William Maynard Sherman
July 22, 1927 - December 11, 2018
Left: George and Nellie Sherman, Bill’s Parents

Right: Bill’s Childhood Home in Kansas City, MO

Above: George, Jr., Marion, Margaret, Bill, Ruth

Top: George, Jr.; Middle: Margaret, Dorothy, Marion, Bill; Bottom: George, Sr., Nellie & Ruth

Bill Sherman in his early teens.
THE JOURNEY OF
WILLIAM MAYNARD SHERMAN
By Roby Angelina Hirst Sherman

GOD’S LEADING
FROM BIRTH TO DEATH TO LIFE ETERNAL

Prologue

This is a short recounting of the goodness of God in the life of my treasured husband of 54+ years, *his words in italics*. We all have different stories to tell but in the end for those who have allowed Jesus to mold the character, it all culminates in one life event: either live translation to heaven when Jesus soon returns or a brief peaceful rest in the tomb – as if asleep – until He awakens us to ascend with Him and the angels into heaven.

Part 1

William (affectionately called Bill most of his life) Maynard Sherman was born to George Franklin Sherman, Sr. and Nellie Hannah Neighbors Sherman in Kansas City, Missouri on a hot Wednesday, July 22, 1927. He was the fourth of 6 siblings. Marion died in 2012, a devout Christian. George, Jr., died a couple years ago. Dorothy, 89, lives in Lampe, MO with her husband of over 50 years, Frank Israel, 96. Margaret Thompson, just turned 95 on December 21, lives with her grandson, Bryan in Rolla, MO for the last couple years. Her husband of over 70 years marriage died about 3 years ago. Margaret is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren for many years. Ruth is divorced, lives in a nursing home in MO but has 3 wonderful daughters to support & love her. Each sibling has children and grandchildren, so Bill has quite an extended family and at a recent family reunion there were 47 present. Bill was not well enough to go.

His grandparents came from Cabool, MO. His great, great grandfather’s cousin was THE General William Tecumseh Sherman. Of course, in the South that is not a popular name. His brother was 5 years to the day older than Bill and they were never close to each other. He was actually closer to his sisters.

At the tender age of 5, Bill went to the local grammar school (Kensington Campus Elementary School – closed 2013) just a few blocks away and on his first day of school, he says, “Well, maybe I was a momma’s boy, but my mother marched me off to school, but at recess I wasn’t happy. So, I walked back home. My mother was hanging up clothes outside. She said, ‘Billy Boy, what are you doing here? You need to get back to school. So, she marched me back to school.” That time he stayed and says, “I finally
got acclimated and really enjoyed it.” He also graduated from the local high school.

“My father was a mechanic and a good one. And my mother, of course, was a housewife.” Not only was she a good and efficient mother of 6 in a small, 3-bedroom, 2-story house, but over the years to help make ends meet, she took in many foster children and raised them for varying lengths of time. Eventually, she and father George bought a laundromat and ran it, too, for some years.

She was active in the Church of the Brethren and a devout Christian and raised her children in the church. But, unfortunately, Daddy, although a good provider and a kind man, never became a professed Christian, to our knowledge. Aren’t we glad God is the reader of our hearts, though? He would take the family to Sunday School and church; and on occasion, such as a Christmas program, he might attend that. “My mother was very, very faithful and kept me in Sunday School.”

His father died in the 1970’s and his mother not long after. We were able to be with Bill’s father and minister to him in the home for several days as he died of a huge, dissecting abdominal aortic aneurysm. He had been a heavy smoker. We also went to Bill’s mother’s funeral but were not able to make it beforehand. She was a godly lady.

“One memory I have of childhood is that there was an old preacher there, Uncle Énos - his name was - and he was having an evangelistic series, and I remember when I was 8, they sang ‘Just as I am’. It just broke my little heart and I went forward and was baptized. I remember at 8 years old I wanted to be just like Jesus – I wanted to be perfect. But I would slip up somehow and I would be so frustrated because I didn’t know the grace of Christ.”

“At 17, I remember on a winter day I had just learned to drive. I was driving down this road with the Streetcar Track and my mother was right beside me. I had to drive carefully, and it was icy and - all of a sudden - this little boy came out from the left side and I hit him square and could hear rumbling underneath. I thought, Oh, I’ve killed him. And I finally brought it to a stop. His mother came and she said, Johnny, I told you never to run out in front of a car. She walked away with him. I never heard a word (from the child).” In other words, he crawled out and walked away miraculously!

“I used to work for a dry cleaner driving. And here’s my Sunday school teacher and I really loved him; I thought the world of him. So, I was working for him driving a delivery truck. I heard him curse. He drove off the pedals. So, so fast.” Bill lost a lot of respect for him that day. So-called everyday little things do make big impressions on tender young hearts.

“The next thing, I was 18, and in November of 1945 I was drafted into the Army and I went to Camp Rawlinson in Arkansas. They sent me to a little
farm up in Virginia and there it was they trained me to be a coder, intersect operator (at a strategic intelligence base for many years - very important in WWII) and I used to just sit there and copy on a machine.” This was Vint Hill Farms near Arlington, VA – a 700+ acres farm in military use from 1942-1997; demolished 1999. “Why was it called a farm? All the operation was in a hidden barn and the barracks were just old buildings where we stayed.”

“It was secret information; they copied Russia and other countries and after about 6 months of that they sent me to Ft. Louis, WA near Tacoma and I joined the United States Signal Corps. I remember I was only 18. We were preparing for bivouac going to CA and I was to drive a third quarter troop carrier and we were all getting ready to go and look at something. And Eisenhower came sometime in the fall and he said everybody (this occurred in 1945,) has the option to leave the night before January 1947. There was no question. I wanted to go home. I was 19 then.”

