

Cleaning Fish

I will start with my experience on the mission field with my dear wife, Sue, and our two baby sons, Grant (who was just three years old), and Todd (fourteen months). After quitting my job as a banker, and selling all of our possessions, Sue and I headed for the 'Jesus tent' in Norfolk, Virginia. There we planned to serve the Lord with this group of hippies who evangelized with a big tent and went to the streets every day to share the gospel. Today, many would think it a weird cult, but then nobody really knew of cults. We were just simple kids who had gotten saved and wanted to share the love of Jesus Christ.

We arrived with our little camper, full of zeal, and ready to preach the gospel. But this new environment was strange to us. Here I was; a straight looking banker, fresh out of a suit and a beautiful home, in the midst of all these hippies with faded blue jeans and long hair. Only a few in the group didn't have beards (and they were the sisters!). Long dresses and combat boots was normal attire for the women, and I won't even mention how the brothers looked. I wondered if they had ever known what a home was. But still, I could feel God in the lives of these people. We really felt the Lord's presence in each of them, and soon came to appreciate the new life God had for us.

In our first morning meeting with the group, which was called *Body Meeting*, I praised the Lord until I was dizzy. During that meeting brother Bill (who was the main elder) asked, "Who knows how to fish?" I blurted out, "Hey Bill, I even brought my fishing pole!" He shouted, "We have our man!" So that day I was recruited... not to fish, but to *clean* a couple hundred pounds of fish for the team.

I must have done a good job, because after that the elders asked for my work qualifications. I stated proudly that they could make good use of me in the office since I was experienced in finance, accounting, and office management. They responded, "That's great! But we're electing you as *kitchen overseer*, since it seems that's your greatest attribute." This was the beginning of a new life of faith, as I was put to work in the back of a semi-truck, preparing food for this team of disciples.

Taking On Washington

After a month of cooking lentils and noodles, Bill came to me one day and asked if I would go with another brother to look for a tent lot in Washington D.C. I was flattered and asked, "Why me?" He explained that I was one of the few 'straight looking' people in the team and that the others might scare off the authorities; that made me feel really great... but soon I was off to Washington with a buddy named Delan.

In Washington brother Delan Thompson and I found a 'Jesus House' that was taking in kids with drug problems. They let us stay for free. The person in charge was a Jewish sister named Doris who, prior to being saved had sold T-shirts on the beaches of Miami. She tried to make us feel at home... and we would have if we had been raised in an insane asylum.

One guy, who I will call Ben, was totally "burnt out" on drugs and spent his entire day staring at the wall. Doris was once so fed up with him she pushed him out the front door and told him to go get a job. Eight hours later I opened the front door and there was Ben... he hadn't moved one inch. Then there was Freddy. He had orange hair and could climb anything. He was as crazy as a bed bug, but was manageable... that is until Ben decided to try to nail him on a cross in the back of the house. I thought that was bad enough until the day Freddy climbed into the bell house of the Methodist church across the street during a big wedding. Just as the groom was about to say, "I do," Freddy let out a yell and, like the hunch back of Notre Dame, jumped down from the church rafters! This made Doris dream of returning to selling T-shirts in Miami.

Eventually we got around to our purpose for being in D.C., and went to the park commission for a permit to set up our five-thousand-person tent. They laughed at us and said they would arrest us if we even came to D.C. with our trucks. Returning to the house we were very discouraged. It seemed totally impossible. Later Delan and myself thought, "Well, here we are in D.C., let's go to the White House." So we gathered up some tracts and a few *Jesus Street* papers (a publication of CITA with testimonies of the team) and headed out.

When we arrived we saw an old gentleman in front of the White House with a big brief case looking as if he were waiting for somebody. Delan and I approached him and started talking to him about the Lord, and we gave him one of our *Jesus Papers*.

He asked, "What are you guys doing in D.C.?" We introduced ourselves and explained that we wanted to come into town with a big tent to preach the gospel, but that the park commission had turned us down. He said, "Why not put your tent on the mall grounds in front of the Washington monument?" We just looked at him blankly. But then he went into talking about how anti-war demonstrators get permission for things like this, but Christians can't.

We said, "Amen, brother! But what can we do?" He scribbled something on a piece of paper, handed it to us and said, "Be at this address tomorrow morning at nine o'clock." Then, just as a limo pulled up, he reached out and shook our hands and said, "I'm Senator Hubert Humphrey. Keep up the good work." I wanted to say, "You mean, the ex-Vice President? Forgive me, but you look a lot different on television." But he disappeared into the limo before we could say anything at all.

The next day we went to the address he gave us where we found two marines with white gloves waiting for us. They took us to an elevator in the office and we went down to what seemed like a secret entrance, and then onto a small cart on rails that took us under the House of Congress. Here we were just a couple of simple Jesus people standing in the corridors of congress with the tourists looking down from above on us.

A gentleman approached me and introduced himself as Senator Hughes. He asked if we would mind waiting for a while as Congress was still in session, and that he would meet with us immediately afterwards. In my heart I wanted to look at my watch and say, "I can't wait long, I'm a busy man." But in reality I acted like a puppy dog and said, "Oh, no problem, take as long as you like. The government must go on."

After a short time that seemed an eternity, he returned and told us he was born-again, and that Senator Humphrey had asked him to help us. He asked what we needed. I explained our need for a lot to put up the big tent and a place for the team to set up camp. He asked, "What sort of group are you?"

I began to explain, "The main elder's name is Bill..." and before I could say anything else he said, "Oh, Billy Graham crusades?" I replied, "Well... not exactly." In my mind I was visualizing Brother Bill in his shoulder length hair and foot-long beard; He looked more like ZZ Top than Billy Graham. But I didn't want to blow our cover, so I just told him that we were an old-time tent revival team. (In my heart I whispered, "God forgive me for not mentioning that we *also* have a Jesus rock band, and that most of the team members are ex-drug addicts, *Hells' Angels* mamas, ex-pimps, and representatives of just about every other strange sub-culture imaginable.")

Senator Hughes got excited and said that he wanted me to meet Senator Hatfield and join him at the upcoming Presidential Breakfast. I was so excited that I nearly shouted "Sure!" But then he said, "First, we want to visit the team when they get into town." I thought, oh no... there goes my moment of fame.

When we returned to the park commission, they had a distinctly different attitude. They were *very* polite and said they had never received word from "so high up" regarding the use of the mall grounds. "Even Billy Sunday was turned down, so how did you guys do it?" I said, "We know the Man at the *very top*." They asked how many days we wanted to occupy the grounds, to which I replied, "Not days, but two months." He took a step back and asked me if I knew that this was the most expensive piece of real estate in the world. "That's why we want it", I exclaimed, adding, "Perhaps we need to go back to Senator Humphrey?"

He gasped! "Oh! No, no! We will have your permit in a few days." We danced all the way back to the Jesus House. When we got back with the others at the main camp we were considered heroes of the faith... but that didn't get me out of the kitchen. Even a Vice-President couldn't do that.