

07/08-83

FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S

# VOICE

ASTRONAUT ROBERT C. SPRINGER'S  
**Decision**



**THREE DECADES OF CONVENTIONS**

See page 19



# Decision

My real turning-point came a few years later,  
after I decided to apply for the astronaut program.



Robert C. Springer, Lt. Col.  
USMC, Seabrook, TX

**N**ot selected! All the complimentary statements about being exceptionally well qualified appearing in the official notice from Johnson Space Center changed nothing. I had been rejected.

"What do you think the Lord wants you to do now?" asked Captain Carlson, my friend who led our Bible study.

"What do you think the Lord wants you to do?" . . . Suddenly that was the most important question of all.

I knew now that God's hand had always been directing me even when I wasn't aware of it. I'd always considered myself a Christian, ever since childhood when my parents sent me to Sunday school. But to seek God's guidance on a constant, day-by-day, minute-by-minute basis . . . well, I was just beginning to get the feel of that kind of Christianity.

I recalled my days at the Naval Academy when I actually skipped out of mandatory chapel, even at the risk of being severely reprimanded. For about a year and a half I really drifted away from the Lord. But one night I

just decided to go over to the chapel and pray, and I really felt God touching my life, bringing me back in His direction. I started attending a Bible study but for the most part God still seemed a rather distant factor in my world.

In 1964 I met Molly, a lovely Catholic girl. On our third date we were walking on a beach when I looked at her and said, "Molly, one of these days we're going to be married."

She just looked back at me and replied matter-of-factly, "Yes, I know!"

A year later while I was in flight training at Meridian, Mississippi, Molly and I were married. I converted to Catholicism and met a priest who helped me come to know the Lord a little bit more. It seemed as though God just kept gently nudging me His way, letting me know He was there whenever I wanted to reach out to Him.

I got my wings in 1966 and went to Viet Nam the next year. I did a lot of flying with a fellow Marine, and on our missions together we'd talk back and forth about God. Other people started overhearing our conversations and we got tagged with the nickname "Apostle Flight."

I also got a reputation as a guy who tended to get his planes shot up. As a result, a lot of men preferred not to fly with me. I never crashed but I sure caught a lot of bullet holes in my planes, and I brought two of them back with so much battle damage that they never did fly again. I wasn't careless—just determined to become



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missions in the F4.

the best at the job I had been assigned, so I generally got caught in the thick of things. Normally it took a 13-month tour to fly 200 or so combat missions in the F4. But in only six months I had flown more than 300 missions. There's no doubt in my mind that God was watching out for me, but I still didn't know Him in a deeply personal way.

After my tour of Viet Nam I was

sent to the Navy Postgraduate School and then back to Okinawa to fly helicopters. During my tour in Okinawa I became good friends with a priest who directed me by his example toward a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I was getting closer, but somehow I still didn't get fully connected to the truth.

Part of my problem was that I was trying to keep up with the standard-issue, fighter-pilot image of hard-drinking, hard-fighting, hard-partying macho guy. One day while stationed

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with a fighter squadron in Beaufort, South Carolina I met a pilot who didn't feel it was necessary to maintain that kind of image. Myrl Allinder was my next-door neighbor as commander of a sister fighter squadron. He was an outspoken Christian, and he just didn't do things quite the way the rest of us did.

For instance, at that time a lot of young servicemen were getting heavily involved in drugs. The normal procedure for straightening these guys out was to haul them into the commander's office and dress them down. Myrl didn't do that. Instead, he'd call them into his office and *pray* with them. Nobody thought Myrl would gain the respect of his officers and men, much less have a successful squadron—until his outfit was named Marine Fighter Squadron of the Year.

Once again God was allowing me to come into contact with someone who really knew Him personally. Myrl was very active in the local FGBMFI chapter and I treasured the insights he shared with me. **But I was still like a battery that wouldn't hold a charge.** I could conduct some power if I was hooked up to another Christian but I just didn't have much godly energy on my own.

My real turning point came a few years later, after I decided to apply for the astronaut training program. Just about to leave for my interview at Johnson Space Center, I got word that my father had to go in for serious surgery. Blockage of the arteries

necessitated surgery of his carotid arteries, and he also needed a double-bypass. Reluctantly I called Johnson to postpone my interview.

My father came through the first operation all right, but the second was touch and go. By this time, even though I hadn't fully committed my life to the Lord, I was beginning to know Him and I knew He was there to be called upon. The rest of my family was tremendously worried, but I had a peace that I knew could only come from the Lord Jesus. I had faith that everything was going to work out for the best.

And when my father recovered I looked inside myself and realized that for the first time in my life I'd counted upon the Lord to bring me that supernatural peace and stability.

I went on for my space-program interview and after a few months got word that I had not been selected. Then instead of being assigned to the fighter squadron I had requested I was shipped off to the Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia. There, through Captain Carlson's Bible studies, I discovered that the only decision in my life for which I was responsible was the decision to accept the Lord. It was not a hard decision but it sure had been a long time in coming.

That decision made a tremendous difference when I had another opportunity to apply for the astronaut program. Both my age and the fact that I had not flown an airplane for two

years were against me. But when I went through the selection process it seemed I could do nothing wrong. I knew the Lord was guiding me.

To make a long story short, this time I was selected. Since I was the only Marine chosen from my area (Virginia Beach), all the local TV stations came to interview me. I made it a point in each interview to thank God for bringing me to this point in my life and making my selection possible. Even though only one station chose to leave that part in, I was amazed at the people who called afterward to say, "I'm glad you slipped that in!"

Following selection by NASA in May, 1980, I was responsible for testing and verification of the Canadian-built remote manipulator system during the orbital test flight program. Currently I am coordinating integration of several commercial payloads with the space transportation system while awaiting assignment as mission specialist on a forthcoming space shuttle flight.

Molly and I have continued to grow spiritually. I've had the great privilege of leading my brother to Jesus and of seeing my father's physical condition improve dramatically because of the healing touch of the Holy Spirit.

No matter what success or happiness comes my way, I know all the glory belongs to Jesus. Sometimes people ask me, "Bob, hasn't God always been a factor in your life?" Yes, He has. But I'm delighted to add that today He's something much more:

He's a personal, loving, caring *Friend*.

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*Lt. Col. Springer was test pilot for more than 20 different types of fixed- and rotary-winged aircraft and has logged more than 2,800 hours of flying time, 2,200 of it in jet aircraft. He has received many special honors and awards, served as advisor to the Korean Marine Corps, and was responsible for joint operational planning for Marine forces in NATO and the Mid-East. He and his wife Molly have three children: Chad, 12; Kira, 11; and Derek, 6. They attend Calvary Bible Church of the Bay Area and Bob is a member of FGBMFI's Space Center Chapter.*

## I want a Voice!

Enclosed is my \$4 for one year's subscription to *Voice* magazine.

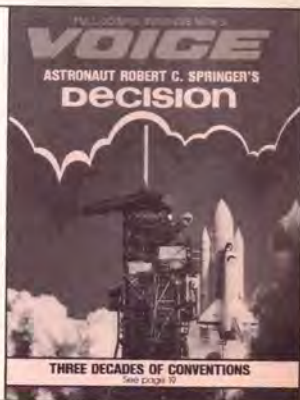
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*Tommy Ashcraft with President Demos Shakarian and Chief Operating Officer Steve Shakarian*

## **“Somebody Do Something!”**

Water can't wash away the stain of sin, and booze can't drown the sorrows of life. I relied on both of those methods for many years before I learned they just don't work.

Thomas L. Ashcraft, Executive Vice-President, FGBMFI, Stafford, TX

By the age of 29 I'd been baptized in water three times, but there was never any essential change in my character. I simply went down a dry sinner and came up a wet one. My gambling, fighting and heavy drinking went on as usual. Three times my wife Elizabeth and I went to an attorney to talk divorce, but we couldn't seem to decide how to divide up our two children.