He was in the military 1 year and 6 days. He was counted as if he were a WWII veteran since the war had barely ended the year that he joined. So, he has gotten all the Veterans Administration benefits for a number of years now, for which we have both been very grateful. They did major surgery in 2005, did many procedures, supplied his hearing services (hearing aids and batteries for the last 10 years or so) and finally, as a lasting gift within the past couple months, they gave us a nice new hi-lo electric hospital bed and new wheelchair (both to keep). We truly have appreciated the VA.

After he was discharged from the Army, in December 1946, he says, “anyway, I didn’t know just what to do. My mother saw this ad in the newspaper for a 6-month Telegraph School, but it was in a different code. It wasn’t easy to suddenly switch codes. The first one in the Army was International Code and this was American code. The first was a series of beeps, the other was a series of clicks. At the end of that 6 months they gave me the option of going to AT&T and joining the team there. So, I went there and when there would be a catastrophe in some of the telegraph lines the board would light up like a Christmas tree; then we would be busy translating circuits.” He worked there for AT&T in Kansas City for 7 years.

To this day when he heard a “tap, tap, tap” code on the radio - if we were in the car sometimes, he would start interpreting what they were saying! “It’s engrained in your mind; you never lose it. I was making $100.00 a week in those days - which was big money - and all of what AT&T offers.” Good lesson for us today. If we study God’s word to know it well, it will become a part of us to use in everyday life and in emergencies just like code was with Bill.
Meanwhile, he loved working with the young people in the Church of the Brethren and became one of their youth leaders. They wanted him to stay on at AT&T, but “I turned it down for what’s called the Brethren Volunteer Service. We spent two months training in Windsor, MD.” He told me long ago they were working in the slums of Baltimore. “Then we spent 5 months at Lybrook Indian Mission near Cuba, New Mexico (with Navajo Indians). Most of the boys there were farm boys from Pennsylvania, and they could build fence, deliver calves; they could do anything connected with the farm. And I thought, if I’m ever going to be a missionary I’ve got to learn, because I was a street boy playing baseball on the street.”

“There were 3 from Pennsylvania and one other young man who was not. I used to drive the Indians back and forth to a little school. I remember one time in the back of our pickup and on the back, there were 40-45 Indians. They were hanging everywhere like ants!” He also took them to a little church there on the mission; there was a nice group of maybe 30 or 40 Indians according to a picture I have from his old mission album.

“After that they then sent me to Kentucky to a project in a very rural area in eastern Kentucky. It was pretty wild country, a very rough and tough section and I spent 5 months of that time doing light maintenance.”

“When my time was over for the Brethren Volunteer Service (1 year), I had a pastor friend in Butler Sizemore. He said, ‘I’ve got you a job,’ because I wouldn’t be serving as a volunteer now. ‘I’ve got you a job in a rural school way up in the mountains.’ I had to drive my little ’48 Plymouth up this stream.”

“I got there. There was a frame building. They had taken some of the boards off to burn in the wood stove to keep warm in the winter. I had 36 children in all 8 grades and no assistant.” Nowadays a teacher thinks she’s really busy if she has 6 or 8, or 10 or 12, in one room!

“And there was a feud in the community.” Have you heard of the famous Hatfield’s and McCoy feud that raged in Kentucky for decades? Well, this was a different feud, but feuds linger on costing people’s reputations and lives to the next generations sometimes. “People thought one man killed the other or killed a man and some thought the other did. And even the kids were divided and took sides. So anyway, I was the 6th teacher there because this big strapping Kentucky girl chased or beat up all the rest of them. So, I knew I was going to have a rough time.”

“So, she was sitting on the front row and the little kids were on the back row and they couldn’t see around her hardly. So, I said tomorrow, the bigger children, and I knew it was dynamite, I said the bigger children will have to go to the back, and the little children up toward the front and she didn’t like it. The next day she came to school, she was sitting right there on the front row.”
“And I told her, you’ve got to go to the back row. She sat there. I saw a glare in her eyes. I made it clear she was going to have to move. I was probably younger than most of the teachers that had been there. She jumped out of her seat, looked eyeball to eyeball, and then she stalked out of the schoolhouse, and went home and told her mother a bunch of lies. When she left, all the kids hollered, ‘yay teacher, yay teacher’ because she had gotten put in her place and they knew I had won the battle. So, when she came back, she sat on the back row. Anyway, I can tell other stories about him (her father) at school. Up to that point, her father was a red neck man who had killed a man and he never went to jail for it.”

“I stayed with a Pennington family that had a bunch of strapping boys. The wife’s name was Polly. They were wonderful people and counselors. They had a lumber business. They would haul loads down on the way to town.”

“I remember looking at a meal because I was getting everything. I was looking at the meal and I kept seeing this white bowl. ‘What’s in that white bowl?’, so I asked them. They said, ‘well, that’s butter’. In the winter they don’t give yellow butter, yellow milk; only in the summertime. It was all white, so I tried this butter.”

“Anyway, the next morning, this old man that had murdered the man came down the hill; didn’t speak to me like he usually did. He had about 3 or 4 kids in school. He just walked on down the way; he didn’t say a thing (to Bill), because he knew his daughter. He had early on talked to me and said, ‘Teacher, those kids never behave themselves. You just tell me, and I’ll whip them when they get home’, but I knew that was a lie. He used to come down (and he lived up the hill from where I lived); he would always greet me, regularly.” But after this incident, he just walked right past Bill that next morning. Bill actually admitted to being a little afraid of him, but nothing ever came of it. “Anyway, we got through that 2 months.”

