

Briefings

The entrance of thy words giveth light (Ps. 119:130)

December 2010

And Never Forget

by Becky Kerr, Editor/Journalist

As another year draws to a close, we will all find ourselves looking back over the events of 2010. Our minds will revisit happy places and times as well as those times and places not so happy. The Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, is replete with admonitions to **remember** the Lord, to dwell on His doings; and the end of a calendar year seems a very fitting time to do so.

The remembering that Bibles International staff members around the world will do this year carries greater-than-normal significance, because 2011 commemorates BI's 30th anniversary. Though we are a decade short of the Israelites' years in the wilderness, our need to remember is very similar to their own: "And thou shalt **remember** all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these

... years ..., to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no" (Deut. 8:2). As a Bible society, we live and work for the days in which people's lives are changed by a translation of God's Word in their language. Yet, as we remember all the ways the Lord our God has led *us* these past years, *our* lives are changed as well. We are humbled; we are forced to examine and to prove that what's in our hearts is pleasing to the God we serve.

In the April and August 2011 issues of *Briefings*, we will specifically recount some of God's "marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth" (Psalm 105:5). We will advise you of ways that we are choosing to celebrate our 30th year, both in the States and around the world. With words and pictures we will seek to bring you back with us as we "**remember** the days

of old" (Psalm 143:5). We will all be blessed as we realize afresh in 2011 that God is our rock and our redeemer (see Psalm 78:35).

Perhaps no one in the BI organization is getting a more "up-close and personal" view of BI's history than Elaine Schulte, who is writing a book on our first 30 years of ministry. She is actually *living* the admonition found in Deuteronomy 32:7: "**Remember** the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee," as she

pores over documents and interviews those who have gone before. You will want to have this book when it is released. The pages written thus far are a stirring testimony to Psalm 45:17: "I will make thy name to be **remembered**

in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

A byproduct of following God's admonition to remember his works is the ability to look to the years ahead with confidence. The God who delivered so many in the past, including us, never changes. The works of old show us what the works of the present and the future can be. In the upcoming *Briefings* we will also share with you our prayers and plans for the next 30 years, should God give them to us.

God bless you as you celebrate the birth of His Son this Christmas season. And may our prayer for 2011 be that "All the ends of the world shall **remember** and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (Psalm 22:27).

Some trust in chariots, and some
in horses: but we will remember the
name of the LORD our God.

Psalm 20:7



IN A WORD

P. Hantz Bernard, Director

On July 15, 1981, the General Council of Baptist Mid-Missions (BMM) commissioned Rev. Paul Versluis to start a department to raise funds to print Bibles produced by BMM missionaries throughout the world. With entrepreneurial passion, Versluis started crisscrossing the country on behalf of the new ministry. He never fathomed that the office he started in his basement would eventually grow to become a full-fledged division of BMM and a complete Bible society.

As we begin our 30th year of ministry, it behooves us to celebrate God’s faithfulness throughout those years. The 2011 issues of *Briefings* will feature historical sketches and present events commemorating our anniversary. A few new programs and productions will be introduced.

The highlight of the year, however, will rest on what we love most and do best: Bible translating. From this fall through December 2011, many new Scriptures will be printed: Simte NT (India, Asia), already printed, November 2010 dedication; Manipuri Bible (India), to the printer soon, dedication projected for February 2011; Kabiyé NT (Togo, Africa), December 2010; Quechua NT (Peru, South America), December 2010; Dagba NT (Chad, Africa), July 2011; Rito NT (Chad), July 2011; Chakma NT (India), July 2011; Dagaare NT (Ghana, Africa), August 2011; Zotung NT (Myanmar, Asia), fall 2011.

Celebrating our history serves as an impetus to do more and do it better. After a long dearth in staffing, our team is poised to welcome many new gifted and well-trained members. Some of them have labored for years to earn their Ph.D’s in order to become productive contributors to our ministry. We are excited about the prospects, in spite of the challenging economy that tends to stymie our effort. Our God is greater than all the obstacles that may come our way. Join with us, not only to celebrate God’s faithfulness during the past 30 years, but also to move forward with confidence. We know that His grace that has led us thus far will lead us until the successful completion of every project. May we continue to keep our gaze intently on our goal: a conservative Bible translation in every language and a Bible in every hand.

