be? Will we kiss? I am looking anxiously. The crowd is gradually disappearing. Where is he? The doors are closing. Paul is not here! What happened? I feel like crying. What will I tell my friends at the office? They were excited with me about our meeting after such a long separation. No, I can't go back to work now. I am going home. As I am approaching home, I see a dark head in the window. Who is it? Daddy is grey and my brother is at work... I run up the stairs and Paul welcomes me at the door. He had left the platform by some other exit and we had missed each other.

It was March 1951 and we got married in June. We had a great wedding with bridesmaids and groomsmen. I had a white dress with a long veil. We even went for a honeymoon, although not very expensive – not in Hawaii or Mexico but in Canada, at my friend's. She and I had worked together as waitresses in the Canadian forests. She got married before me and now they lived on a beautiful, big farm in Quebec. There I began making fruit preserves. Walking with Paul in the woods we found a wild strawberry patch. We picked a lot and then I made my first preserves.

We spent two months together. Then Paul went back to the States for school and I stayed in Toronto because I did not have a visa yet. In May, 1952, our first daughter, Iwonka, was born. Paul had exams at that time. My daddy picked us up from the hospital. How his chin was shaking when he held in his arms his first granddaughter! He cried with joy. Paul came a week later. I will never forget him running up the stairs two or three steps at a time to see his daughter! Later he said, "When I saw her, I felt warmth in my heart. I fell in love with her at once!"

Paul finished his studies at the institute and, again thanks to Earl Stuckenburck's efforts, he got accepted to Milligan College in Tennessee. Meanwhile, I got a U.S. visa and in the fall, together at last, we went to the college.



PAUL'S STORY

In Targoszyce

Our family was quite noisy. There were nine of us siblings. We had a small farm and we worked in the field. As the second oldest child I had to help a lot. I started out pasturing cows. I did not watch them carefully and they went into our neighbor's field. He confiscated them and my father had to buy them out. There was no school in our village and I went to the nearby village, Zabczyce, about three miles away. When it was raining, our mom would give us potato bags that served as umbrellas. Life in the 1920's was a bit different from today.

I was born on August 1, 1922, in Targoszyce in the Polesie region. My parents were Grzegorz and Tekla Bajko. I grew up in a Christian atmosphere. Our whole life revolved around the church. My father was the regional presbyter of the Church of Christ in Polesie. I was actively involved in



church life; I went to conventions and conferences. At the age of twelve I already played in the church brass orchestra. We would go to nearby villages and towns and sing at worship services. We would walk on the main road and blow our trumpets. People used to come and ask what was happening and we invited them to an evening service. And many came, even to just listen to us play. After the service, young brothers from our orchestra would go to get acquainted with the young girls and they would leave me behind to keep an eye on the instruments. I didn't like it! My childhood and teenage years is when the first Church of Christ congregations were established in Poland. Brother Konstanty Jaroszewicz had just come from America. He became a Christian in America but he was from Starowies in the Bialostocczyzna region. At that time he began evangelistic work in the eastern

frontier of Poland. I personally knew many other pioneers of our church: Jerzy Sacewicz, Jan Bukowicz, Jan Wladysiuk, Boleslaw Winnik, Nikon Jakoniuk. They were often guests in our house.

My father was one of the first who converted and started preaching the Gospel in our village. Later he was appointed to be the regional presbyter. My uncle, Bazyli Bajko, was a conductor, and he organized conducting courses in my church. In

Targoszyce, my home village, we used to meet in people's homes, but the church was growing and we did not have enough room. We had to start thinking about building a house of prayer. My grandfather, Konstanty Misiukowicz, gave us a piece of land for that purpose and church members started giving generously from their small funds. In 1931, a beautiful wooden house of prayer was built. The same year the first Church of Christ convention took place. We were thanking God for our chapel and we rejoiced over it. In 1961, this house of



My parents – Tekla and Grzegorz

prayer burnt; the communists set it afire. Not until 1997, thanks to Polish Christian Ministries, was a wonderful new chapel built.

In Kobryn

After finishing seven years of primary school, I went to Kobryn where I was learning in middle school. I lived at the Bukowicz' and Sacewicz'. I used to visit the Jaroszewicz' house. A completely new world opened before me. I really liked science and I dreamed of becoming an engineer. My father, though, had a different opinion. "Son," he used to say, "it's a wonderful thing to build roads and bridges on earth, but I'd prefer you build different bridges, those connecting the earth with heaven. I wish you would build roads leading to our heavenly homeland. I would like for you to become a preacher and lead people to Jesus."



Already as a twelve-year-old boy I played in the brass orchestra of the church in Targoszyce. I still have that trumpet – it stands on a rack in my office. (In the picture, I am sitting on the first row, far right.)

When I was sixteen I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior. I was baptized by Jerzy Sacewicz in Brest in 1938. I even tried preaching. I remember my first sermon. I practiced it in front of a mirror for a long time, but when I stood up to preach on Sunday I did not remember anything. I only read the verses I chose and said, "Dear brothers and sisters," and then sat down. The elders, our pioneers, and my father had similar plans for me and they arranged for me to go to a Bible School in England, but I wasn't convinced. I still wanted to be an engineer. Unfortunately, in 1939 the war broke out and ruined both mine and my dad's plans about my future studies. The country was attacked from two sides – in the west by the Germans and in the east by the Soviet Union. Poland, which had just started being restored after a hundred years of captivity, had no chance to stand against such strong opponents.

Our region was first occupied by the Soviet army. The Russians started introducing their own order. The professors from our middle school were deported to Siberia. They were replaced by Russian professors and Russian became the leading language. We also got a new headmaster. Compared to us students in our nice uniforms, he looked somewhat poor in his worn-out suit made of nettle, not of wool. Suddenly the headmaster was gone. He came back a few days later in a new suit. He was quite good to us. "I love you, Poles," he used to say, and often times he rescued us when deportations to Siberia began. The intelligentsia were deported first; that included middle school students as well. They would sent rich citizens, those who refused to join the Communist party, and of course, "enemies of the state." Later we found out that our family had already been put on the list

for deportation and if the Germans had come a week later we would have been in Siberia. In June, 1941, the Germans drove out the Russians and they occupied our territory. We fell from the frying pan into the fire. The Germans closed down all the schools, including ours. I started looking for a job. A new store with herbs had just opened and I started working there. Local villagers brought all kinds of herbs; we sorted and dried them and then they were transported to Germany. The manager was a German man from the Reich – a very good, decent man who was friendly towards local people. The payment for herbs was salt, sugar, and most of all, grease for vehicles, which was hard to get.