“Somebody along the way had sent them up a grade and they couldn’t handle it and Polly Pennington told me - ‘You’ve got to send them back a grade’. So, I sent them back a grade and they started catching on. But the only way I could handle 36 kids by myself was having the older students get a younger student and help them with their studies and that way we got through after two months.”

“The next day after she stomped out and went home, I went back up after she went home; I knew I needed to make it right with the family. And so, I walked up the hill not knowing whether I’d find a bullet in the eye or in the head.” I said, ‘you were afraid he might shoot you?’ To which Bill replied – “Yeah, he would. He told me that. I told her mother the story. She understood because she knew her daughter and that was it.”
My next comment was, “well good, there was no confrontation. So, after you left that school successfully - you turned out to have 2 good months. What did you do next?”

Bill’s friend, Pastor Butler Sizemore, was “a passive, dear man, lawful man. He said, ‘I think you need to go to seminary.’ Actually, it was a seminary, but they still taught classes on a college level; and so, we arranged to go the Church of the Brethren Seminary in Kansas. I enrolled and was accepted.” He studied at McPherson College and Bethany Seminary. “I had almost a BS degree (3+ years of college), but not quite; but I had seminary professors and Church of the Brethren professors. Some were Mennonite and some were Church of the Brethren, but they all thought about the same thing. And the young farm boys had come. And they’d have to read all those books on theology. And some would say one thing and some, another. Well Prof, how are we supposed to know which is right? ‘Well, just take your pick – whatever you think is best and just teach that.’ I put up my ears at that. I thought, boy, is all this seminary confused? I had a class on Hebrews and Revelation. Hebrews was pretty good. It was a beautiful experience.”

But then he got discouraged and quit school. He decided to go to Florida and rode down with a Church of the Brethren preacher. He worked as a carpenter’s helper for a while, then decided to go back to school. He went to the library. “There were probably at least 100 books on guides to American colleges.” He set up certain criteria in his mind. “I had to work my way through. I wanted to study agriculture and Bible and it had to be a small school. So, I picked out two.”

“One was over in Tampa, and it was a place where there used to be an old gambling hall; they showed me where the table was that they used when they were raided. They dropped the table down into a pickup truck and drove away. It had false doors; but anyway, they left it like that. But I came from a very conservative church where we didn’t say ‘Hallelujah!, Praise the Lord!’ I was very conservative. So, when they started ‘Praise the Lord!, Hallelujah!,’ I thought, ‘I don’t know about this – are they Pentecostal?’ But they showed me where Billy Graham studied there. He used to take his Bible and sit on a tree stump outside and he preached to nature. That’s one way he got his stronger voice.” He just visited there; he didn’t enroll. “It wasn’t for me.”

Next, he went up to Bryan College in Dayton, TN, where the Scopes (so called ‘monkey trial’) trial was held. “Yeah, it was a good school. And that’s pretty much everything I wanted. I don’t think they had agriculture, and I knew I needed that to be a missionary, so I went back to Chattanooga. I stayed at the YMCA. I looked over the guide and it said something about Southern University, so I went out there. It was a Sunday.” I gently corrected him and said – “Honey, it was Southern Missionary College at that time.” To which he replied, “Yeah, Southern
Matrimonial College!” I countered – “it wasn’t called university ‘til just a few years ago.”

“Anyway, I went up there and went to the boy’s dorm. Clear down at the end of the hall there were some boys, so I went in to talk to them. We got to talking and we got into the Mark of the Beast pretty quick.” They told him the about the significance of the 7th day Sabbath and other doctrinal topics – quite an abrupt introduction to 7th Day Adventists. I asked, “were you asking them questions or what?” “Well, we just talked”, he said. I asked him – “you mean you’re a total stranger and you just walked in the dorm and you’re like, who are you guys? What are you studying?”

Bill replied, “This was during the conversation. I was pretty well convicted then. So, I went back down to Florida, to the Avon Park area and I went to the Avon Park Adventist church the next Sabbath the next week and I got such a blessing. I was looking for one.” And he was going ever since! “I said, this it. A young couple invited me home and gave me a study on Daniel 1 and 2, and I was really convinced.” From then on, Bill became enthralled with the amazing things in Biblical prophecies.

Part 2

“Then my sister (Dorothy) called, and she said, ‘My husband has died from alcoholism at the age of 30. She said, ‘I want you to come to the funeral’. And I went up to Kansas City to the funeral. While I was there, I attended the Adventist church – a small church, and I told them what I wanted to do, and they told me about Madison College,” then a small 7th Day Adventist College established in 1904 at Madison, TN near Nashville.

“And I went down there, and it was just for agriculture; I would work my way through and also study their religion courses. And it was small, and it was conservative,” meeting his preselected criteria. This was about 1957 or 1958. “I was there about 6 months. I had a young roommate and I had left my billfold out where he could see it. In the Church of the Brethren they’d never think of bothering my billfold. But this young man took it. So, I had to report it. They had the FBI out and they fingerprinted him, and he had to tell them that he took the billfold. I never held it against him. There are weak people.” I asked – “did they punish him?” “I don’t think so.”

“I worked on the farm at Madison. Then in the summertime Elder Frazee (the founder of the Wildwood Sanitarium and the Wildwood Medical Missionary Institute – now called Wildwood Lifestyle Center) came to Madison and he had a class on Gospel Medical Missionary Evangelism.” By then it was 1959. After that school year at Madison, Bill became a student taking a Medical Missionary Course at Wildwood for a couple years. He was baptized as a 7th Day Adventist Christian in about 1962
by Pastor Frazee in the old outdoor baptistry up on the side of the hill going toward the Lifestyle Center.