One day I began to notice there were Bibles open beside every ashtray in the house. I smoked three packs a day, so there were plenty of ashtrays—and plenty of Bibles. I learned that Elizabeth had been led by her aunt into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now our lives were really at cross-purposes (my wife was going the way of the Cross, and I was just plain cross), but

in her loving way she finally persuaded me to attend church with her.

The people were wonderful and loving, but when the pastor got up to preach he mentioned just about every ornery thing I'd ever done. I accused my wife of telling him all about me, and swore I'd never go back.

Some time later, though, the pastor visited our home with a bunch of other fanatics, and I found out I liked him. He talked me into coming to church again, and this time I figured

When God was through with me there was a puddle of tears on the altar. He burned every evil thing out of me—and there was plenty—and made me a new man.

That was almost 30 years ago. I never dreamed then that God would allow me to have a role in this great Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, which is literally leading thousands of men and women all across the globe into a personal walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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## When God was through with me there was a puddle of tears on the altar.

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he'd go easy on me in the sermon. But he gave me a worse time than before. He knew things about me that I didn't know about myself. I didn't realize it was the convicting power of the Holy Spirit at work in my heart.

When the altar call was given I stomped out of the church and lit a cigarette. I had one foot on the ground and one on the front step when God spoke clearly to my heart:

"You take one more step and it's your last chance!"

As though in a trance I flipped away my cigarette and went back into the church. When I got to the altar I cried out, "Somebody *do* something!"

"*You* are the only one who can do anything at this moment, Tom," the pastor said. "Kneel and ask God to forgive your sins. Tell Him you will accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as your personal Saviour."

It began a few months after my salvation experience. I was quite content with my job; in fact, I'd just gotten a \$25 raise without even asking for it. Then one day while I was eating lunch a big, tall fellow tapped me on the shoulder.

"My name's Bill Carol," he announced. "God has told me that you're the man to come to work for me." I was living in Houston at the time, and this man's business was in Atlanta. I talked with him a while to be polite, but made it clear I wasn't interested in the job.

But he kept calling me, telling me I was the man. Finally I agreed to stop and see him in Atlanta on my way to visit my sister in South Carolina. When I got to Atlanta I phoned Bill Carol and arranged to meet him at his bakery business.

Bill showed me his profit-and-loss



statement, which for 31 months had really been just a loss statement. He was in the hole considerably, having lost \$48,000. He told me he'd pay me the same salary I was making, plus 5 percent of the profits. Five percent of nothing is nothing, so in my mind I'd already decided against the job, but I said I'd get back to him.

I got in my car and was driving down the highway when all of a sudden I saw that bakery in a vision. God showed me everything I had to do to get that business to make money . . . bigger pots, bigger oven, faster machinery, everything. Over the next few days I tried to push it all out of my mind but couldn't. Finally I told Bill I'd be at work in two months.

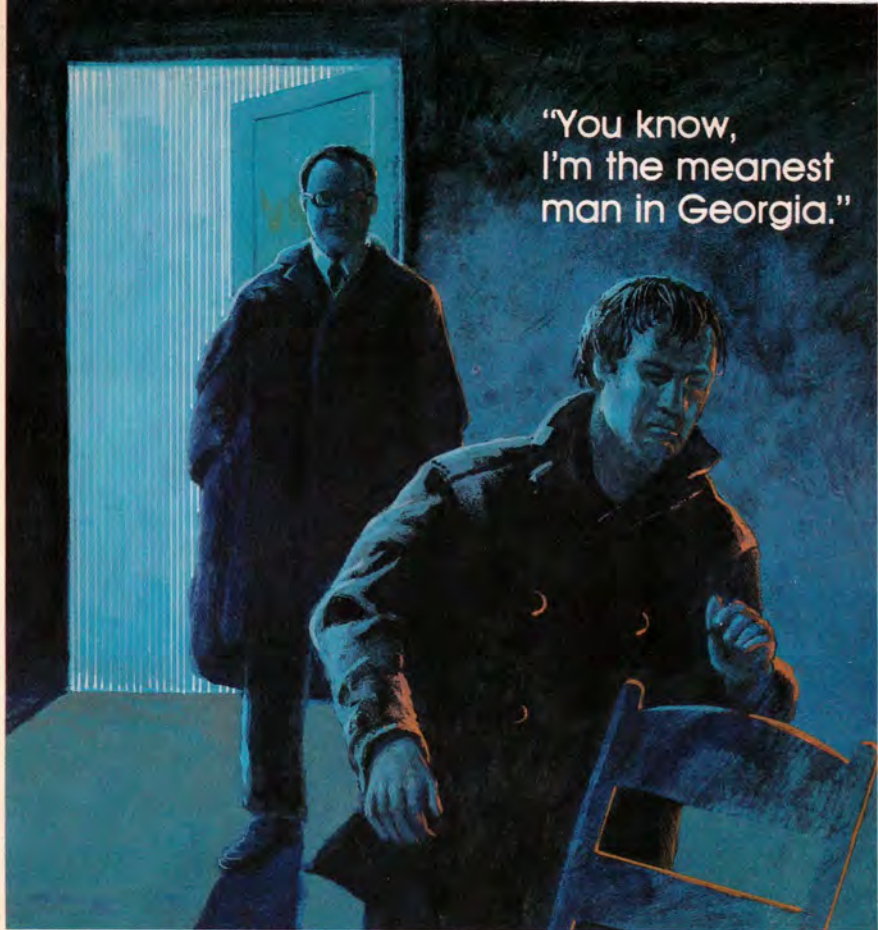
To make a long story short, in three months' time we had his bakery in the black. Everything God showed me came to pass.

But that wasn't the main reason God had me in Atlanta. I got a call from Full Gospel Business Men, asking me to get some men together for the purpose of forming a chapter in Atlanta. At eight o'clock one Saturday morning 67 of us got together in a restaurant banquet room. God touched every one of us in a special way, and men were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. I never saw so much crying among a bunch of grown men in all my life.

The next meeting had 125 in attendance. After that there were up to 450 in attendance. We saw at least three men saved at every meeting. That chapter has helped bring more than



I saw this  
skinny guy,  
standing and  
shaking in  
a pouring rain.



"You know,  
I'm the meanest  
man in Georgia."

400 men to Jesus in its first six years.

God put a tremendous burden for souls on my heart, and sometimes this has led me to do foolish things. One evening in Atlanta I had just delivered Demos Shakarian and some others back to their hotel after a chapter meeting when I saw a skinny guy in a black trenchcoat standing in the pouring rain. He was shaking, so I

rolled down my window and asked if he was all right. He said his car had broken down, and wondered if I could take him to a taxi stand a few blocks away. I unlocked the door, and the second I did I had the feeling I'd done the wrong thing. He smelled of whiskey and was lean and hard looking. I thought, "He's going to rob me and take my new Oldsmobile away from

me." So I started witnessing to him right away.

"You talk just like my brother," he said, sounding kind of mean. We got to where the taxi stand was supposed to be, but it wasn't there. He got out anyway, but like a crazy man I offered to take him home. I know it was God who put it in me to do that but, naturally speaking, it wasn't a smart move.

I kept witnessing to him as he gave me directions to his house. Then all of a sudden he said, "You know, I'm the meanest man in Georgia." I certainly wasn't going to argue with him, especially when he seemed so sure of it.

"I just broke out of jail," he told me. "I had to go through three doors to do it and they said it was impossible. But I got through those doors and they haven't caught me yet." I was about to hand him the pink slip to my car when he announced we were at his house. He started to get out and I said, "Wait a minute. I want to pray with you."

"No," he retorted, "you come inside." So I thought, "Well, this is it. But I can't back out now. I've just got to trust the Lord."