It's 1944. The front is moving. The Germans are slowly withdrawing. There are rumors that the Soviet army is approaching. One day our boss appears in the office and says, "The Russians are coming. I am leaving. I've got train tickets. You can take them if you want." We are shocked and disoriented. What to do? My parents tell me to go. Nobody knows what will happen. We've been on the list to Siberia before. It's either that or be taken to the army. I leave. First I come to Warsaw. I find a Baptist church. There are many people who have escaped from the Eastern borderlands -- about a hundred, all nervous and undecided. What's next? The Germans are escaping; the Russians are approaching. Thanks to Brother Gutsche, a well-known and respected preacher, a factory owner from Germany comes and takes us all to his factory. We leave at the last moment, a day before the Warsaw uprising begins.

Labor in Germany

I worked in a factory twelve hours a day with just a cup of coffee and a piece of bread in the morning and a bowl of watery soup and another slice of bread in the evening. I lived in the workers' camp near the factory. We slept on the floor, on the straw which was literally moving with bugs. Embittered and aggrieved boys wept, complained and cursed. I, on the other hand, after a whole day of work would read the Bible on the straw and pray. At first they laughed at me and threw pillows at me but with time they became interested. "Could you read something to us from your Bible?" they asked. That's how it began, God opened a huge mission field before me.

One day a loud whistle stopped our work.

We are told to gather in the factory square and stand in rows. We are standing still and waiting. Some short, chunky German colonel appears. He walks along our row a few times and points his finger at me and my friend, Stefan Zubilewicz. He orders us to step forward and follow him. We freeze. What will happen? Where is he taking us? What have we done? We go to the train station and travel somewhere for a while. We get off at a little station. We are walking through a forest. There are some buildings – a small factory.

"You will be working here now," says our colonel and introduces us to the supervisor.

"We start work at 6am and finish at 6pm," he says and leaves.

Thus, a new period for us began. On one hand it was better because the work was lighter. The factory produced all kinds of screws for army equipment. On the other hand, it was more burdensome because we had to get up very early to catch a train and get to work by 6:00. In the camp we had breakfast – that black coffee and a piece of bread, and we took a mess kit with that

watery soup plus another piece of bread. After some time, our colonel came to the factory again. He came up to us, said hello, and shook hands with us.

“How is life? Do you like working in my factory?” he asked.

“Yes, we like the job but getting here every day is burdensome,” we dared to say honestly.

“That can be fixed,” he said. “You can live here near the factory.”

He ordered someone to empty a space upstairs and prepare two rooms for us. He gave us a sack of potatoes and some food stamps.

“You will be preparing your own breakfasts and suppers. As for dinners, I will arrange for you to eat in the nearby women’s camp.”

Then he took us to his home for dinner. He introduced us to his wife and he told his two sons to call us Onkel Paul and Onkel Stefan (Uncle Paul and Uncle Stephen). Now heavenly life began for us. The meals in the women’s camp – compared to our camp – seemed like real feasts to us. Later we found out that the manager of the women’s camp was a believer who did not cheat on the workers’ food ratios, as our manager obviously had been doing.

Our wonderful boss told us to take off the letter P (standing for Pole) and gave us special permits allowing us to move around freely. On top of that, we received payment for our work, which for people taken to forced labor in Germany was completely unbelievable. Thanks to those privileges, we started going to different camps each Sunday and doing services there. The majority of people at the camps were young, hungry and cadaverous, depressed, bitter, resigned and distraught, and tired from the hard work and constant air raids. They missed their homes and families. For them, tomorrow was painted in black and seemed hopeless. With such joy and emotion did they listen to the comforting words of the Bible! They desired more and more. Neither Stefan nor I were preachers or pastors. We were just ordinary believers; we felt so weak and unfitted, often times literally overwhelmed with the volume of responsibility for these people. Then I felt the desire in my heart to devote my whole life to serving Christ. “Indeed, you were right, Dad. It’s better to build bridges connecting the earth with heaven than bridges over the rivers,” I thought.

The war came to an end. Bad news for the Germans was coming from the front. Their army was retreating from every direction. The atmosphere was becoming intense. In the labor camps there was excitement. The workers were leaving their work places. There were different gangs wandering around the area, burning down places and pillaging. They came to our factory. Stefan and I were working in our usual work places. They saw us.

“Hi, fellows! Come, let’s burn your German factory!”

“Have you burnt yours already?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Then leave! We will burn our factory ourselves!”

And they left. In this way we saved the factory belonging to a man who had shown us so much favor. The American army came to the area where we worked. We went to meet them. Very quickly

they realized we were not local Germans. They gave us loaves of bread and chocolates. To our joy, they left behind a lot of canned food and other delicacies.

Waiting for emigration

The war ended. Germany had been divided into four spheres: American, British, French, and Russian. Forced laborers were placed in D.P. Camps (Displaced Persons Camps) where they were waiting for an opportunity to go back home or emigrate somewhere. Life in those camps was very good, especially for us young people. We did not worry about the future. We were living and enjoying the present day. Slowly we were forgetting the twelve-hour work day, watery soup, and pieces of dry bread. But not everyone forgot. Soviet authorities were tracing their citizens who did not want to go back home, knowing they would be sent to Siberia. These people were hiding in the camps as Poles, changing their last names into Polish ones and saving their lives that way.

One day in our camp a young girl showed up. She marched in high boots, like a soldier. “One, two, three, four,” called kids behind her. “Poor fellow who has to deal with her,” I thought, but little did I know that I would be that “poor fellow.”



Bible Seminary in the displaced persons' camp in Germany.

Seated from left: Gabriel Boltniew, Jan Marek Gałustians, Waldemar Gutsche, Piotr Gordiejew.

I am standing in the last row, third from the right.

As I mentioned already, life in the displaced persons camp was very good. In our camp there were many preachers from different parts of Eastern Europe. They organized a Bible school that I immediately signed up for and graduated from. I really wanted to deepen my biblical knowledge. I recalled when I graduated from middle school my father wanted to send me to a Bible school in England. Somehow I managed to find the address of that college. I wrote a letter asking if I could be accepted there. They wrote back and informed me that the school had been closed down, but they gave me the address of Earl Stuckenbruck, an American missionary in Germany who cooperated with European Evangelistic Society. They suggested that I contact him. I found the address. The Stuckenbrucks welcomed me very warmly. I did not know English and my German was very poor so our conversation was very “long” and at the end my arms hurt! What I did

understand, though, was that if I could somehow manage to get to America, Earl Stuckenbruck would help me enter a Bible college.