He told me years ago the hardest thing for him to understand and accept was our stand on the State of the Dead – what happens when you die – BUT once he understood it clearly, from then on, he had no question about the fact that people rest in the grave until Jesus' second coming. This was very comforting to him the rest of his life.

He hadn’t been baptized that long when he decided to join a little mission team near Guadalajara, Mexico. Dr. and Mrs. Alan Harmer with their 13-year-old daughter Sylvia, Grandma Harmer in her 70's, and I, Roby Ann Hirst, traveled together in 1963 to start a little project. After a few months living in a primitive one room cabin on a large lake (Lake Cajititlan; about a mile outside the village of Cajititlan, 20 miles from Guadalajara), more people joined us.

Sylvia and I stayed in the 17-foot camping trailer which served as kitchen, dining room and living quarters. The Harmers with Grandma stayed in the large cabin room. They had to hang some big sheets over the life-sized black silhouettes of naked women painted on the pink walls. This cabin belonged to a wealthy hotel owner in Guadalajara, Mr. Palacios, who – after inquiry – graciously let us stay there for 1½ years for nothing.

Arriving soon in another camping trailer were David and Betty Lima, and baby Jonathan. They also hauled in a lot of used medical supplies that Bill Sherman helped them get in the States. Homer Barrett, from TN, joined the team for part of a year, then went to Honduras to be with his parents who had established a mission there. Later, in the fall of 1964, he married Berta in Honduras. She was a lovely Honduran girl living near the mission. They subsequently established a small mission work of their own for many years with Homer doing dental work for a living and pastoring some churches.

Homer and Bill lived in a tent and we even took in a couple patients to the tent. Dr. Harmer held Spanish classes with his wife Betty, Sylvia, Grandma and me at first and later with Homer and Bill after they arrived. Dr. Harmer had already spent 3 winters in a mission clinic called Yerba Buena Hospital in Chiapas, Mexico. He would return to Wildwood in the summers as he sought to regain his health. Then he decided to start his own project.

At first, people heard about a doctor in the area and started coming to our front porch at the cabin. The very first patient was a lady brought by boat to our landing from one of the five villages around the lake. She had been mauled in the legs by a large dog and thinking it might be rabid, they cut its head off and brought it to us. We told them to take it to the Health Department in Guadalajara but that they should have
quarantined the dog by law. Now we would have to give the poor lady rabies shots plus her legs were in terrible shape, but we sewed her and patched her up, kept her on antibiotics as a patient in the cabin. She did fine, then we sent her home by boat again. From there, others started to arrive, and we realized we would have to have a clinic in town.

With God’s blessing, as a group we rented a small house in the village and started a clinic. We built shelves, simple tables, exam tables, etc. It wasn’t that easy to go out and just buy furniture back then and funds were extremely limited. Soon patients started coming to the clinic. After Bill arrived, he was practical and assisted in any way he could from building simple furniture to assisting with the patients.

We hauled water from the lake, set up a metal table outside to do dishes on and built an outhouse early on. We poured the water into big tubs so the mud would settle and then used plenty of Clorox to disinfect the dishes along with the sun to dry them most days!

Pretty soon, there was a group of about 25 people meeting every week in a Sabbath Bible Class on our front porch overlooking the lake. People were reaching out to know God better and we were delighted to help them.

Bill was part of the team for close to a year and asked counsel if he could carry on a courtship with me. We had known each other very superficially at Wildwood, but, really not well at all. I had no idea of his interest in me. The Harmers and my mother at Wildwood both agreed we should court.

Bill was serious about courting; after all, he was now 37 and I was 25. He wanted a practical wife that together would participate in teamwork for the Lord. We, having known each other for some time and rubbing shoulders together in a small group setting, only officially courted for 4 months before we got married in a lovely, simple outdoor wedding at Wildwood in front of the Hyder Home, just up the hill from this church.

We had an invitation to join the work at Yerba Buena in Chiapas, Mexico and made plans for that. We took part of our honeymoon in New Hampshire at a home that my 2 nearly retired nurse aunts owned together. They had never married. They offered to let us stay there as they were still working in New England Sanitarium & Hospital in Stoneham, MA and would go to NH on the weekends. It was a lovely old farmhouse and we had a delightful 2 weeks or so there.

We went back to Attleboro, MA where my Uncle Ernest Peck lived, and he hired Bill to work with him a couple months to learn the trade of floor finishing. I got a job at the nearby Fuller Sanitarium as a nursing assistant for that time. We needed the funds to make the long trip to southern Mexico. My wonderful parents, Joe and Roby Risch, gave us a nice station wagon for our wedding and someone else gave us a small
travel trailer; which enabled us to go North, see relatives and earn the money to go to Mexico. We were so grateful to God for those providences, but we needed to have a pickup truck to make the trip, so we sold the station wagon and bought a pickup after returning to Wildwood.

We were going to take as much as possible with us for household and medical supplies. So, we went back to Wildwood and Bill proceeded to build an over the cab camper which turned out pretty nice. That took a couple months and then we set out for Chiapas, Mexico. The road to the mission back then was mostly a rugged 1 to 1½ lanes, climbing up to 6,000 feet in mountains from the hot tropical valleys. Yerba Buena had been founded some years before by Ray and Marie Comstock and by the time we were there it was a well-established mission with several homes, a clinic and hospital, a model village for Indians, large gardens and a student nursing and industrial programs for young people.