It was dark inside and he stumbled against a chair. I heard someone yell, "Who's there?"

"It's me," he answered. "I brought a friend." He turned on the light, explaining to me, "That's my brother." As he hung up his jacket I saw the outline of a .45 in his pocket.

His brother came out and I said, "I've been witnessing to your brother,

telling him he needs to get saved."

"I've been doing the same thing," his brother replied. "I'm a deacon in the Baptist church, and I've told him only Jesus can help him."

Well, you might say we kind of ganged up on that man right there in that kitchen and together we were able to get him to surrender his life to Jesus.

I didn't hear any more concerning that incident for more than a year. Then one day I happened to be in the area so I went up to that house and knocked on the door. A lady answered. I explained who I was and why I was there.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I've always wanted to meet you! That was my husband's half-brother. After you and my husband prayed with him he was a different person. He'd just escaped from prison, and he went back and turned himself in. They pardoned him about six months ago, and he's been writing to boys in jail and prison, telling them that crime doesn't pay. He teaches Sunday school to a group of boys at my husband's church! And he's got a good job at a filling station not far from here."

Naturally, I got directions to the station. When I arrived I could barely recognize the man I saw working there; he'd put on about 20 pounds. I introduced myself and he gave me a big grin.

"I've wanted to thank you," he said. "You know, I had every intention of taking your car that night. I had a .45

automatic. But I just couldn't do it."

That shows you what God can do in a man's life. I've seen so many miracles like that, I can't even remember them all.

My business became my parish, so to speak. I led many, many of my employees to the Lord, and prayed with many others . . . even customers.

Through the years I became an international director of FGBMFI, then a vice-president and in 1981 was named executive vice-president. God

Also in Nigeria, with evangelist T.L. Osborne, I saw 200,000 people standing for six to eight hours per day to hear the Gospel. It was so awesome to see those acres and acres of faces that all I could do was sit there and cry.

And I saw blind people given sight. One woman hadn't seen the daylight in 20 years. A man crippled so badly for five years that he had to scoot on the palms of his hands and on his heels was instantly healed by the

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## I saw blind people given sight. One woman hadn't seen daylight in 20 years.

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has taken me all over the world, helping to set up new chapters and telling people about Jesus. I've been to 38 countries just in the last seven years; that's how fast the Fellowship is growing.

But needs are the same all over the world. Recently in Nigeria a black reporter from the country's main newspaper came to interview me. As I told him my testimony he didn't ask a single question. But I asked *him*, "Have you ever given Jesus your heart?"

"How do you do that?" he asked. I told him the plan of salvation and prayed a sinner's prayer with him. Tears were running down his cheeks. He got up to leave and still didn't say a word. The next day on the front page of his newspaper, which goes out to millions of Nigerians, he told about his "interview." It was the simplest, easiest-to-understand explanation of salvation you could imagine.

power of God. The next day the newspapers carried these items as the most important news of the day.

And that is the wonder of what God is doing today. It is not only good news, but it is the *most important* news of the hour. Jesus is still changing lives.

No, water can't wash away the stain of sin, and booze can't drown the sorrows of life. But the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness, and the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift us above our sorrows and into the realm of miracles, joy and God's wonderful blessings. □

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*Former president of Ashcraft Bakeries in Houston, Texas, and for many years an executive with Dutch Oven Bakeries in Atlanta, Georgia, Tom Ashcraft devotes himself full-time to lay ministry within the Fellowship as an international director and as executive vice-president of its Executive Committee. His autobiography, Prodigal Husband, was published in 1980 by the Fellowship's Gift Publications.*



## UPDATE!

Fellowship News  
from Here, There  
and Around the World



1. Voice distributors assemble to place Voice containers in beachfront establishments.
2. International Director Reidy Lawing agrees in prayer with singing evangelist Mike Adkins for a brother.
3. Chuck Sutton and David Field pray for the sick and minister to spiritual needs.

### VOICE RALLY PROVIDES MODEL

Nearly 300 participated in the South Carolina Voice rally March 18 and 19, including three international directors, seven field representatives and several North and South Carolina chapter presidents.

His enthusiasm for Voice magazine has tagged International Director Reidy Lawing (Charlotte, North Carolina) with the title of "Mr. Voice." In reporting results of the Myrtle Beach weekend, Reidy stressed that, in addition to instituting of a Voice ministry which will continue to witness month after month, there were immediate spiritual benefits.

Six or seven are known to have received Jesus as Saviour, including a waitress and the assistant manager of a doughnut shop. Ten or twelve were baptized in the Holy Spirit and several were blessed with physical healings as Field Representative Chuck Sutton (St. Joseph,

Missouri) and evangelist/singer Mike Adkins ministered.

Approximately 1,500 copies of Voice were distributed and 31 dispensers were placed in luxury oceanfront motels, restaurants, shops, offices and service stations along the Strand.

"Mr. Voice" noted that in the next few months rallies will be held in Iowa, Minnesota, Canada and Greenville, South Carolina. He expressed the hope that South Carolina would become a model for a rally to be held in every state.

Orders for 17 additional dispensers will result in 1,150 Voice distributed each month in the Myrtle Beach area. This mecca for vacationers draws thousands from New York, Pennsylvania, New England, Canada and other places. "God alone knows how far the impact of this ministry will be felt," says Lawing. □

# The Case of the

Lionel A. Luckhoo, Georgetown, Guyana, South America

**F**ull Gospel Business Men?" I thought skeptically, looking at the invitation in my hand. My initial reaction was almost totally negative. The name was long and involved, and I'd never heard of such an organization.

"Another church, and a Yankee one at that," I grumbled. "What do they want in Guyana?"

According to the invitation, this group would be meeting at the Pegasus Hotel in Georgetown November 7, 1978. I decided they would have to meet without Lionel Luckhoo.

But three hours before the dinner I received a phone call asking if I was planning to attend. I had every intention of saying no, but ended up saying yes—for reasons I did not then understand.

On my way to the dinner my skepticism continued. What could this new group possibly have to offer me? I considered myself to be already a Christian. I seldom read the Bible; when I did it was more or less the way a lawyer such as myself would review the facts of any case. Quietly religious, I had used my reason to decide that Jesus, who lived on earth some 2,000 years ago, was God. The evidence of this was overwhelming, the proof beyond a reasonable doubt. However I did not consider Him to be the only way of salvation.

I had even written a little booklet on the subject, pointing out that if I had

to conjure up a God coming into this world as man, He would have had to fit in with all the requirements which Jesus clearly filled.

But despite my keen appreciation for the Man called Jesus, I was actually a "head Christian" rather than a "heart Christian"—a Sunday believer moving comfortably along in my deep rut.

Certainly God had permitted me to receive a degree of recognition and the world's honors. I was grateful to Him for that. As an attorney I'd successfully defended 231 murder cases, which prompted the *Guinness Book of World Records* to dub me "Most Successful Criminal Advocate." I had attained two degrees of knighthood (which people refer to as being knighted twice) by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. I'd served as ambassador for Guyana and Barbados in London, Paris, Bonn and the Hague, and had been elected mayor of Georgetown. All this and much more God had given me. Overall, I was reasonably content with my life. What could this new group of "full-gospel" Yankees do for me?

At the dinner I met Full Gospel representatives Newman Peyton and Glen Norwood, both from Houston, Texas, and West Indians Holmes Williams and Kyffin Simpson, as well as a small group of Guyanese. Peyton explained that FGBMFI was in Guyana

# Transformed Attorney



to set up a chapter in Georgetown. He told us about the Fellowship; that it was not a church or a cult, and that its only purpose was to "lift up Jesus" through its worldwide chapters, now numbering 2,700.

"Idealistic, but not very practical," I thought. But when I heard the messages delivered by these sincere,

accepted Jesus by faith. That was the beginning of a complete change, a total transformation of my life. I was born again.