Graduate-Level Servants

Retirement means different things to different people. For many it conjures up an image of extra time, extra money, and a level of relaxation only dreamed of during working days. Not so for the couples who represent Bibles International in other parts of the country. One such couple has been Rev. Paul Lobb and his wife Edwina.



The Lobbs were part of the BI Stewardship Department shown above. Edwina is seated, center, and Paul is behind her.

For the past five years of their retirement the Lobbs have represented Bibles International in the midwestern states of Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Wisconsin. Their zeal for God and ministry didn’t stop when they reached a certain age, and many weekends found them in churches other than their own so that the ministry of Bibles International could be known and shared by others. Prior to their retirement, Rev. Lobb pastored for many years, and both he and Edwina used their musical abilities in the Lord’s service as well.

At the annual BI meeting this past August, Rev. Lobb announced that “We will be retiring from our retirement.” The BI staff was saddened by the news, having come to know and love this very special couple. But obviously the heavy travel schedule is taxing for any age, and the Lobbs have certainly gone the extra mile in their service to the Lord. Only God knows the measure of impact the Lobbs have had on people’s lives. Their desire was to connect the eternal souls of people with the eternal Word of God, and by God’s grace they succeeded.

Bibles International staff members are privileged to work alongside people, both in the States and abroad, whose lives are wrapped up in loving God and loving others. Thank you, Paul and Edwina, for blessing us with who you are in Christ. May His blessings be on this, your “real” retirement.

Changing the Character of Chad

by Mark Seymour as interviewed by Elaine Schulte

Chad: A country in central Africa deemed to be one of the poorest in the world.

Mark Seymour: A Baptist Mid-Missions missionary who grew up in Chad as a missionary kid. He and his wife Debbie served in Chad for 25 years and are now serving as representatives of Baptist Mid-Missions.

BI Harvest Dinner: An annual event held in Grand Rapids that brings BI friends together for an evening of focus, fellowship and funding of a particular BI project. This year, BI's six Old Testament and two New Testament projects in Chad were featured, and Mark Seymour was the speaker. Much of the information presented at the Harvest Dinner was elicited by Elaine Schulte, BI's text production researcher, in an earlier interview with Mark. Read and rejoice!

Q: Thinking about some of the positive things that Bibles International has accomplished in Chad, would you be able to relate some of those?

A: Yes. Right off the top of my head three things come to mind. First of all, BI has given the field real credibility. Dr. Osborn came out and was able to do linguistics training. He

public schools to teach the children to read. Once they can read in their own language, the transition to French is easier. It's incredible to see a Muslim government buying our Bibles for use in the public schools. There should be a real harvest as these young people learn to read and get into the Word of God.

And finally, every time a BI consultant comes to Chad for a workshop, they give our translators an incredible amount of teaching. Our men now have a better understanding of the Word of God, not just because they're translating it, but because of all this teaching. There are devotions every morning that instruct them. It's almost like a Bible school or a seminary course for our translators. So there's this incredible influence that Bibles International is able to have in the theological training of our men. It has helped our Chadian pastors and our association to retain a separatist stand when other organizations may be compromising their convictions.

Q: What years were you in Chad, and what role did you play in BI's work there?

A: We arrived in Chad in 1983. We were designated as the field coordinator, and I was also on the direction committee.



Chadian translators in 1993 with Dr. Osborn (far left) and Mark Seymour (far right).

was able to get most of these languages in a written form. A whole culture would be lost if there weren't someone who did that. The government is still using these standards that were set up by Dr. Osborn and BI. Every time we've had a Bible dedication, the government has come and thanked us. Even a Muslim government is very positive to what we and BI are doing.