I naturally worked in nursing, supervision and teaching the nursing students. Bill was asked to head up the model village program (still quite primitive but with several Chamula Indian families already there), teach the men there how to build latrines, make home gardens and do some practical things around the homes (such as making indoor fireplaces that wouldn’t fill the house with smoke). He was also in charge of the agricultural program. He coordinated with the nursing students and others for the women to learn child care and healthy cooking, sewing, gardening, etc.

He also used our pickup to haul bananas from the tropical lowlands. They would first put in a load of rotten coffee hulls for the gardens – wonderful compost – then a canvas which formed a nice cover to cushion the bananas on – that is – if in navigating the treacherous roads, the banana stalks (about a half ton) didn’t make their way down into the mucky coffee hulls! Ooh, that could be a big mess to clean up on arrival home to the mission!

Bill would also help organize ‘jiras’ (jungle trips by horseback or foot or by vehicle occasionally part way) for us and the student nurses to go to sometimes staying several days out in different villages in very unsanitary places to share the gospel with and treat the physical needs of the people. We would take boxes of medical supplies. Bill would take garden seeds and tools and sometimes take produce from our gardens at Yerba Buena for practical demonstrations.

One time we went several hours away by horseback to Blanca Rosa, a Zoque Indian village. As he was demonstrating carrots with no tops and lettuce heads he asked if they knew what they were – some men pointed to the lettuce and said that was the top to the carrots. Apparently, they had never seen either one and they just guessed! Anyway, Bill and I with our nursing students and graduates and sometimes with some of the industrial students shared many fun ‘jiras’ to those Indian villages. He
helped with health lectures, sometimes done with sheets tacked to an adobe hut and using a portable battery-operated projector in places with no generator or electricity.

One time, Bill had been out on a ‘jira’ with some students without me for several days. When he came back, he was pulling some teeth in the dental clinic one day and suddenly fell backward fainting onto the hard-ceramic tile floor. It turned out he had acquired amebiasis from something he ate or drank out in the Indian villages on that fateful ‘jira’. With adequate treatment he soon recovered apparently. Amoebas are known to cause serious liver disease.

There were already a number of Adventist churches in some of the villages, but in others they had never seen Adventists, much less a ‘gringo’ (white foreigner). We shared some thrilling but scary times. One time we took a ‘jira’ to a small Chamula Indian village. We parked the truck at a hacienda (wealthy Mexicans owned this ranch) and then walked several hours up and down lofty mountain trails – sometimes very narrow with overlooks of hundreds of feet down. We got there mid-morning, set up our boxes of medical supplies on the porch of the little government one room school house and invited people to come if they needed medical help.

A number of women and children came, fearful at first; but they warmed up and we treated quite a few for the usual ailments of stomachaches, colds, etc. Most of the tummy aches were likely from parasites, so common in tropical areas. We probably pulled a few teeth which Bill had mastered very well at Yerba Buena. We usually took anesthesia and a few key dental instruments. There was a lot of tooth decay because of sucking on sugar cane from childhood and the introduction of ever-present soda pops, even back then.

What we didn’t realize was that all the able-bodied men were at work far away in their fields. Since it was rainy season, we had to leave after a couple hours to make it back to the truck before the usual afternoon downpour. We packed our boxes, said goodbye to the people who by then were grateful and very friendly. We paused along a wide spot down the trail to enjoy the beauty and eat our lunch. Then we took our time and made it back to the hacienda and the truck on time for Bill to drive us home. There were about 5 or 6 of us. We headed back up the mountain to Yerba Buena in our pick up by early afternoon.

Sometime later, at Yerba Buena, our Chamula Indian pastor and evangelist, Antonio Diaz, told us that he had gotten acquainted with a man from that village who told this story: apparently, the men arrived back from the fields and having found out that their families had been treated by gringos and people from the mission. They became furious for they had not given their wives permission. They set out on the same trail
we took to catch up with us and kill us. Remember, we took our time eating at a wide spot on the trail.

Well, Bill and I have always believed that heavenly angels covered us as the men walked right by. They could have easily overtaken us, as we were carrying quite a load and they – being fleetfooted on those trails and strong – should have easily reached us; but, on not finding us, they headed back home. We always knew that “the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them.” Ps. 34:7. There were so many more providences in the years we were there it would take a book to tell them.

On one occasion, while still at Yerba Buena, we took a group of students with our pickup truck out to a small village and were doing health and evangelistic work in the public-school house by permission. We did not personally do religious work as it was against the law for foreigners to do that, but our students and workers did it. We did do health lectures though. While inside, a little crowd of protesters gathered and set a fire under our truck which was parked just outside the school porch. Someone friendly to us quickly put the fire out and notified us. There was no violence and God miraculously stopped that incident.

Elwin and Nytta Norton were in charge of Yerba Buena for several years and he, being a pilot with instrument rating, purchased for the mission a Cessna 172 plane. Later on, that was changed to a Cessna 182 with a STOL kit (short take-off and landing) for safer flying. Bill and I flew with him and some students on many medical missions to jungle Indian villages with very dangerous airstrips, some of them being ‘coffee strips’ for wealthy ranchers to haul out coffee for sale. They would hire the Indians to work in the coffee plantations. But many of the strips were in the Indian villages themselves. This was real jungle flying with no instrument guidance at all as we were way too far from Tuxtla Gutierrez, the capital of Chiapas.