A week after this wonderful meeting a letter was written to the prime minister of Guyana, inviting him and other dignitaries to a special dinner hosted by FGBMFI. The very next day



*Lionel is knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.*

loving men something within me responded. They were experiencing a new dimension of life, a peace and joy I had searched for in vain.

When the "altar call" was given I looked around at the people, many of whom I knew personally, and mentally debated whether I should respond. But it seemed as though Jesus was knocking at the door of my heart, bidding me open to Him. I stood and ac-

after that letter went out, more than 900 people died in the tragic suicide/mass murder at Jonestown. Because of that fatal affair we all thought there was not a chance that Prime Minister Forbes Burnham would accept the invitation, but he did, quite readily.

As for myself, I was overwhelmed with awe at what I could see the Lord had done for me. Had I yielded to the pressure by Jim Jones for me as his



attorney to be with him when Congressman Leo Ryan arrived on his ill-fated trip, I would be in hell today. Something in me—the Holy Spirit, I now believe—had kept saying, “Don’t go. Don’t go!”

The Full Gospel airlift to Guyana was a resounding success. The prime minister himself told me how impressed he was with this group of Christian businessmen. In meeting after meeting we saw people committing their lives to Christ, being baptized in the Holy Spirit and receiving healing. Yielding to my characteristic attorney’s need for evidence, I recorded names and addresses of those who claimed healings. I counted 47 who stated God had healed them, including a deaf-and-dumb man whose ears were opened and who left the platform saying his first words: “*I love God. I love Jesus!*”

One of the great miracles of my own salvation experience was that my heart was opened to two crucial facts. First, I realized that my spiritual knowledge was nil, in spite of my legal knowledge. The second thing I realized was that I had been *anesthetized to sin*. Satan had lulled me into a state of apathy (ignorance, really) about the awful reality of sin.

This new insight contributed to an insatiable hunger for the word of God. But I didn’t dive into the Bible pell-mell. True to my personality and training, I began to study it like a brief. I would read long passages, underscoring portions that spoke especially clearly to me. I was fascinated! I had

no more interest in doing anything but reading the Bible. Although I was a member of several gaming clubs and even owned racehorses, I resigned from all my past social associations. They simply didn’t interest me anymore. Jesus was all in all to me!

I was invited to speak at a Full Gospel chapter in Barbados, and there something else happened which changed my life even further.

By nature I am not an overly-emotional person; I don’t shed tears easily. But as I stood there telling those 99 businessmen my story I had to fight to keep tears from flowing. Inside, I felt as though the “fallow ground” of my spirit was just yielding to the Master’s plow. I began weeping openly, and would have fallen down if someone hadn’t pushed a chair under me. Newman Peyton, who happened to be there, asked, “Do you know what is happening to you?”

“No,” I said, my body shaking.

“You are receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit!” he exclaimed.

Many men raised their hands to accept Jesus at that meeting. And from that moment I can’t explain what happened but I became almost a lion for Jesus. I was emboldened with a supernatural boldness.

The next day I went to speak at a church and the pastor told me, “God has given you a new ministry. Because of your legal background you can present the case for Christianity in a new way, almost like an apologist for Jesus.” Since that time I have been privileged to go to many parts of

the world to proclaim Jesus as the Light of the world.

In everything I do I try to make Jesus the focal point. I do not want my name or "my" accomplishments—God has given it all—to diminish the central message: *Jesus is Lord*. My only purpose in life today is the winning of souls. I weep with joy when I see souls coming to Jesus.

For instance, in one nation when I spoke before 800 people, many of them judges and lawyers, I correlated aspects of secular and spiritual laws, such as the doctrine of "vicarious liability," wherein an insurance company will assume the liability for the "sins" of a policyholder. That is what Jesus has done for us: assumed the liability for our unrighteousness. In their strongly Moslem country, the Holy Spirit led me to point out that although there are 27 Bibles in the world, only one, the Holy Bible, withstands the tests of time and scrutiny. Only one religious leader's tomb, the tomb of Jesus, is empty, while all the others still contain the bones of mortal men.

Because of my past government contacts I have been able to speak about Jesus to ambassadors and world leaders. For example, after much prayer FGBMFI was allowed by the government of New Zealand to hold a banquet in the parliament building, with me as main speaker. This was unheard of, but I was able to give my full testimony to many of that government's leaders.

It has been that way all over the

world. People are so hungry for the Gospel. I have seen literally thousands of men and women stand to accept Jesus during these last few years. To the world, Guyana stands for a country where religion became so perverse that hundreds were willing to take their own lives for a false messiah. But I see my country as a launching point for the true Gospel into all of South America. It is not a country of religious despair, thank God, but one where tremendous spiritual rebirth is taking place.

Last year I devoted two-thirds of my time to traveling for Jesus. This year I hope to make it fifteen-sixteenths of my time. By the grace of God, I have traveled approximately 650,000 miles to preach this precious Gospel.

It is the greatest case I have ever pleaded and I am confident, because all the evidence is on our side. The verdict must be that Jesus is Lord, and that He is coming back soon to proclaim His people "not guilty" and to take us to be with Him forever. □

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*Attorney Lionel Luckhoo has his own law firm in Guyana and is listed in Guinness Book of World Records as never having lost a criminal case in the courts of London. Author, journalist and broadcaster, with academic training at Oxford University, he is recognized in international circles as statesman and ambassador (the only one ever to represent two countries simultaneously as ambassador; honored four times by the Queen of England, with two degrees of knighthood). President of Guyana's Olympic Committee, four times mayor of Georgetown, and head of four trade unions, Sir Lionel is an international director of FGBMFI and president of its Georgetown Chapter.*

## THREE DECADES OF CONVENTIONS



**U**nbelievable, yet true. At the beginning of his fabulous career the only position offered Walt Disney was that of cartoonist for an unknown church paper. Unable to afford an art studio, he set up shop in a garage. One day an uninvited guest ran across the floor. That mouse did more than share the makeshift studio; he became the inspiration for Mickey Mouse. From that small beginning came a host of cartoon characters, then Disneyland, Disney World in Florida, and EPCOT, Walt Disney's Community of Tomorrow.

Not many miles away from Disney's Fantasy Land, and only a few years later, another seemingly insignificant beginning was destined to have a positive impact on the world. Rather than provide the pleasures of Magic Kingdom in Fantasy Land, however, it would reveal the reality of the spiritual kingdom of our Lord.

A tiny group of 21 men met in a Los Angeles cafeteria in 1951 in an effort to motivate Christian men boldly to declare their faith and to introduce unsaved men to Jesus. For a whole year this nucleus seemed like a stubborn seed refusing to spring from the ground with new growth.

Then God overpowered Demos Shakarian, the founder and president, with a vision of the lost condition of men all over the world, and the power of God to transform their lives.

That vision and the encouragement it brought inspired the men to use every avenue available to share Christ in a non-threatening arena where businessmen could feel comfortable. Banquets and breakfast and luncheon meetings in restaurants and hotels provided a platform for laymen to tell how Jesus had changed their lives. These gatherings spread across America and abroad, until today there are FGBMFI chapters in 83 countries.

One of the many important outreaches of this humble beginning is the conventions. The first annual FGBMFI convention was held in Los Angeles 30 years ago. Four thousand filled the facilities to witness what Demos Shakarian

then described as "the most glorious demonstration of God's power that I have ever seen anywhere in all my life."

In reviewing the conventions through the past three decades one is aware that the original has served well as a pattern and that these annual events continue to have tremendous spiritual value.

Strong biblical teaching by world-renowned spiritual leaders is part of the richness benefiting those attending conventions. Among those who have ministered are Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, Father John Bertolucci, Pat Robertson, Dennis Bennett, Paul Crouch, Jim Bakker, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, John Osteen and many other anointed men of God, a list much too long to be inclusive.