Emigration began and the first group of women went to England, including my fiancée, Dela. When England announced the need for men, I volunteered to go. Before I could get a permit to leave I had to see different commissions. I passed the political commission without any problems, but the medical commission did not give me their permit – “Too high blood pressure. He’s not suitable for work.” In other words, I could stop dreaming about going to England. I don’t know if I really had a health problem or whether I was just so excited about leaving and meeting Dela that my blood pressure went up.

Returning wave

One day I suggested to Stefan that we visit our former boss. He agreed. We packed a small suitcase with food and went. It turned out that they no longer lived in their house which the British had taken for their headquarters. In a basement we found our boss’ wife with their two boys. She was happy to see us. When she opened the suitcase and started taking out cans, powdered milk, coffee, and chocolate, her eyes filled with tears. She cried like a baby, and we cried with her! It turned out that her husband was in captivity.

“Can we help him in any way?” we asked.

“Yes. Write to the authorities and tell them how he treated you.”

We wrote a petition and it helped to release him. I met our colonel one more time. Years later I went with my wife and three children to Poland. On our way back we stopped in Germany to visit Dela’s uncle, Teodor Mosalkow, who went to study in Germany before the First World War. The war ended and Russia was struggling with the revolution, so Teodor Mosalkow never went back to his home country. He stayed in Germany, first working as a doctor, and then as a missionary cooperating with an American missionary, Earl Stuckenbruck.

“Perhaps we could visit my old boss?” I said to Dela when we were in Germany.

“Can you find him? You said the factory was somewhere in the woods....” doubted Dela.

“I can.”

We went with the whole family. The old factory was no longer there but in its place was a new, beautiful one. At a nice, modern office we asked the secretary if we could meet with the director. She led us to his office.

“Paul! What an incredible surprise!” cried the old colonel while getting up from behind the desk. He hugged and squeezed me like his own son.

“Is this your family?”

“Yes. This is my wife and my children.”

He hugged them one by one. A moment later he grabbed a telephone and called his wife.

“Guess who’s in my office?”

She probably mentioned different people because he kept saying “Nein, nein, nein...” (“No, no, no...”).

“Paul Bajko with his family,” he finally announced.

Even standing far from the receiver we could hear her joyful scream.

“Yes, it’s him. We are coming shortly.”

He asked about our luggage and sent someone to pick it up from the station. He took us to his home, which was not the basement or his old little house. He gave us two bedrooms and said we could stay there as long as we wanted. Later he invited for dinner all the important people in town and told them about the suitcase with cans that we had brought to his wife when he was in captivity and she was living in the basement.

“A returning wave,” I thought, remembering the words from the Bible. “Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shall find it after many days.” (Eccl. 11:1)

Finally in America

America finally started accepting immigrants. “We will go to America. President Truman is a believer; he will accept us all.” For me this hope turned out to be true. The American doctor treated my high blood pressure graciously and signed me up for emigration. At last, in December of 1950, I landed on the American continent.

My sponsor was Brother Leonowicz from Passaic in New Jersey. He knew my father personally and he was convinced that he had signed papers for him. How surprised he was when he saw in his house a young man – his son! The sponsor was obligated to support an immigrant for three months and help them settle in during that period. I spent only seven days at the Leonowicz’



because Brother Kitchen, director of Eastern Christian Institute in Orange, New Jersey, came to take me. Earl Stuckenbruck kept his promise and arranged for me a scholarship at that college. And thus, not knowing English, I became a student at an American college. Though I had English lessons at the camp and knew verb forms in all tenses, I could understand very little when someone was talking to me. Therefore I did not let go of my dictionary. I would also read my English-Polish Bible to help myself. There were different situations, sometimes unfortunate, and other times very funny. Students did everything they could to make me feel good in the new circumstances. Once a friend of mine came into my room and said “Paul, let’s go for a hot dog!” I opened my dictionary and looked up “hot” and “dog.”

“These Americans are crazy,” I thought. “Do they want to take me for some dogs?” That’s how I found out about hot dogs, which I really liked at that time.

Living at the campus and being around Americans all the time, I learned English very quickly, but still I had the dictionary at hand, as I do even today. During Easter break I went to Toronto, Canada,

to see my fiancée. After years of writing letters, dreaming and longing, we finally met. We set our wedding date for June 16, 1951, and I went back for a few months to the college in the States.



March 1951 – Together at last!

June finally came – our wedding. There were two preachers: Brother Gordiejew – our friend from the camps in Germany, and Brother Rabucha – a Canadian, because Brother Gordiejew did not have the official right to perform weddings. No wonder we have lived together so peacefully and faithfully for sixty-two years – after all, two pastors “bonded” us. We spent the summer holidays together and at the end of August I had to go back to America, to my college.

In 1952, I graduated from Eastern Christian Institute (they honored my Bible college study at the camp in Germany) and I was ordained as a preacher. Then, whether on the wings of a bird or some other way, I wanted to go to my wife and my daughter, Iwonka, who was born two weeks earlier.



SHARING TOGETHER

In the United States

In the fall of 1952, the three of us went to Tennessee where Paul studied at Milligan College. Paul had two more years to graduate and receive his diploma. He asked the administrative authorities to let him take more classes in one semester. They hesitated. It was against the regulations; besides, Paul did not know English very well. They made an exception and agreed. It was a hard year. Little Iwonka needed constant attention and Paul's only view of the world was from behind his books. Even during the night he would wake up to check in his course books something he had forgotten or hadn't understood, and he had to study with a dictionary in his hand. I cried that my husband didn't care about me; maybe he had

even stopped loving me. He was not interested in our child, either. He took care of her only when I was teaching German, substituting for Professor Stuckenbruck who went as a missionary to

Germany in the middle of the school semester. Paul used to take Iwonka with one hand while holding a book in the other! However, he managed to complete two years in just one school year! That year ended, Paul got his diploma, and ... love returned.

For summer holidays and Christmas we would go to Toronto, Canada, to my family – my parents, sister, and married brother. It was the last Christmas before Paul's graduation. We were going to Toronto by bus....