Elwin gave his wife, brother (who joined the mission) and myself basic flying lessons, which helped take away some of my fear of flying – at least I could understand the instrument panel – but – on the other hand – it could cause more fear if something went wrong! For some reason, Bill chose not to take the lessons. Elwin let me take the controls and fly the plane once, but I preferred to let him do it. He was an excellent pilot.

We stayed at Yerba Buena a total of about 6 years between 1964-1971. We would leave at times to go work a few weeks in the States to earn money to go back. I also took the 2-year associate degree RN course at Southern Missionary College from 1966-1968. The second year of the AS program, I had to spend at the old Madison College campus, now just Madison Hospital. During that year, Bill enrolled in an LPN program and graduated with his LPN, which he utilized for several years as a nurse. I was proud of him for finishing that course.
In late 1971, we returned to the U.S. for me to pursue my BS in Nursing at Southern. I had already had a 3-year non-accredited Medical Missionary Nursing course at Wildwood from 1956-1959 and did basically everything RN’s would do back then, plus more at the mission like: delivering babies, suturing, treating hundreds of patients, etc. This served us well the first couple years at Yerba Buena.

We lived in a trailer park at Southern for a short time and then moved to Wildwood, where Bill could participate in the work here. He was very active in the Reconditioning Program (now called the Lifestyle Guest Program), taking charge of the male patients (or guests, as we now call them) part-time.

We stayed at Wildwood from 1971-1979. Bill also worked in the hospital part-time here, for a while. I worked in the Nursing Department and was Director of Nursing for several years. Bill loved to study the Bible with the guests whenever possible to encourage them. He often took patients on long walks out in nature. He spent quite a lot of time making miles of trails in the 1970’s for the patients and workers to enjoy and regain their health on.

He also made beautiful carved wooden cedar signs with Bible verses that would be posted on trees along key trails sequentially, like the old Burma Shave signs along the US highways when we were growing up! I remember one very well that he placed in segments on lovely cedar signs: “Fear thou not ... for I am with thee ... be not dismayed ... for I am thy God ... I will strengthen thee ... yea, I will help thee ... yea, I will uphold thee ... with the right hand ... of my righteousness.” ... Isaiah 41:10. Believe me, if you walked that same trail day after day with your Reconditioning Guide (now Lifestyle Coach) and you were stressed, anxious or unwell, you would soon have memorized that and many other verses he placed on several trails. Just that one verse might have taken up to ½ to 1 mile of trail!

He also made a lot of cedar labels, naming the trails and some of the trees. He made a number of benches that were placed as rest areas on the trails, for when people tired. He made several metal bridges crossing ditches or little creeks, some of which are still in place. Most of the benches and signs have been long gone and many of the trails he made need more upkeep.

Bill has often lamented in his older years when he was no longer able to keep up the trails that there was no one to do it anymore. Just recently, some young people have taken an interest in some of the trails. It’s so important to get people outside. Nature and nature’s God promote a lot of healing and there are many object lessons to be learned about everyday life and spiritual life in nature. Bill enjoyed pointing these things out to the guests.
He would take able bodied Reconditioning patients to help him on the trails at times for therapy. Sometimes they would even pack water and lunch and a devotional book or Bible and a sheet and toilet paper and go out for a whole day hiking. Certain patients greatly benefited from this therapy. Sometimes two Reconditioning Guides would go together with a small group of patients for several hours.

In our facility, our workers don’t promote our religion actively; if people want to ask questions, we are happy to answer judiciously. We do hold morning and evening devotionals and they are welcome to attend our church services if they wish. We get all kinds of patients here and want them all to feel welcome and comfortable in a wholesome, Christian atmosphere, without feeling they are being pushed.

In 1979, I was accepted to the newly established SDA Medical School at Montemorelos University, Nuevo León, Mexico. A number of providences pointed that way: money, a camper and improved health for me, as I had been quite ill that year for several months, since the fall of 1978. Bill was willing to let me study and we both felt God was calling me to medical school. It was a huge undertaking for both of us and a greater sacrifice on his part to be separated much of the time. I owe everything to him, God and my mother and step dad.

Bill got a job with a nursing agency in McAllen, TX and worked up and down the Rio Grande Valley as an LPN for a long time. He always made the long trip of 125 miles back to Montemorelos every weekend for most of the 4 years I spent there. At first, we used the trailer, but later sold it and rented an apartment; later, a nice big house for $50.00 a month. The house had fruit trees and a large yard in a decent neighborhood. I rode by bicycle back and forth about 1 mile each way to school all year as we only had one vehicle. I had big baskets on it to carry my books. I got teased a lot by the students for this!

Oh yes, there was a neighbor next door with a big pigpen in the back yard which could be unpleasant at times. But offsetting that was a lovely citrus juice plant just down the street producing all we could use of orange, grapefruit and tangerine juices real cheap! And the aroma from that plant really helped brighten the neighborhood atmosphere. ‘All we had to do was take our jugs down to the plant anytime and fill them with fresh juice at a great price. So, in many ways, our heavenly Father provided for our needs. Fruit and vegetables were reasonable, and I often ate at the student cafeteria for lunch. The campus had a wonderful whole grain bakery where Bill could purchase all he needed to take back for the week.

The stress of medical school for 4 years was tremendous – all in Spanish. My ‘ranch Spanish’ from Chiapas improved significantly the first year. I went from taking notes in half Spanish, half English to about 98% English which made it easier for me to study for exams.
The summers were free from school and Bill and I cherished more time together and had some fun times as well traveling. The first summer we went back to Wildwood for 2 months where I worked in our new OB wing, that I had planned and written the procedure manuals for that first several months of medical school. Bill enjoyed being back on his beloved trails and working with the guests again. It was a refreshing and busy summer.