Secondly, BI has had a major impact on the literacy rate in the country of Chad. Formerly, children who only speak indigenous languages attended schools where only French was used. The government found that it was taking the students a long time to learn to read French, since it was not their mother tongue. There is a push now for them to learn to read in their own indigenous languages. In the Tumag-speaking area particularly, the government is buying BI's New Testaments and using them as reading books in the



Mark and Debbie Seymour with Chadian friends

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PROJECTS UPDATE

Organization is a key word for accomplishing the work of Bible translation. There are many people involved in each step of the process, and all aspects must be **organized** to ensure that steps are neither missed nor needlessly duplicated.

Bibles International currently has 40 active projects in various stages of development around the world. We strive to keep each one moving forward at a steady pace to bring them to completion. To accomplish this goal, we establish various committees to work on the projects.

- **Sponsorship or Direction Committee:** This committee cares for the local administration of the project in promoting the project on the field, acting as the liaison between the field and Bibles International, as well as caring for logistical details.
- **Translation Committee:** This is the translator and all others who assist him in the translation process. The goal is accuracy.
- **Read and Review Committee:** This group reads the translation produced by the translation committee and verifies it for readability and understandability. The



The Songhai translation and read and review committees at work

translator knows what he is trying to say, but we want to confirm that others are getting the same message. This important step assures clarity in the process.

We are in the process of establishing these committees with three language groups as we begin new projects. These are some of the final steps before the actual work begins. Please pray as we work toward officially adopting the following language projects:

- **Tagalog** (Philippines) – revision of New Testament and translation of Old Testament
- **Tok Pisin** (Papua New Guinea) – translation of New Testament

- **Luxembourgish** (Luxembourg) – translation of New Testament



A planning meeting in Luxembourg

These committees are also being confirmed with the Warao Old Testament translation in Venezuela. Our missionaries there have served as liaison since the project's inception but are now unable to renew their visas for continued ministry in Venezuela. It is our desire to bring this project to completion, and to accomplish this we must verify that these committees are functioning well.

Another aspect of organization is the work done by the national Bible societies that Bibles International has established to work alongside our ministry. Bibles International India Society and Bibles International Myanmar Society are overseeing multiple



Organizational meeting of Bibles International Myanmar Society

projects in their respective countries. The direction committee in Chad is in the process of establishing their local Bible society. Each of these groups is in different stages of strategic planning to establish effective ministry for stability, growth, and most importantly, bringing God's Word to the millions who still wait. The results of our organization's ability to organize will be souls saved, churches established, and God glorified. Continue to pray that each of our projects progresses well. And contribute to the financial needs of these projects as God leads you.

The Rewards of Accuracy

“Whatever you do, don’t tell anyone back home how much fun we’re having over here!” These were the words of a pastor who accompanied us on his first overseas trip. He was amazed at the joy he experienced as he put in very long days for the Lord in a culture totally different from his own in northern New England. I thought of his words repeatedly during the first two weeks of our trip to a small southeastern Asian country this past winter. My wife and I arrived with Consultant-in-Training

Anna Beth Wivell and short-term helper Bonnie Bartelt and were soon joined by our two literacy workers, Carla Bieber and Kristy Montgomery. Within a few days I accompanied the latter two on an adventurous trip from the capital city to the distant jungle. My young companions made the trip to train 20 college-age tribal ladies to use newly printed literacy primers and Bible storybooks as evangelistic tools in the mountainous villages. In fact, within a month of our trip, those 20 were paired up and teaching their people in a way that opened hearts and minds like never before.

I was there for a very different purpose, one that involved six wonderful tribal men, most of them pastors or Bible college teachers but also including one key brother who was barely literate. These men would become the read and review committee for their language. My job was to teach the committee how to work with the translators to greatly improve the quality of the New Testament that is being prepared for their people. I did not take success for granted. A previous attempt with a different translator had failed. Though we loved him, his refusal to allow his peers to check his work made accuracy checks impossible.