We are getting near the Canadian border. The way leads along a river. All of the sudden, the bus skids and goes straight into the river. I see as the driver is steering with all his might to bring the bus back onto the road. It saves us because the bus did not go full speed into the river but fell down on one side right on the riverbank. I can hear the water coming inside the vehicle. "We will drown," I thought, because I know that the river is deep, "and thus our whole family will just disappear...." It's amazing that the bus is filled with people and nobody screams. Then I hear, "We are all right. We are against a tree!" Indeed. The fast flowing river does not take us any further. The bus is lying on its side, leaning against a tree.

There were no serious injuries. A few passengers were taken to a hospital, including us. Someone had a broken rib, another one was hurt and bleeding. Paul almost lost his ear. He was sitting by the window and the broken glass hurt his ear badly. I had Iwonka on my knees. She was crying a lot but mostly just out of fear, because she wasn't injured. How good it is to be "under the shadow of the Almighty."

Later an insurance agent contacted us and asked us what injuries we had. We said that by the grace of God nothing bad happened to us except Paul's ear that had been stitched in the hospital.

"What compensation do you expect?" he asked.

"Just the cost of hospital treatment," we replied, looking at each other.

"That's all?"

"And maybe the cost of the dry cleaners because Paul's suit is all bloody...."

"That's all?" asked the agent again.

"We don't know. We have never been in such a situation before. You know better what we can expect...."

He was stunned and kept looking at us, nodding his head.

"I've never met such people before," he said.

The world is watching us.

Polish Christian Ministries

Eastern Christian Institute in Orange, New Jersey, where Paul studied when he arrived in America, offered him a job. It was 1954. He was asked to organize a Mission Department which would prepare students for mission work. He became the director of that department. He also taught "Missions." In 1959, this Christian Institute moved to Bel Air, Maryland, received accreditation and

changed its name to Eastern Christian College. The Mission Department under Paul's leadership became independent and since 1992 it started working as Polish Christian Ministries. For a few years Paul taught Church history, missions, making and broadcasting radio programs, and other subjects. Working for Poland took up much of his time, so he decided to devote himself to it completely and gave up teaching. In 1984, Eastern Christian College gave Paul the title "Doctor Honoris Causa."

Every two or three years we went to Poland, the first time being in 1960. We would visit churches, talk to people, and recognize their needs. After the war, the country was ruined. People were poor and were just starting to stand on their own feet. Everywhere we went the needs were enormous. First we had to take care of the church workers who had to work full time apart from preaching since churches could not provide their salaries. Over the years, PCM was supporting about 50 preachers. Another problem was finding places to meet. Services often took place in people's homes. Many church buildings were destroyed or badly damaged. PCM helped to purchase, build, or renovate buildings.



Polish Christian Ministries has supported churches in Poland, youth camps, an old people's home in Ostroda, and other projects. We have also broadcast evangelistic radio programs in Polish via Monte Carlo. Sermons were not a problem. Paul wrote them down and read aloud, but we wanted to add singing. Our preacher, Adam Korenczuk, sang beautifully in Russian, Spanish, and English, but not in Polish. We had to teach him to read and pronounce Polish words. At times, Adam's little son created some problems. Linda, Adam's wife, accompanied us on the piano and Adam was singing holding his son in his arms. Sometimes, this usually good baby would scream unexpectedly and we had to repeat the recording. From time to time we made a quartet, singing together with different voices and later "gluing" them together. These Polish programs were very popular and we were receiving lots of expressions of gratitude from the listeners. Later PCM invited Brother Boleslaw

Winnik to come from Poland and prepare these radio programs.



Poland is our homeland. It is still close and dear to us. Therefore we have been trying to help our churches and believers, but not only that. We shared in the construction of the Millenium Schools, the Child Health Center, the Memorial Hospital of a Polish Mother, the Dom Polonii in Pułtusk, and the renovation of the Royal Castle in Warsaw. Polish authorities recognized our work and presented Paul the Golden Cross of Merit. In the 1980's when Poland was in crisis, PCM was involved in providing material help for Poland. PCM also organized help for the victims of the flood in 1997.

Councilman Zbigniew Bylica hands Paul the Golden Cross of Merit (1986)

Fundraising for Poland took up most of my husband's time. He would travel to American churches presenting the work of the church in Poland and sharing its needs. He spoke in over 500 American churches, at many theological colleges, plus children's and youth camps. He has driven over two million miles. He used to be away for weeks or even months. His whole life was connected with the church in Poland from its very beginning. In 2001, he published a book called, "A History of the Churches of Christ in Poland." He was an eyewitness to most of the information he presented in the book. One of the chapters is devoted to Polish Christian Ministries, of which he was the director for forty years. He founded it in 1954 and in 1999 he passed his position over to Wayne Murphy. In March, 2013, David Hatfield became the director of PCM. We are glad that the work is being continued.



Wayne Murphy, Paul Bajko, and David Hatfield (December 2012)

Packages with clothes

We sent tons of used clothing to Poland. Preachers and friends sent us names and addresses of people in need – not only believers – and we sent them packages. When we were in Poland people would come up to us and say, "This dress is from you, and these shoes, and the tie, or these clothes...." We received many touching, sometimes amusing, thanks. In a letter from a large family we read, *"The fall was approaching and the beginning of a new school year and our children didn't have shoes. They couldn't go to school barefoot! And that's when your packages came. There were shoes and clothes. I don't know how to thank you..."*

Another letter: *“We received packages from America but we don’t know who sent them. We don’t know anybody there. We were in such need! Someone said that believers had sent these packages. What believers? We were no pagans ourselves! We were told they had been sent by the people of “cat’s faith” (different or worse faith). We found out that there were such people in our area. We searched for them. We went to their service and now we worship God together. We want to thank you wholeheartedly not just for the packages but for your merciful hearts that led us to God....”*



One of the ladies wrote: *“I sold some of the clothes you sent and with that money I bought a cow. Now my children can drink milk, at last! ...”*

Another letter: *“Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thanks to you our children could go to a camp where they accepted Jesus as their Savior. They told us about it. We became interested and went to those heretics. Now as a family we worship God....”*

I used to spend hours in the basement assembling packages. Paul was complaining that he had to try on dozens of jackets so that I could get an idea what would be suitable for whom. I put a letter in every package in which I shared about the love of Christ. Indeed, there was a lot of work, but there was also a lot of joy. We shared that joy with all those who sent us used clothes.