The second summer we spent tree planting for a big tree company in Montana. We were way out in the woods somewhere near the Canadian border. It was beautiful scenery everywhere we looked. We lived out of a van and I cooked like the Indians on 3 rocks on the ground! I learned to use a hoedad to plant the little trees and it was a lot of exercise clambering over cut large branches of trees and finding places to plant.

Nearby was an uncut virgin forest with giant pines. We heard a loud screaming overhead and craned our necks to see what the ruckus was about. A pair of bald eagles was upset that we were in their territory. They circled over us and then as we looked more, we could see in a tall tree just on the edge of a clearing this magnificent nest about 10-12 feet across and could hear baby eagles crying for their parents. What a thrill to be out in God's nature and witness that for the first time! I shuddered to think that the next big tree felling operation might just destroy their home of many years. We talked about and hoped that the loggers would be merciful and leave any trees like that. We had a wonderful summer working very hard, getting stronger and healthier and enjoying the fellowship with each other and with our Heavenly Father. All too soon, I had to be back in school.

The third summer, we went to Huguley Adventist Hospital in TX, where Bill got a nursing job and I worked with Dr. Elvin Adams in the mornings as an extern: making rounds, learning to do physical exams, writing notes on charts, dictating histories and physcals. Then, the hospital personnel did some routine lumbar spine X-rays on Bill (typical back then for everybody that was a new employee). They found out he had spondylolisthesia (a mild deformity in the lumbar spine he was born with) and because of liability, they were afraid to let him work anymore. In other words, they fired him. So, the hospital had a lot of construction going on and he went and got a job in construction. He said he was happier doing that anyway!

Back to the last year of medical school, then graduation. Bill’s mother and sisters came to my graduation all the way from Kansas City. My mother and stepdad came from Wildwood. Then Bill and I left for CA for me to start a 1-year program called, ‘Fifth Pathway’ (through Loma Linda University). This was practically an internship which we had to pay for, but opened the door to enter a regular residency in the States.
Bless his heart – Bill uncomplainingly looked for work yet again and got a good job painting a wealthy person’s house inside and out most of that year. I got through the year, but the smog was terrible for my asthma. We were happy to move to WV where the air was much purer since the Environmental Protection Agency had just shut down a lot of coal mines where we were. I got accepted to a 3-year Internal Medicine Residency at the Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling, WV.

There was a nice Adventist Church there and Bill became very active in that. He purchased a large Class C motor home and made it into a blood pressure screening van and got church members involved in screening and health education and they gave out health and religious tracts. He also joined the colporteur force of the WV Conference of SDA’s and started placing lead cards in many businesses, doctor’s offices, etc. to be able to sell health and religious books. He was especially selling the beautiful set of Uncle Arthur’s Children’s Bible Stories.

The first year we rented a nearby house in the country but rent profits nothing so for the second and third years we purchased a nice, older mobile home set in place in the country about 10 miles away. We had room for a nice little garden. The lot rent was very reasonable and there was plenty of space to walk in the country. We enjoyed gardening and walking together whenever we could. I didn’t have a lot of free time but overall my health was better those 3 years despite the grueling schedule on call than in Mexico or CA. Yet, it was good to be done and on to the next step which was Social Service in Mexico for one year in the City of Nuevo Progresso, Tamaulipas. We purchased a good used mobile home in a park near the border and I was assigned a clinic 6 blocks inside Mexico from the border.

Bill helped me that year gather a lot of medical supplies for the clinic and the border authorities didn’t hassle us knowing it was for their clinic. It was a very busy year. I made a lot of home visits, saw hundreds of needy patients. We joined the Mercedes, TX SDA church that year and Bill was active in the church.

He got a big group of members involved in a mission to help a single mother – a patient of mine – with several children living in Nuevo Progresso in a 2-room house with almost no furniture, clothes, dirt floor, etc. The members gathered supplies and made a picnic day of it. The ladies brought food and helped with what they could. Bill led out in the project and the men put together a floor with joists, plywood and linoleum tacked down – a nice quick floor she could sweep and mop – not mouse or rat proof but a lot better than the dirt she was living in as did many of the poor of that town. At the end of the day there was rejoicing and quite a crowd gathered throughout the day to watch the progress. The men helped her put all her meager belongings back in the house – better named ‘shack’. She and her children were ever soooo grateful! The members all went home knowing they had helped someone that day
Lybrook Indian School & Church, Cuba, New Mexico; Bill’s first car—a Huppmobile!

Portrait from his teenage years; Bill in the Army at 18.

1963—Cajititlan, Mexico mission group (Lima’s, Harmers, Roby, Sylvia, Bill, Galina);
Bill & Roby at my graduation—which one?—you’ll have to guess!

1968—Camper made by Bill, at Wildwood, for us to go back to Yerba Buena. He was now an LPN and I an RN.

1967-1968—Bill’s LPN class in Madison, TN. He was the only man! They used him for demos.

1968—Bill & Roby returned to Wildwood after 9 years of schooling.
Bill, as a trail maker at Wildwood, GA and a dentist—pulling teeth—at Yerba Buena, Chiapas, Mexico.

A 1980s portrait of Bill; a camper Bill fixed for blood pressure screening in Wheeling, WV; 1994—Bill at a Russian market.

Bill with Lifestyle Guests on a hike and administering hydro; 1996—Bill & Roby, in Waldensiain costume, with Donna Anthes at Wildwood.

Left: 1970s—Bill with guest Bill Hosko on a trail.

Bill & Roby in Torre Pellice, Italy; Bill & Roby visit sister Dorothy in Lampe, MO; Bill & Roby with Roby's stepdad and mother: Joe & Roby Risch.