The process of translation has changed radically in the past decade at BI as we seek to develop the tremendous asset that exists in most of our projects – a good number of highly gifted and committed native speakers. In particular we have been developing such men and women into read and review committees, groups designed to act as spiritual and linguistic filters through which newly translated Scripture is passed. Gone is the day when one man’s translation of Scripture was merely checked by consultants and then sent to the printer.

The cardinal principle of the R&R committee is that only native speakers can identify certain errors in a translation. Even if an outsider (foreign missionary) has lived and

studied long enough to become fluent in the tribal language, he/she will still not be able to recognize many subtleties that cause the language to sound natural and clear to the reader. A translation that begins with a native speaker, however, can become both beautiful and accurate. Properly trained, the translator can make even his first draft sound good to other speakers of his language.

Our translators work extremely hard to understand the doctrine behind each Scripture passage. This is good, because there are far fewer errors to be identified and corrected by BI consultants. It can be, however, a weakness, in that once the translator has spent hours researching a portion of Scripture and has worked to put it into his own language, he knows very well what it means. Reading his translation with the benefit of the background he has developed, the translator may think that everyone else can understand it as well, but his understanding may depend to some extent not on the words that he has used but on the research he has done. That understanding will not reside in the minds of his readers.

At this point the R&R committee steps in. They have not studied the passage in advance. They have had nothing to do with creating the first draft. As a group, they carefully go over the text verse by verse, looking for anything that sounds confusing or unnatural. The committee’s job is not to change things, but they note every potential problem and question for the translator. They will even take the new translation to distant villages and read it aloud, encouraging their hearers to share advice or questions.

The six men who took the training are very eager to see their New Testament dedicated and in their hands, but if they are going to escape having a translation which will bring confusion and even false teaching to their people, they must work effectively with the translators to recognize all possible ambiguities and incomplete thoughts and to correct them before their text goes to the printer. Pray not only for our translators and consultants but also for the members of the read and review committees who must donate hundreds of hours of hard work if they are to have quality translations of God’s Word.

*Rev. Ross Hodson
Translation Consultant
Text Production Department*



We were in Chad until 2008, so that would be a total of 25 years. In the early days I did almost all the translating for consultants who didn't know French. Debbie and I hosted the workshops, planning schedules, arranging travel and housing for translators, feeding the translators and consultants, and handling any problems that might arise. There was a host of things to orchestrate, and Satan would sometimes attack. But just the camaraderie, the encouragement, and the fellowship that sprang from the translation workshops made them something very special. Even after so many years have passed, our boys still talk about it.

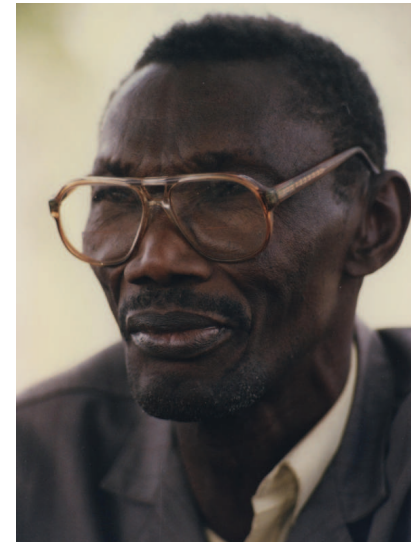
Q: One of the things I want to include in the upcoming BI history book is testimonials – not necessarily of salvation, although that is fine too – of people who have been strengthened through the work of BI or through having read and studied God's Word. Can you relate such a story?

A: Yes. The New Testament in Sara Madjingaye came out in 1986, and after the major distribution of it, Pastor Machine and I decided we would do an evangelistic trip over the weekend. So I took Pastor Machine and the Bible school students from Koumra. We took all the New Testaments with us and were distributing them.

On the way home, since I had so many people inside the vehicle, I had everything else on the roof. It started to rain, so I pulled off to get a tarp. When I pulled off, about 20 fresh initiates (young men taken into camps and initiated into the Chadian ways of devil worship) came out of the woods and totally surrounded the vehicle. The leader, a big, tall Sarh, came to the passenger's side where Pastor Machine was sitting and asked, "Do you have any food or money that you can give us?" Failure to produce food or money will give the initiates the "right" to whip and rob you.