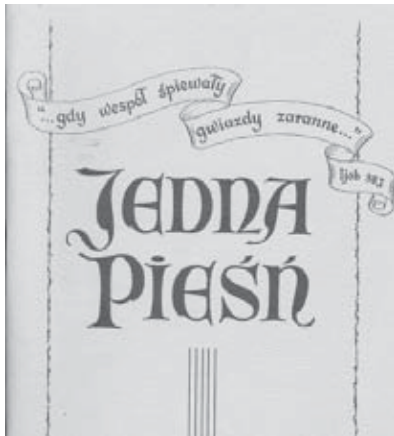
Bibles and Christian literature

We also sent many Bibles and New Testaments. It was in the 1950s. In those times, Bibles were available in the Bible Association but people were not able to buy them. In 1960 we started publishing the monthly “Signpost” and continued doing so until the end of 2012 – in other words, for 53 years. In addition to that, we published books translated from English and collections of poems.

Preparing “Signpost” for shipment. Our children and students helped. Ben Boruszko (first on the left) and Kostek Jakoniuk (first on the right) – 1960.



I mostly enjoyed translating songs. I have always liked music and singing. When I was fifteen I started singing in our local church. We had wonderful songs, but not new, so even back then I started translating songs from Russian and German. In America there were new possibilities for me. I was amazed with the richness of English songs and I got down to translating with great enthusiasm. We bought a note typewriter – a “Musicwriter” – and we began publishing songbooks. First they were collections of short songs – “Sun Rays” part I and II. Later they included longer songs – “One Song” part I and II and a few cantatas. From people’s letters we learned that these songbooks gave them much joy.



One preacher once wrote: *“Our youth were vegetating. During services they sat in the last rows and didn’t pay any attention to what was happening. And then your songbooks appeared. We started learning new songs and all of a sudden our youth came alive. Now they sit in the front rows and sing the loudest...”*

We were told that even pilgrimages to the Sanctuary of the Black Madonna in Czestochowa sang our songs! I remember one time when a brother from Poland visited us. He played the guitar and sang and he shared an interesting testimony:

“I was raised in a Christian home. I went to church since I was a child, went to Sunday school, and then attended a youth group. But with time I was getting less interested in the church. As a teenager I was attracted to other pleasures. My parents were worried; they talked to me, tried to persuade me but with no success. Summer came.

‘Why don’t you go to a summer camp?’ said my mom.

‘It’s boring. Only sermons and sermons.’

‘It’s not just teaching. They have sport activities, trips, and singing.’

‘I’m doing sports with my friends here. I don’t have to go anywhere.’

‘But there’ll be lots of girls,’ tempted my mother.

It worked and I decided to go. There were some lectures but I did not listen. I was looking at the girls. And there were many beautiful girls! I also played ball but I liked singing the most. I went to our camp director and asked for the songbook. ‘I can’t give it to you because we have only one; we’ve just got it,’ I heard. It didn’t discourage me. On the last day of the camp I saw it on a table. When the room was empty, the songbook ended up in my pocket. On the way home on the bus I pulled it out, started looking through it and humming. Those songs were beautiful. They were tear jerking. At home my mom asked me how it was at the camp. I answered shortly that it was ok. In my room I reached for the songbook again and the guitar. I was playing and singing quietly while tears were coming down my cheeks. I read the words of the song: ‘God cleansed my eyes in streams of tears that I could see how sinful I was...’ Then tears really started flowing. At the camp I thought I was not paying attention to the teachings but my consciousness had soaked these wonderful words

of life. The songs did the rest. A moment later I was down on my knees thanking God for removing my scales and softening my heart."

How happy I was to hear such a testimony! I thank God that my translation work was not wasted.

Visits to our homeland

On our first trip to Poland in 1960 we took only our three-year-old, Jedrus, while the two older children stayed with my mother in Toronto. I will never forget the face of our five-year-old Jurek as he was watching us depart. I thought my heart would break and I would stay at home with the kids. However, when we came back we could hardly recognize him. He was an angel; not a child. He was so well-behaved, so obedient, no need to say anything twice. Unfortunately, it did not stay that way long. A few days later our little rascal, Jurek, returned.

On our first trip we sailed for almost two weeks. This trip stayed so vividly in my memory....

Gdynia, at last! We disembark. We don't know what's awaiting us. We are looking around the welcoming crowd and suddenly I see someone far away waving his arms high up in the air. I look closely at him. It is Longin Wojciechowski, the brother of Stach, my dearest friend from the church in Lodz. What a joy! He takes us to his home in Gdynia where his wife, Jadzia, is waiting for us with dinner. I introduce Paul to them (he had never been to Lodz before) and our Jedrus. They have two daughters slightly older than him. The girls



take care of our son and we share our experiences.

(First visit to Poland – 1960. On the right, Maria Sacewicz)

From Gdynia we go to Warsaw. I am absorbing the sight of my long unseen home country. Everything seems too familiar, close, dear to my heart.... The church delegation welcomes us. Now Paul introduces me, for I don't know everybody. Conversations last forever and I can't wait to get to

Lodz. Finally I go there with Jedrus because Paul is too busy with meetings. My heart is pounding as if it were to burst in my chest. I am going to see Lodz after fifteen years. I make a stop at Stach and Ania Wojciechowski's, my closest friends. We were baptized together with Stach; together we served in a youth group and Hania was my dearest friend. Jedrus also finds himself a friend – their younger daughter, Alunia. Jedrus is still drinking milk from a bottle. When Alunia sees it, she wants to do the same. Hania empties a medicine bottle and both of them – lying on the sofa – drink milk from a bottle.

We put the children to bed and finally we have time to sit down to talk. After all, there is so much to say. So many things have happened, so many changes. Suddenly I look out of the window. "Look! A fire!" "Dela, it's not a fire. It's a sunrise," Stach laughs. We have talked all night.

We are told we need to register. We go with Stach to a police station – there's a long hallway and finally an open door. We go in. I come to the counter. The office worker looks at me grudgingly and grunts, "You must have been brought up in a barn – that's why you don't close the doors." I apologize, explaining that when I entered the door was open and that's why I didn't close it. Stach is embarrassed and tries to justify her. "Forgive her. People are really exhausted and nervous. There is always a shortage of something. Life in Poland is not easy now." I had already noticed on the train that people are nervous and impatient. When Jedrus was laughing and making cheeping sounds a lady reprimanded me, saying, "You should take care of your boy so that he won't make noise."