Other names surface from the past, such as Tommy Hicks, Jack Coe, William Branham and the late congressman Walter Judd, statesman and medical missionary to China.



1. For 31 years FGBMFI conventions have been enriched by ministries of great spiritual leaders such as Billy Graham and Oral Roberts, photographed in 1962 with Demos Shakarian. 2. Attendance has continued to increase from the 2,000 at the first convention, now fills largest convention centers in the nation. 3. Appealing youth programs, a vital part of each convention, make it a family affair. 4. Africa's Bob Trench and the late

Vital testimonies of victory in Jesus, shared by laymen in all walks of life—astronauts, attorneys, bankers, home builders, professional athletes, physicians, etc.—have effectively communicated the message of salvation year after year to men in the marketplace.

Without exception, the central purpose of each convention is "to lift up Jesus and to draw men to Him." Whether it is a spiritual invasion of New Orleans, famed for its Mardi Gras, the sun-and-surf setting of Miami, Seattle during the Century of Progress World's Fair, or Philadelphia, birthplace of the nation—every city which hosts what someone has described as "the most unconventional convention you will ever attend" has been richly blessed. Conventioneers both in the sessions and on the streets joyously introduce men and women to Jesus as the answer to life's needs.

God has used our conventions to complement the ministry of the local

church, to encourage pastors and to bridge denominational differences. *Voice* convention coverage in individual years specifically makes positive reference to Catholics, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Seventh Day Adventists, Methodists and Pentecostals among those worshiping and fellowshiping together.

The emphasis in 1956 on "setting aside the differences that divide, and concentrating on the truths that bind us together" has been a common one.

The impact of conventions could not be contained on this continent. Year after year, delegates from other lands were noted in increasing numbers, until last year more than 50 countries were represented.

The theme of the 1965 Chicago convention was "Tell the World Jesus Saves." That year, at the conclusion of testimonies by converted drug addicts, more than 1,000 youth responded when Demos Shakarian gave the invitation.

Four months later a World Convention was held in Royal Albert Hall, London.



*Stew Berlett, president of Canadian FGBMFI, symbolize the presence of hundreds of participants from outside USA. 5. National and international leaders have experienced spiritual impact. Here, FGBMFI leaders pray for America and its president with President Reagan's former legal counsel Herb Ellingwood, currently chairman of U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, who is also an international director of the Fellowship.*

Three chartered SAS jets convoyed reinforcements from North America. Thousands who came to hear Nicky Cruz share his life story were saved. An international conference for pastors reached 400 clergymen. Teams spread throughout England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Others crossed the Channel into Holland, Germany, Spain and Italy.

And the influence of that first convention in Los Angeles' Shrine Auditorium has continued to race around the world, with thousands upon thousands receiving Jesus as Saviour and Lord and being baptized in the Holy Spirit. God has evidenced His presence with miracles and healings. FGBMFI is one of the largest users of convention space, with nearly 150 conventions, rallies and men's advances each year. And each year men have gone out from the miracle services, business seminars and teaching sessions mobilized to be effective ministers in the marketplace. □

# CONVENTIONS

## **30TH ANNUAL WORLD CONVENTION**

**July 5-9, 1983**

Detroit, Michigan  
Write: Mr. Dave Byram  
World Convention Coordinator  
Box 5050  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

## **MARYLAND STATE**

**July 14-16, 1983**

Mount Saint Mary's College  
Emmitsburg  
Write: Mr. Gene McCollum  
417 Heather Ridge Dr.  
Frederick, MD 21701

## **CENTRAL NEW YORK REGIONAL**

**July 21-23, 1983**

Hotel Syracuse  
Hotel Syracuse Square  
Write: Mr. David Wiggins  
Box 84, Syracuse, NY 13215

## **FAMILY ADVANCE**

**July 29-30, 1983**

Campgrounds at  
11722 Johnson Rd., Fort Wayne  
Write: Mr. Jim Clark  
11722 Johnson Rd.  
Fort Wayne, IN 46818

## **TWIN LAKES COUPLES ADVANCE**

**July 30-August 1, 1983**

Twin Lakes Covenant Bible Camp  
Manson  
Write: FGBMFI, Box 13  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

## **NANOOSE BAY FAMILY CAMP**

**August 4-7, 1983**

Nanoose Bay Pentecostal Camp  
Grounds  
Write: Dr. W.R. Rod Lindsay  
2224 Departure Bay Rd.  
Nanaimo, B.C. V9S 3V8

## **ALBERTA REGIONAL**

**August 10-13, 1983**

Westin Hotel, Edmonton  
Write: Mr. Ken McAmmond  
79 Sunset Blvd.  
St. Albert, Alberta T8N 0P2

## **ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, AREA WIDE REGIONAL**

**August 10-13, 1983**

Marriott Hotel, St. Louis  
Write: Mr. Walter Thorn  
861 Manitou  
Rock Hill, MO 63119

## **4TH KENTUCKY REGIONAL**

**August 11-13, 1983**

Executive Inn  
Rivermont-Owensboro  
Write: Mr. Fred H. Garst  
Box 1105  
Owensboro, KY 42302

## **MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL**

**August 11-13, 1983**

Holiday Inn-Downtown  
Write: Dr. Wm. Keller  
Box 625, Laurel, MS 39440

## **ONTARIO COUPLES ADVANCE**

**August 12-13, 1983**

Holiday Inn, Guelph  
Write: Mr. Don Moss  
6 Terrace Lane  
Guelph, Ontario N1G 2Y3

## **NEW MEXICO REGIONAL**

**August 24-27, 1983**

Hilton Inn, Albuquerque  
Write: Mr. Clem Dixon  
5907 Alice, N.E., Ste. A  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

## **HARRISBURG REGIONAL**

**August 17-20, 1983**

Messiah College, Grantham  
Write: Mr. Leo Nehr  
6210 Whitehill Dr.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

## **WESTERN NEW YORK/ ROCHESTER REGIONAL**

**August 17-20, 1983**

Genesee Plaza Holiday Inn  
Write: Mr. Jim McDonald  
79 Norcrest Dr.  
Rochester, NY 14617

## **GREATER DALLAS/FORT WORTH 19TH ANNUAL**

**August 18-20, 1983**

Anatole Hotel, Dallas  
Write: Mr. Bill McGill, FGBMFI  
Box 222252  
Dallas, TX 75222

## **ALABAMA STATE REGIONAL**

**August 23-25, 1983**

The Birmingham Hyatt House  
Write: Mr. William A. Abercrombie  
1413 Woodland Ave.  
Birmingham, AL 35211

## **UTAH FAMILY CAMP**

**August 26-28, 1983**

Granite School Dist.  
Retreat Center, Mill Hollow  
Write: Mr. Victor Martinez  
6833 Village Green Rd.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84121

## **FORT DODGE REGIONAL**

**August 31-September 3, 1983**

Holiday Inn, Fort Dodge  
Write: FGBMFI  
Box 13  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501

## **FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S CHAPTER OUTREACH**

As this issue was being prepared for publication, the following chapters were submitted as having been recently chartered. The president's name and telephone number are included in this list for your information. Write for information regarding the date and location of a chapter meeting in your area.