So I'm thinking, *Oh, my, what are we going to do?* And before I can even say anything to Pastor Machine, he grabs his New Testament that was on the dashboard and puts it out the window, right in front of this man's face. And he says, "This is the Word of God. And this Word of God says that what you're doing is sin, so we can't have any part of it." At that point I'm thinking, *You know, Pastor, you could be a lot more diplomatic.* And during the pause that seemed to last forever, you could just sense evil. But Satan lost that spiritual battle as the great big Sarh man laughed and gave a signal in their secret language for the men to go back into the woods.

That was a different Pastor Machine than the one who compromised in 1973 when Christian pastors were buried alive for their faith. Now, 13 years later, Pastor Machine had the Word of God in his hands. The fact that he could hold it and say, "This is the Word of God," was due to the ministry of Bibles International.



Pastor Machine



Merry Christmas from the BI Staff

Have you considered Bibles International in your Estate Plan?

To designate Bibles International as a recipient either of a specific asset, amount, or percentage in your will or trust, the following wording is needed: "To: Baptist Mid-Missions, Cleveland, Ohio, designated for its Bibles International ministry."



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BMM President • Dr. Gary Anderson
BI Director/Editor • Dr. P. Hantz Bernard
Associate Editor/Graphic Designer • Mrs. Becky Kerr

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In Honor of Harris & Nancy Byers' 50th wedding anniversary Andy Farkas' retirement Edna Stadtlander's 95th birthday	Given by Marvin & Jill Pederson Sharon Dawson Marvin & Jill Pederson

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

Recently God called another faithful BI worker home. His name was Bekas Medindo, and he was the typist for the Dagba translation team. He was a highly educated Chadian, evidenced in part by the fact that he knew eight languages. A BI consultant reported that whatever the Dagba translator lacked in formal education would be compensated by the help of his typist, Bekas. Indeed, Translator Koyan Martin and Bekas had a beautiful working relationship.



In addition, it was said of Bekas that "He has a great spirit and dedication to the work." His aunt led him to the Lord when he was a child. Though we know Bekas would have loved to see the New Testament completed in Dagba, he loved seeing his Savior more.

Pray for his family and the Chad field as they struggle with the loss of such a dear servant of God.

Your God-directed help will be greatly appreciated

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Prayer Requests

For the translation workshops and literacy workshops taking place in Asia in December through February.

That the translation teams in Chad will be encouraged by the financial support provided them by people who attended the annual BI Harvest Dinner in October.

For our translation team in Haiti as they continue working despite the earthquake, Hurricane Tomas, and the outbreak of cholera. Pray that many Haitians will cry out to the Lord for salvation.

For good progress on the Songhai New Testament for Mali, despite the fact that Missionary Coordinator Ken Beckley and his family had to relocate to Niger for safety reasons.

For safety for our Tenek translators in Mexico, Fernando and Christy Angeles, in light of increasing tensions in their country.

Thanks

For an increasing number of individuals pursuing additional education in preparation for working with BI.

For the Tenek translation workshop conducted at Northland International University. It allowed faculty and students to observe the actual translation checking process.

For BI's faithful volunteers. A highlight each year is honoring them at a luncheon right before Thanksgiving.

For the dedication of the Simte New Testament for India on November 19.

For the marriage of India Resident Consultant Angam Longthei.

That Carla Bieber, after many short-term trips with BI personnel, has become an official Baptist Mid-Missions missionary and will be raising her support to work full time with Bibles International.

By God's grace, the 2010 BI Harvest Dinner was a wonderful evening of coming together to help meet the needs of BI's eight Chadian projects. There were 620 attendees, and approximately \$42,000 was raised to help fund the Chad projects. The level of sponsorship was higher than in any other year. Much of the set-up and all of the serving was done by volunteers, the majority of them from Calvary Baptist Church in Grand Rapids. We are extremely grateful for all who attended and all who helped make it a very blessed event.

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