I start running around Lodz. I am walking down Piotrowska Street. My father used to work here in a bookstore. I stop every now and then. I am looking around and viewing the old buildings – old, but how beautiful. When I lived here I didn't use to notice the ornaments on these buildings. Now I'm admiring them. The monument of Kosciuszko is still standing at Plac Wolnosci, or rather, is back there because it is said it was taken apart. I am rushing to my former primary school at Cegielniana Street. I remember the beautiful, big sport field where we used to play volleyball and dodgeball, which now seems to me so small and neglected. There is a heap of coal at the entrance. I go inside. First I go downstairs to the locker room and then upstairs. I'm looking for my classroom. Everything seems smaller; the hallways are narrower; the gym has shrunk. I run to Pomorska Street, to the middle school. The cleaning lady doesn't want to let me in. I explain that it used to be my school, that in 1939 I passed my A-level exams here, that it will just take a moment to look around and come back. She lets me in but she is observing me.

I go to Poludniowa Street where we used to live before my parents bought a piece of land on the outskirts of town and built a small house. I'm looking at the wooden house through which we passed to get into the yard and then to the backhouse where our apartment was. Obviously I cannot go into the apartment; somebody lives there. I am trying to open the door to the main building. I can hardly do that because nobody cleaned the rubbish and debris. It used to be such an elegant place – wide stairs with beautiful railings leading to the owner's apartment. I remember how fascinated I was with the skin of a white bear that was on the floor of his living room, especially the open mouth and his claws. Behind the house there was a big garden with fruit trees (I still remember the taste of those pears), a wall of grapevine, cut lawns, majestic chestnut trees, aromatic lilacs, lilies of the valley and pansies. It was so beautiful and charming. As children, we spent many wonderful moments there. I open the gate to the garden and freeze. Not one tree, no flower bed, nor a lawn. The ground is plowed and there are some sheds.

Disappointed and depressed I head to Dabrowa. Our house is still standing but the garden is neglected, overgrown; the blackberry, gooseberry and raspberry bushes are broken. Poverty, misery and hardship! "Is this how the Communist government cares for the wellbeing of the nation?" I think with bitterness. [When I went back there a few years later there were tall blocks of flats.] I cheer up a little as I go further into the downtown. Lodz seems more beautiful. In the past, nothing broke the monotony of cobblestone and grey buildings. Now there are squares with lawns and even flower beds and there are trees planted on some new streets. Understandably, I make my way to Abramowskiego Street where our church was. I go into the meeting hall. I can feel butterflies in my stomach. My eyes fill with tears. I had

been coming here since I was a child. I attended Sunday school here. It was here that I was growing spiritually, was born again and was baptized. I used to serve with great enthusiasm in our youth group. My whole life was focused on this place. So many memories but now it's time to leave Lodz.

I return to Warsaw. This time Paul and I continue our travels together. We notice small gas stations. During my days they did not exist since there were very few cars. There were trams and horse carriages.

Some "guardian angel" accompanied us on our journey through Poland. He did not leave us for a moment even when we made private visits to our friends. Two others were also watching us discreetly. We wouldn't realize it ourselves if it weren't for one brother who told us about it. He uncovered the curtain in the window and pointed to two people across the street. "They are watching you," he commented. However, that was the case only during our first trip to Poland. Later we didn't notice that. They either became bored with us or decided we were "harmless." Although, when we went to register, the officer said, "When you go back to America, tell only the good things about Poland." Was it just good advice or a hidden threat?

Another time we took all three of our children to show them their parents' homeland. They really enjoyed a carriage ride around the Old Town in Warsaw and even more so a horse and wagon ride in the Bialystok region. Jurek sat next to the wagon driver who gave him the whip. That brother came with us to the States.



In the dining room of the ship "Batory" on our way to Poland.

On the left Jedrus and Iwonka; on the right Jurek – 1963.

Our first trips were on a ship called "Batory." The trip was very good and pleasant. The food was delicious. They organized a ball for the children where they could perform by reciting poems and singing songs. I taught Jedrus a piece of famous Polish children's poetry.

How surprised I was when on the first Sunday after coming back to America, during the Sunday service when it was time for the children to recite their memory verses, so called "golden poems," Jedrus got up first from his seat and recited his memorized children's poem. (Our entire family in Poland – 1963.)



The church in Baltimore

We found out that in the nearby city of Baltimore there were believers of Slavic origin. Paul contacted them: two families with children, one elderly couple, and one lady. We met, got to know them, and suggested meeting together to encourage each other spiritually. At first we met in a private home and later we rented a room at a Methodist church. We were growing in numbers. Paul invited George Bajenski and Kostek Jakoniuk from Poland and Adam Korenczuk from Argentina to study in our institute. They became actively involved in church life. We started looking for our own meeting place. We bought a small house, and a few years later when we were quite a group, a beautiful, big church building from the Methodists. We have been meeting there ever since.



Beginnings of the church in Baltimore. Students from the institute where Paul lectured helped us.



Christmas 1959 with Kostek Jakoniuk (on left) and George Bajenski (on right)

More people were coming – from Poland and from the former Soviet Union. There was one baptism, then another and then a third one. Today our church has 200 members and on Sunday

services there are up to 300 people. We have three choirs: the main one, a youth choir, and a children's choir. We have a brass orchestra and a string orchestra with guitars and flutes. There are Sunday school classes and a youth group of enthusiastic youth. We've been having picnics on our property in the summer. Young people play volleyball and football, kids run around the back among the pine trees and bamboos, while adults finally have time to talk and sing. In the evening we set up tables and roast sausages. We are glad that our house and garden is the best place for such events. We have always had lots of guests and visitors, both from Poland and Russia. Some of them stayed with us for weeks and called our house "the Bajko's hotel."



Studies

I've always liked studying. What interested me most was history and literature. After moving to Bel Air, I had an opportunity to deepen my knowledge. We lived next to the college where Paul was teaching. The work at home did not allow me to study full time so each semester I took only a few classes, but as a student, not as a listener. When Paul saw me "cramming" so diligently, he used to sing this song:



All this studying – all this toil

Mind occupied with just these:

Grammar and Mathematics,

And no thought of love!