**B.C. CANADA:** Fort Nelson Chapter, Art Joyce (604) 774-3367. **ENGLAND:** Tunbridge Wells, Leslie Green 0892-21582. **HONDURAS:** Comyagua Chapter, Alberto Chain. **SCOTLAND:** Dunfermline, Michael Banks 0383-27223; Linlithgow/Bo'Ness Chapter, Ewen L. Todd 0506-827720. **UNITED STATES:** **ARIZONA:** Northeast Phoenix Chapter, Edward F. Targosz (602) 971-1294. **ILLINOIS:** Indianapolis-East Side, Tom Petty (317) 894-4007. **KENTUCKY:** Ohio County Chapter, Earl Phelps (502) 275-4577. **NEVADA:** Tonopah Chapter, Charles Gordon (702) 482-6997. **OHIO:** Norwalk Chapter, Richard French (216) 834-2821. **RHODE ISLAND:** Greater Fall River Chapter, Brydson Sharples (401) 624-9398. **SOUTH DAKOTA:** Bear/Butte Chapter, Humbert Raposa (605) 347-3437. **TEXAS:** Coronado Chapter, Sherod L. Mengel, Jr. (915) 584-9905. **VERMONT:** Waterbury-Area Chapter, Robert Crenshaw (802) 244-7269.

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# DESPERATE



Tom Coleman, Fayetteville, NC

It must have been a strange sight for anyone who happened to be driving into town that night: my two sons, tramping through wet, knee-high weeds by the roadside, their flashlights scanning a huge billboard as though searching for some important piece of information that wouldn't wait till morning.

As it turns out, that's just what they were doing: searching for a vital number they hoped would change my life.

God knows I needed *something*. I'd been arrested two and one-half

months earlier for robbing a bank.

I'd never been in trouble with the law before, never seen the inside of a jail cell except in the movies. But things had been going badly at work. I was under a lot of stress, with bills to pay and no money to pay them with. For the first time in my life I actually didn't have enough to pay the rent or to buy food for my family. For a working man, a man who's always accepted his responsibilities and supported his family... well, that's a bitter pill to swallow.



*The name of Jesus is "lifted up" daily at Nationwide Golf & Printing Company, where Tom Coleman is employed.*

On January 7, 1982 I walked into a bank, handed a paper sack to a teller and asked her to put some money in it, which she did. Then I walked out and went home.

The police arrived about an hour later and took me to Cumberland County jail, where I spent the next 74 days.

I'll never forget hearing that cell

door bang shut. That's when you know you're a criminal. There's a finality about it, knowing that for the first time in your life you're locked behind a door and you can't come in or go out as you please. Someone else literally has in his hands the keys to your life.

Bad as it was for me, though, it was worse for my wife and 16-year-old son. I'd left them penniless and with absolutely no means of support. My wife had to apply for food stamps and welfare and all those other things that she'd never encountered before. She and our sons had to face their friends and our creditors.

My wife thought about suicide, but she and our children were devout Catholics, so she knew suicide wasn't the answer. Fortunately, the priest and people from her church were loving and understanding, and helped her through this crisis.

On March 22, 1982 I went to court for sentencing. The judge called only one witness: the FBI agent who had arrested me. Amazingly, that man had nothing but good things to say about me. Right then I felt that God's hand must be there, helping me. The judge issued a three months' continuance of my trial so that I could get outside counseling, then released me on my own recognizance.

My oldest son, Tommy, had come to Raleigh from his home in Houston to be at my trial. On the way home we talked about how we were going to solve my problems. Tommy said, "Dad, I know what you need. There's



an organization called Full Gospel Business Men, and if you go to one of their meetings you'll find what you're looking for."

Tommy looked in the phone book for the number of the local chapter but couldn't find it. We learned later it was listed under "FGBMFI" instead of the full name. But in the meantime, that didn't stop Tommy.

"You know," my wife said, "I saw a sign down on Robinson Street, and I'm sure it advertised Full Gospel Business Men. Seems to me there was a phone number on it, too."

So that's how my two sons came to be wading through the weeds by the side of the road, waving flashlights at a billboard. Tommy had to laugh when he saw the message, because it seemed so appropriate to the circumstances:

"Wise men still seek Him... Jesus."

They got the phone number off the board and called Noble Stanley, president of the Fayetteville chapter. The very next day Noble came to my apartment and invited me to an FGBMFI meeting that Saturday, March 27.

When I got to the meeting I didn't really know how to take it at first. I'd reach out to shake someone's hand and they'd grab hold of it, pull me in and hug me! I'd been a loner all my life, never had much to do with other people. This was a new experience for me.

I saw that these men had something I wanted, and that morning I went forward to make Jesus the Lord of my life. I felt God's love and peace

surge right through me. I'd heard of being born again, and that's just what it was like. I felt as though I were starting life with a clean slate.

The next day from pastor Dr. Oscar Poole and his Spirit-filled Methodist congregation I got the same treatment all over again. People hugged me and told me they loved me. You can't imagine how much that meant after all I'd been through and all I'd put my family through.

When we returned to court June 22 I heard the judge say, "I want you to know that in my 11½ years of being a judge, you're the first man to commit this type of crime and not be sent to prison for it." He gave me a five-year sentence, which was reduced to the 74 days I'd already spent in jail, and I was put on three-year probation.

My financial situation has improved greatly. Now I work for one of the FGBMFI chapter directors in Fayetteville, selling printing supplies to golf country clubs all over the United States.

Yes, wise men still seek Him. Better yet, *He's* still seeking *men*, even if they aren't wise enough to look for Him.

So if you've been looking for something but don't quite know what it is, look to Jesus. *He's* the answer you've been searching for. □

---

*Tom Coleman is a telephone salesman for Nationwide Golf & Printing Company. He and his wife have four children. He is a member of Fayetteville Chapter, FGBMFI, and of L'Vie World Outreach Center, where he is bookkeeper and treasurer.*



1. Members of Executive Committee and representatives from the world's seven areas participated in development of a strategy to reach every nation in the world. Front row, left to right: Oscar Pinto Rossell, Honduras; Khoo Oon Theam, Singapore; Jim Jarvis, Canada; Lynwood Maddox; Demos Shakarian; Tom Ashcraft; Earl Prickett; Don Ostrom; Daniel Uwadiae, Nigeria; Bernard Gray, Australia; Jerry Kibarabara, Kenya. Back row, left to right: Gunnar Olsen, Sweden; Norman Norwood; Narciso Padilla, Philippines; Chike Mbanalu, Nigeria; Bob Horton, New Zealand; Bill Warnock; Arthur Evanson; Bob Spillman, England; Adolf Zinsser, Germany; Steve Shakarian. Participants not shown: Bob Trench, South Africa; Doug Fowler. (Where their country is not indicated, the men reside in USA.) 2. Steve Shakarian, chief operating officer, lists input by group as Khoo Oon Theam facilitates discussions. 3. President Demos Shakarian gives insights based on his vast experience working with men around the world. 4. Small study groups apply biblical principles to possible solutions to determine the will of God. 5. Prayer and praise set a high spiritual tone for the working sessions. Doug Fowler, M.D., inspires the men with his message on the raising of Lazarus. Tongues, interpretations and prophecies bring messages from heaven.



## WORLD STRATEGY

Key, pivotal, historic and exciting are the descriptive words FGBMFI International Director Khoo Oon Theam uses to underscore the importance of international strategy sessions held April 17-21, at Laymen's World Headquarters, Costa Mesa, California.

Oon Theam, owner of a consulting firm in Singapore, acted as facilitator. The group included members of the Executive Committee and selected FGBMFI leaders to ensure participation of three men from each of the seven areas of the world.

The strategy sessions were preceded by a year-long process beginning with an organizational audit by the Executive Committee last July. This initial study revealed the need for directional planning and structure realignment in order for membership to fulfill the vision God had given Founder/President Demos Shakarian 30 years earlier.

A Lake of the Ozarks retreat in February, called specifically to seek the mind of the Lord, and a mid-year meeting of international directors January 24-29 at St. Petersburg, Florida, provided essential preparation for the April planning meeting.

Oon Theam expresses sincere appreciation for FGBMFI attainments of the last three decades, stating that "America has been very outreach-oriented, sponsoring airlifts and raising substantial sums to spread the Gospel. Without these efforts FGBMFI would not now be ministering in 83 nations. However, we are entering an exciting new era and must be willing to make the necessary changes to achieve

our global objective."