A professor once told me, "Dela, you have passed so many subjects. Why don't you get your degree?" His words mobilized me and I started studying seriously. I passed all the obligatory subjects, including New Mathematics, which was quite difficult and I had to ask my son for help at times. All in all, I managed somehow, not just somehow, but very well. The students accepted me as one of them.

They let me look at their tests during exams but I never did. There were funny moments, too.

"Who had geography lessons at high school?" asked our new professor.

"Me. Fifty years ago," I said, raising my hand and the whole class burst out in laughter.

And thus in 1989, at the age of 69, I graduated from college and received my diploma.

Family life



Family picture from 1958. At the top -- my sister, Kazia.

God gave us three children. Iwonka was born in 1952, Jurek in 1954, and Jedrus in 1957. When we were expecting our first child we went to visit our friends who had just had a baby. I remember how terrified I was when the baby started crying and the mother could not calm him down. What would I do in such situation? I knew nothing about raising children. Fortunately, God had already taken care of it when he gave women the motherly instinct which tells you what to do with a newborn.

We spent the first year of our marriage living apart from one another. Paul was studying in the States and I was waiting in Toronto for my American visa. When Iwonka was born my parents were



overjoyed. They loved their first granddaughter and they spoiled her. Especially Grandpa – he would carry her in his arms and hold her close to his cheek, and she did not mind his beard. When we were leaving for the States my parents cried. At home we talked in Polish. When Iwonka went to preschool she didn't know English at all.

“You made her disabled! Why haven't you taught her English?” said the teacher.

“Don't worry. You won't even notice when our daughter learns English as she's around English speaking children,” I replied. And it happened.

I used to spend the summer time with the children in Toronto where they learned Russian from their grandmother. One time on our way back home, our two-year-old Iwonka asked me for “babatka.” I couldn't understand what she meant and when I asked her a third time she

explained in Russian: “chai” (“tea” in Russian). She wanted tea. All our children could speak Polish and when we took them to Poland they had no problems communicating. Once in Warsaw at Pulawska Street they went to a playground to play. “Say something more!” asked the Polish children. I thought my kids were showing off their English. On the contrary, they were speaking Polish, but it was their accent that interested the children so much.

When the institute where Paul worked moved from New Jersey to Bel Air in Maryland we moved there also and we stayed there for good. Paul took a loan and we had our house built. We have been living in that house since 1963.

We lived in a field. Yes, there were trees and flowers but no neighbors nearby. The houses were scattered a long way from one another. Friends used to ask me if I were not afraid of living in such a desolate place, especially since my husband was rarely at home. Why though? We were under the “shadow of the Almighty” and each night I used to say in prayer: “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for you, LORD, only make me dwell in safety” (Ps. 4:9). I memorized this verse for life.



Indeed, Paul would be away for weeks. Sometimes when he came home after a long absence, the children did not recognize him and ran away from him as if he was a stranger. Years later, Iwonka told me, “We thought that Daddy didn’t love us because he was never around.” People were gossiping, “He cannot stand his wife so he constantly goes away...” We laughed about it and I remembered Ruth Graham’s words when they asked her if she regretted marrying a preacher who was never at home and having to bring up children single-handedly: “I would never trade my part-time husband for the best full-time one.”

I brought up our children practically by myself. Every evening we would read the Bible, sing, and pray. I remember once we were singing, “What is that knocking to your hearts in the quiet moments of the night.” I told my children it is the Lord Jesus knocking to our hearts. He stands behind the door and patiently waits “until you open the door.” And if you don’t open it, “He will walk away sad but then woe to you.” I will never forget those wide open eyes of my children and tears coming down their cheeks. One evening as I was putting the children into their beds, I looked through the window and saw a glow. “Look, there’s a fire,” I said. “Mum, let’s pray!” called Iwonka. The seed planted was springing up.

All three of them – Iwonka, Jurek, and Jedrus – accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior at an early age.

The years were flying by. The children finished high school and began leaving for college. We were grateful to God that our children had given their lives to Jesus, but we knew how dangerous the secular world was for teenagers. Therefore, we sent all our children to Milligan College, a Christian college located about 450 miles from us. Everyone could study there but all the professors were believers and the students were obliged to participate in Bible devotions and prayer before classes. Iwonka went



there first, then two years later Jurek, and in three years Jedrus. Our house became empty. I recall that after we took our youngest son to college we came back home. It seemed so big and empty.



That night I cried in my pillow for a long time...

Iwonka met her husband to be at the college and she got married. We were happy because the man was a believer. One day I got a phone call from her.

“Mum, are you standing or sitting?”

“I’m standing.”

“Then you better sit down! I’m pregnant!”

What a joy! Our first grandson, Tony, was born. I traveled to be with them and to help but most of all to enjoy the baby. They lived in Nevada, we live in Maryland – a three hours time difference. I told Iwonka, “When he wakes up in the morning, you can bring him to me. I’m not going to be asleep anyway. I haven’t got used to your time.”



Thus, every morning I had Tony all to myself. Later T.J. appeared – their second son. Meanwhile, Jurek got married, too, and we had a third grandson, Justin. Finally Jedrus found



himself a wife in our church. Her name is Ola. They have two daughters: Naomi and Sarah. They are the greatest joy to us because they live close by and we get to see them often. I teach them to play the piano and I share with them many stories. “Babcia, tell me a story,” I hear again and again. And time is flying. Iwonka’s sons got married and now we have great-grandchildren. I still find it hard to believe that our Iwonka is a grandma.

Not an easy, but an abundant life

All our children are believers. They have their own families. They graduated from Milligan College, a Christian school where their father used to study and now their children study there also – it’s the third generation! We have five grandchildren and four (so far) great grandchildren. It is our prayer that each one of them would accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord, that they would follow their parents, grandparents and great grandparents in the narrow path “under the shadow of the Almighty.” We do not promise them a carefree life, for ours was not easy. Paul was studying only because our American brothers had burning, sincere hearts and paid for his education. He did not have any money. I had to buy him a train ticket to get to our wedding. I even bought his suit and the rings. “You bought me for yourself,” my husband joked later. And when he started working, he still did not earn a lot. When we were moving into our house, we bought used furniture from the Salvation Army. Our children used to wear clothes given to us by parents of children that grew out

of them. But these were all secondary things. We were healthy, we had each other, we loved each other and we were always “under the shadow of the Almighty.”