In assessing accomplishments of the five intensive days, Demos Shakarian is satisfied that the overall purpose has been achieved. He says, "A clear statement of vision and mission has been drafted and unanimously approved. The mission has been translated into goals, objectives and targets which will result in the reaching of every nation on earth by 1988."

The planning group will present a briefing on their goals and structure recommendations to international directors July 3 and 4 for approval. Thereafter, planning will be required to provide strategy executions for all longterm goal objectives. Appropriate training and resources will be needed to equip every member for this ministry.

"The final step required," says Oon Theam, "will be for the seven areas to come quickly to the realization that this is God's plan for the end times. He has given us the strategy and is raising up an army of Christian men to reach the world. It is essential in God's army that each of us agree with the war plan and fulfill our role."

We believe this is God's plan to help us bring in the last great harvest.

"It excited me to be part of this great move," adds Oon Theam. Each of the 26 participants shared not only his sense of expectancy but also his belief that "members are ready and waiting to follow our Commander, Jesus Christ." □



## **FGBMFI CAPTURES COVETED AWARDS**

*J.W. Turney, representing Southern California Motion Picture Council, presents Golden Halo Awards before crowd of 1,200. Below, left to right: Denny Ermel, Steve Shakarian, J.W. Turney and Demos Shakarian.*



Among Golden Halo Awards presented by the Southern California Motion Picture Council April 6 at Sportsmen's Lodge, Studio City, California, were three won by FGBMFI television programs.

Demos Shakarian, founder/president of FGBMFI, received the Bronze Halo award, recognizing him as an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the television industry, especially in the presentation of the Gospel.

Bronze Halo awards were also presented to Steve Shakarian, executive producer, and Denny Ermel, producer/director,

for excellence in production of "The Happiest People on Earth" and "Good News!" programs.

The awards luncheon was attended by 1,200 persons, including well-known celebrities Dennis Weaver, Jane Wyman and Dan Haggerty.

The 45-year-old Council is committed to promoting higher standards in program content in the television and motion-picture industry. The quality of excellence recognized by the organization is an important factor in the effectiveness of FGBMFI's television ministry. □



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## THREEFOLD PURPOSE OF FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

1. *To witness to God's presence and power in the world today through the message of the total Gospel for the total man, and by this to reach men for Jesus Christ, especially those having the same social, cultural or business interests as the person doing the witnessing.*

2. *To provide a basis of Christian fellowship among all men everywhere through an organism not directly associated with any specific church but cooperating with all those of like mind, and to inspire its members to be active in their respective churches.*

Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International does not start churches. Rather, we desire solely to be a service arm to existing ones.

3. *To bring about a greater measure of unity and spirit of harmony in the body of Christ, where members are united in a common effort for the good of the whole body.*

## HOW TO START A FULL GOSPEL BUSINESS MEN'S CHAPTER

Requests come in daily to start new chapters. If you have this burden laid on your heart and see the vision for your community, write for complete information to: Chapter Department, FGBMFI, P.O. Box 5050, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.

# The Braxton Story

**H**e hated poverty, loved America and served God with all his might. That one bold statement underlines the powerful drives that motivated S. Lee Braxton, one of the five original international directors of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International.

Lee Braxton was a giant of a man whom I cherished as a warm personal friend. His distinguished career included valued contributions in many areas of Christian and community service, as chairman of the board of regents of Oral Roberts University; a director of Mercantile Bank and Trust Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma; and president of Braxton-Warren Company, Whiteville, North Carolina, where he had served as mayor, organized the First National Bank and been president and charter member of the Chamber of Commerce. The list goes on, and the recognitions and awards are equally lengthy for this man who was a world traveler, lecturer and philosopher.

Lee Braxton received the ultimate promotion when on November 18, 1982, at the age of 78, he heard his Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

As thousands of members and friends of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International gather for the 30th Annual World Convention, at a time when our country is celebrating the anniversary of its independence, it seems appropriate to share his words expressing his love for his country.

In a speech which won him the George Washington Medal of the Freedoms Foundation, the following was part of his defense of his country:

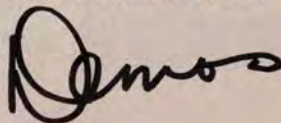
"If America is as bad as her critics claim she is, why do people of all other lands want to come here?

"Some say that the whole world distrusts America. I do not believe this. If it were true, would America continue to be the magnet that draws more immigrants from other countries than any other nation?

"If America is so full of evil, would more than 130,000 students leave their countries and homes to attend universities in America?

"We have made great strides, but the American dream is not finished. . . . I don't know the answers for solving all our problems, or how to meet all the challenges, but I do have faith and confidence that we will. We've always turned our difficulties into opportunities and advantages."

His testimony (*Voice*, April, 1972) is included in this anniversary issue as a challenge to every man who reads it to fill the large place occupied by this spiritual warrior who hated poverty, loved America and served God with all his might.



Demos Shakarian  
President/Founder  
FGBMFI





S. Lee Braxton

June 5, 1904—November 18, 1982

I never had the opportunity of being a little boy. My blacksmith father struggled in our small North Carolina town to provide a bare existence for his large family, and my childhood years were spent doing a man's work for a child's pay.

I was the tenth of 12 children in our family. Bicycles and toys existed only in our dreams. We grew up on the "other side of the tracks"—lived poor, thought poor and were taught that as Christians we were supposed to be poor.

It is no sin to be poor, but it can be awfully inconvenient. Conversely, it is no sin to have plenty of this world's goods if we use them for the purpose for which God gave them. But quite a few years were required for me to learn that.

My sister began taking me to Sunday school when I was five. Scrubbed and dressed in my scanty best, I never missed a Sunday for seven years (eight, except for an attack of appendicitis that put me in the hospital). There was an attendance contest with a shiny bicycle as prize. My dreams were shattered when I found they wouldn't give me credit for the Sundays I was ill.

Today that doesn't sound like such a world-shaking affair, but then it hurt more deeply than anyone, except someone who has known a deprived childhood, could understand. My reaction was quite violent. At 14 I quit school, ran away from home and away from Sunday school and church.



For three years, alone in a strange and unfriendly world, I lived without a purpose, trying to make my own way, having no faith in myself or anyone else. My Christian upbringing no longer had any real bearing on my daily living. Yet I still clung stubbornly to the belief that there must be a better way to live.



One evening when I was about 17 a group of us boys went to a revival meeting we'd heard about. We didn't plan to go inside, just to hang around the church and poke fun at the "holy rollers." Standing on the outside looking in, I saw for the first time in my life people who seemed genuinely happy. I was fascinated.

As one at a time they told of great things God had done for them, a strange feeling came over me. I didn't know that anybody in the world was really happy—especially Christians.

My early training had given me the impression that the longer the face the more spiritual the soul. When a young man told how God had set him free from the cigarette habit something said to me, "Here is what you have been looking for."

I listened spellbound as the powerful words of the preacher carried me back to Sunday-school days and lessons learned about Jesus. From all over that church, sinners came and knelt around what they called the "altar bench." When I saw the glow on their faces it seemed everything good and worthwhile was inside . . . and I was outside.

The next night I was back at that little pinewood church, but this time I went in, determined to find what those people had that made them so happy. I found it, kneeling at the altar, where Jesus met me and forgave my sins. Someone real and glorious entered my life and my happiness knew no bounds.

A few nights later I was filled with the Holy Spirit. He has been my never-failing guide and comforter all these years. To be truly converted and to experience the new birth is the greatest miracle known to mankind, but the infilling of the Holy Spirit gives a Christian power and wisdom to witness and to live the Christian life. In my estimation the power of the Holy Spirit, when used as God intended, is greater than atomic or any other power. I cannot put into words what this experience has meant to me. I

just praise God for the baptism in the Holy Spirit and for speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4).