The storm of war blew us across the ocean to a different continent – a foreign land, foreign people with their traditions, a foreign language. We missed Poland, especially Lodz, and we were looking forward to receiving letters from our home country. However, God gave us here a good life, affluent and varied. We traveled a lot. Paul, while he worked for PCM, drove the length and breadth of America. After the children grew up, I could accompany him in on some of his trips – to Alaska and Hawaii, for instance. Even in Poland, though our schedules were tight, we always found time to sightsee the country. We were greatly impressed by Malbork Castle. I looked at those old walls and it seemed to me that I could hear Danusia from the novel “Krzyżacy” (“The Knights of the Cross” – a historical novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz). We were in the Pieniny mountains and sailed on rafts down the Dunajec River and in the Tatra mountains at Morskie Oko (“the Eye of the Sea” – the deepest lake in the Tatra mountains). Unfortunately, we were everywhere just for a short time.



We have also traveled for pleasure. Some prefer to spend the holidays on the beach but we'd rather travel and sightsee. We have been to nearly every European country. In Spain, we were not interested in watching bull fights but enjoyed Don Quixote's windmills; in London, the edifices by the Thames, Big Ben, Madame Tussaud's museum. In Hyde Park, we noticed a man standing on a wooden box gesticulating and shouting something. Our group was too far away to hear him but he was probably an evangelist. In France, we explored the Versailles Palace. We were intrigued by a secret entrance to the king's bedroom. In the Louvre, we were impressed with the great pieces of art. We saw the Eiffel Tower from a distance. A mermaid, similar to the one in Warsaw, welcomed us to Copenhagen. We were mesmerized by Budapest. In Prague, in Wenceslas Square, we saw fresh flowers in a place where a young patriot set himself on fire as a sign of protest against the communist regime. In Yugoslavia, we were impressed with the old Dubrovnik. I cried when some time later I read about its destruction during the Balkan war. In Venice, we sailed in gondolas. The Leaning Tower of Pisa was still standing. In Rome, we were most interested in the historical buildings. We saw the Forum Romanum but we were more moved by the catacombs – narrow passages out of whose walls graves were dug. We made the tour in the light of torches and I had the impression that the figures of early Christians were emerging from the dark. Then we saw the great Coliseum where so many of them were martyred. Seeing Pompeii excavated from under the ashes of Vesuvius was another wonderful experience.

In Turkey, the sultans' palaces are congested with gold. Not even in Versailles did we see so much over abundance. We traveled in the apostle Paul's footsteps. In Troy – the famous Trojan horse. In Istanbul – endless mosques. Cappadocia was fantastic. There were carved houses and temples inside limestone walls. Christians used to meet in those hard-to-reach caves, a fact confirmed by paintings on some of the walls.



Athens, Greece – here the apostle Paul was at the Areopagus. We also admired Acropolis Hill – the well-preserved temples, rows of pillars, Hadrian’s library. We went to Corinth. Our guide tried to draft the history of the town but our thoughts were

occupied with the apostle Paul.

In Egypt, we sailed on a ship down the Nile. Sometimes we had the impression that time had



stopped there. Women still did laundry in the river and dried the clothes near the river bank. Children were swimming and some distance from them horses and cows were wading in the water. The farmers’ work also seemed primitive; no sign of tractors. From time to time we would come to a berth and go ashore to sightsee some temples. Pharaohs’ palaces no longer existed but huge stone temples with statues of Ramses, sphinxes, and pyramids were still standing.

Gibraltar, Morocco, Jordan, and finally Israel – incredible experiences – Bethlehem, Nazareth, Cana of Galilee, sunset by the Lake of Galilee, an Easter celebration. We were watching the surface of the lake and singing, “He rose again on the third day!” – an unforgettable mood. We went to Jerusalem – the Wailing Wall, Olive Garden, Gabbatha, the garden with a grave carved in a rock, Golgotha. We tried singing, “On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame...” but tears choked our throats.

Eventually, we went to China, as well. We walked on the Great Wall of China. We were at Tiananmen Square. We visited the Forbidden City and saw countless pagodas. We have traveled a lot and seen many things. We are grateful to God for that, too. Nobody can take those experiences away from us.

When I look back on our lives, I thank God from the bottom of my heart for the multitude of His blessings. So much joy, so much love, so much happiness! God was with us every step of the way. He has been with us all our lives.



“Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures,” we read in Psalm 90:10. Both of us have already passed that Biblical age. With real gratefulness in our hearts we can repeat after the prophet, “The LORD’s loving kindness indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. *They* are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22-23)

God has given us abundant lives. It’s wonderful to live “under the shadow of the Almighty.”

PHOTO ALBUM

Psalm 91 - He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."



God gave us three children

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.



25th wedding anniversary – 1976



Opening the new building at Ostroda Camp

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge;



Our 50th wedding anniversary – 2001



With our children on our 50th anniversary

His truth shall be your shield and buckler.



Banquet in Bielsk Podlaski for our 50th wedding anniversary



In Warsaw – 2001

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,



Celebrating the 80th year anniversary of the Christian Churches in Poland
Bielsk Podlaski – 2001

Ordination of Jaroslaw Sciwiarski during the anniversary celebration

Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.



Celebrating the 25th year anniversary of the Church of Christ in Kolobrzeg with Wayne Murphy and Piotr Karel. Millennium Hall – 2003

A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.



With our granddaughter, Noemi – 2002



With Noemi and Sarah – 2004

Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.



At the annual Church of Christ
conference – Zakosciele

July 2004



During the annual Church of Christ conference – Zakosciele 2008 – with Piotr Karel and Andrzej & Urszula Bajenscy

Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place,



Koszalin – June 15, 2008

The dedication of the newly built chapel. Paul is at the microphone. Wayne Murphy is sitting in the first row on the left.

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

With Jedrus, Iwonka, and our granddaughter, Noemi – 2008



For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.



50th year anniversary of the church in Baltimore

You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra; the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.



In our living room on my 90th birthday – 2010

With our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren on Paul's 90th birthday – August, 2012. Missing are our oldest son, Jurek, his wife, and son.



“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.



With our youngest great-grandchild, Caleb – August 2012



With our great-granddaughter, Jocelyn

Our great-granddaughter, McKenna,
gazing at her great-grandfather



He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.



55th wedding anniversary

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”



In our living room – January 2013