One day about 15 years ago I was flying my single-engine plane over some rugged terrain when a piston rod broke in the engine. I was not within gliding distance of any open field or landing place. I barely got over



some 65-foot trees into a small clearing and, not knowing if I would survive the landing, the last thing I said audibly was, "Thank God for the Holy Ghost."

The plane was completely demolished; however, after 37 days in the hospital I was released with no permanent injuries.

Many times as I have met with high officials in Washington, D.C. on business matters such as seeking a charter for a new national bank, I have been given the right words to say

which I did not think of beforehand. I believe this was the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. If space were available I could use it all in telling about this wonderful experience. The main reason I felt led to accept membership on the founding board of Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International is its special emphasis on the baptism in the Holy Spirit and its witness for Christ to other businessmen.

A few months after my baptism I enrolled at Holmes Bible School in Greenville, South Carolina. I had no money, but that particular school accepted students by faith if they wanted to come in and share the common table. Usually we had food (sometimes we didn't), but we all had faith and believed God would supply our needs.

We hear much about faith, we read volumes about it, but actually I think we know very little about the kind of faith of which the Bible speaks. The Lord has seen fit to give me many lessons in sheer faith. Some have been pretty rugged, but I thank Him from the bottom of my heart for every one of them.

Upon leaving that school I returned to my hometown, with a railroad ticket purchased with borrowed money. In those days before the general use of automobiles and airplanes, travel by rail was the ultimate. I had to change trains in a little town about eight miles from my final destination and a boyhood friend who lived there came to see me between trains. Trying to be

helpful and thinking I had forgotten my luggage, when I started to get on the train he asked, "Lee, where is your suitcase?" He didn't know that all my earthly possessions were in the pasteboard box under my arm. Let me assure you that was really an embarrassing experience. Travel on a train without a suitcase was unheard of.

When the train pulled into the depot of my hometown, Norma (the girl I later married) was there to meet

had something better for me. In fact, it began to occur to me that surely God had enough and to spare for His children, and that even if having *plenty* might be sinful, as we had been taught, He wanted us to at least have *enough*.

Norma and I were married (by faith plus a loan of \$50). God blessed our home with four lovely children, none of them born in a hospital because we couldn't afford it. Many times our



me. Again I was most terribly embarrassed, as a local boy who had been away at school and had come back on the train, to disembark with my clothes in a little box under my arm. Not wanting to be seen that way walking down the street with the girl I hoped would be my future wife, I got the station agent to keep the box in his office until I called for it.

Right then a hatred for poverty began to creep into my heart. I felt certain that somewhere, somehow, God

meals were pretty scanty, but we never failed to give thanks for whatever we had. I had learned the power of prayer and faith in God while in Bible school—that "all things are possible to them that believe." Now I began to seek the key that would open the door to God's storehouse of blessing, for I felt certain it contained plenty for all.

The opportunity to put this into practice came soon after we were married. My first business venture ended in complete failure, with the

loss of our home and furniture. We moved to Whiteville, North Carolina, and another business failure sent me to my knees.

It had taken quite a while for God to bring me to my knees—and to my senses. Now I told Him about my dreams, my hopes, my failures. It was really a pitiful tale of trying to do things in my own strength and my own way instead of in His strength and His way. I gave up that night and entered into a partnership with God.

It was almost unbelievable how things suddenly began to turn in my favor. Profits began to increase. I expanded my little repair-and-parts shop into a complete auto-parts store. We were very careful to give God the glory for all the increase. The business prospered beyond our wildest dreams until we not only owned our own home but also had 30 rentals and a wholesale auto-parts business. I held an official capacity in 22 different companies besides, and had an annual gross income of more than I had ever dared to dream. I organized the First National Bank in Whiteville and promoted the building of a radio station and a modern hotel. My fellow citizens elected me to several terms on the city council and as mayor, and by appointment of the governor I served on the state planning board.

This didn't happen overnight, of course. Nor do I suggest that there is a pat formula that causes success to drop automatically into a man's lap. Neither is it the easiest thing in the world for a human being to trust God

when there seems no outward supporting evidence. Sometimes we must *unlearn* some things before God can get through to us. God had to give me some real jolts before He was able to show me what faith was all about and convince me that receiving the blessings of a loving God didn't necessarily impugn one's spirituality.

Material goods and civic honors were very pleasing. At 44, having reached what many call success, I was preparing to retire. Still, the material things of life that seem so important when one lacks them did not



*S. Lee Braxton, Demos Shakarian and Miner Arganbright, three of the five original FGBMFI directors.*

satisfy the desire of my soul. I had made God a promise, but had become so absorbed in business it seemed I was not doing very much to fulfill that promise. So as rapidly as possible I disengaged myself from the business ventures that required my time and began looking for an outlet to serve God.

A Christian doesn't have to look very long or far if he really wants to be a witness for His Lord. While serving

as mayor of our town it was one of my duties to hold Mayor's Court. There I learned a good deal about what it means to be a witness.

Straight and true testimony is a very important thing. Many times the witness carries more weight than a skilled attorney, although the attorney has his place. The witness is not required to know all the law or to interpret it. He need not be a teacher, preacher, attorney or any specially trained person. All he has to do is tell what he *knows* and what he *saw*—not what someone else told him. Jesus gave an example of a good witness in John 3:11: "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

Christ said, "Ye are my witnesses."

Two things happened to me at about the time I began earnestly to seek a way to get out where the spiritual action was. I met Oral Roberts, and I met Demos Shakarian and FGBMFI. Since that time there hasn't been a moment that wasn't filled to overflowing with active service for my Lord. Nor has there been a day when He did not bless my life.

Flying my own plane back and forth across the United States, hopping from revival campaign to FGBMFI convention, new chapter meeting or board meeting, I have logged tens of thousands of miles in the air and been able to minister person to person and heart to heart with thousands of people.

I can never thank God enough for His blessings upon my life and for

having called me as a Christian businessman to be His witness. This doesn't mean I've reached "the end of the rainbow" or that there are no more tests of faith. As long as we live on this earth such tests will come, but God is abundantly able to give us the victory.

I have found there are **two important laws of life: the law of faith and the law of compromise.** That which you might gain through compromise of your convictions will never satisfy you, nor will you be able to retain it. But that which you hold onto by faith will bless you and you will be able to keep it.

I challenge you with this thought: God has something better for you—a greater degree of wholeness in Christ, a new job, an opportunity to serve Him in a wider outreach. Whatever it is, *lay hold on it by faith* and claim the victory that is yours in Christ. According to your faith, so it will be done unto you. □

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*S. Lee Braxton began as an auto mechanic, then purchased his own service station. His phenomenal career in business took him on to become, first, the owner of an automotive parts wholesale company; then, of an automobile agency, radio station, bank and finance company; and eventually, of 30 companies. He retired at 44, having made fortunes enough for five men, to devote his time and resources to Christian causes.*

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If you have a testimony that will glorify God and bring others to Jesus through *Voice*, you are invited to request guidelines from the Editorial Department, Box 5050, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.

Full Gospel Business Men's

# VOICE

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## SIX SCRIPTURAL STEPS TO SALVATION

Men still cry, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible provides a clear answer.

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE:** "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

2. **REPENT:** "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

3. **CONFESS:** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).

4. **FORSAKE:** "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord . . . for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

5. **BELIEVE:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

6. **RECEIVE:** "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11,12).

### Why not make your eternal decision right now:

"Lord Jesus, I believe You died for my sins and I ask Your forgiveness. I receive You now as my personal Saviour and invite You to manage my life from this day forward. Amen."

Write us to tell of your decision. We'll send you a booklet, "Now That You've Received Christ." Our mailing address: Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, P.O. Box 5050, Costa Mesa, CA 92626.



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