Bill & Roby with Conference President & wife, Laurel Rudnik in Torre Pellice, Italy.

Bill & Roby in the 1990's.

Bill, a few years ago in Italy; Bill & friend at the School of the Barbs in Italy; Pastor & Mrs. Cleveland with Bill in November 2018.

Bill with his sisters 1983 at Roby’s medical school graduation in Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Left to Right: Ruth, Dorothy, Bill, Marion and Margaret.
Middle Left: Picnic at Nickajack Lake, October 6, 2018.
Above: Picnic by lakeside, with friends, at Cagle Mtn, TN in October 13, 2018.
Bottom Left: Bill endured many surgeries and hospitalizations over the last five years of his life.

Above: Bill just fell, fracturing left hip—in pain!
Top Left: Physical therapy after broken hip in 2016.
Bottom Left: Bill recovering marvelously at Siskin Rehab.

Middle Left: Picnic at Nickajack Lake, October 6, 2018.
Above: Picnic by lakeside, with friends, at Cagle Mtn, TN in October 13, 2018.
Bottom Left: Bill endured many surgeries and hospitalizations over the last five years of his life.
substantially with the gift of friendship, a floor and hopefully a step in a better direction for the family.

During that year, Bill also got a nice job as a Physical Therapy Assistant with a very busy Adventist Physical Therapist. That was a real miracle to have that steady and quite pleasant job nearly all year. This was a plus since my work in Mexico was free labor for the year. They only paid Mexican nationals for Social Service, not foreigners!

As I finished the year, I still had not had time to write up all the many reports the District Public Health Department wanted in Reynosa, Tamaulipas along the U.S. Border. I could not get my final certification without them; BUT a big hurricane was threatening the Rio Grande Valley and we had to leave quickly. We hired a man to help us pack the 14 x 70-foot mobile home and shed, get the mobile home tied down, and drive us to Wildwood.

We spent the weekend in a motel 2 hours north of San Antonio and went to church Sabbath morning, but listened to the hurricane news on TV after lunch. People were gathering in large shelters and they were begging for volunteers to take turns in the shelters. We called immediately and volunteered to pass out food in a big public venue – a gymnasium where already scores of families had arrived to await the hurricane’s passing. That was a novel and enlightening experience. And we loved doing it together. We didn’t know if we would even have a mobile home left or not in the Valley.

We proceeded to Wildwood with our things. There was a nice home waiting for us. We stayed there several months as Bill was unwell, exhausted and tired after 9 years of moving around the country which had been very hard on him. After several months we drove back to TX, fixed up the mobile home with new carpet and curtains, etc. to make it more saleable and were able to sell it quite soon. We bought 2 small travel trailers and parked them right there – one to live in and one for an office to do the extensive paper work the Health Department wanted. It amounted to the equivalent of a thesis. It took me about 3 months to finish the work and what a relief to hand it in. Of course, I kept a copy! Then we sold one of the trailers and took one back to Wildwood which we later sold.

That was a welcome return to settle down at Wildwood after being gone for nearly 9 years! That was 1988 – 30 years ago! Hard to believe that was nearly half a lifetime ago. So much has happened in these last 30 years. God has been very good to us. Bill worked in the Hospital for a while as night nurse with his LPN but finally gave it up – as he said, “so I wouldn’t have to do that anymore!” It was too hard on him. He simply could not take night duty.
He did work in the Lifestyle Department again, for some time. The name was changed a few years before we got back. He also did some work on the trails again. He got involved with the Education Department here and eventually was asked to take it over which he did for 8 years. I wish I had the pictures of the 16 graduations of students he was responsible for but somehow those pictures accidentally got destroyed. He loved that work and made quite a few changes while directing it. Herschel Hendley, now the Associate Pastor here, worked with Bill in that department for some time.

Bill was also Head Elder of the Wildwood SDA Church for about 8 years. He loved helping in the church. He enjoyed seeking out members who needed physical, spiritual or other help. He was always ready to lend a hand. He would have given the shirt off his back. He was one of the most generous spirits I have ever seen. I have watched him grow spiritually the last few years. God allowed him to live to 91 not only to help others but to finish rounding out his character. He was not perfect but was a growing Christian all the years that I knew him. He spent time on his knees and a lot of time reading and studying devotional books and the Bible. He loved to study Bible prophecy.

Regarding the last 30 years here, it would take another book to describe all the things we have been allowed to do. Jesus has been so merciful to us, protected in many dangers seen and unseen as we made approximately 25 mission trips to several countries. In the early ‘90’s we took a group back to Chiapas and did health seminars in several Indian villages where there were now many little Adventist churches. On that last trip to Chiapas, we visited a church that we had helped start, now filled with about 100 worshippers on Sabbath and in a real little building with a metal roof. We pray that there will be some stars in our crowns because of the seeds sown in Chiapas to God’s glory.

For some years, Chiapas was the fastest growing place in the world for Adventism. However, in recent years there were serious problems with persecution of Protestant churches, including Adventists. Also, the drug cartels have been a problem throughout Mexico making travel quite risky. However, travel does seem somewhat safer currently. Friends of ours just returned from a one-month mission trip clear to Chiapas (and other places) to another mission near the Guatemala border south of Yerba Buena that Norton’s founded several years after we left Yerba Buena. This mission had actually been ransacked by terrorists some years ago but seems to be safely back in the hands of the church and has an active elementary school and little hospital and clinic.

In 1993, 1994 and 1995, Russia (the former USSR – Soviet Union) was just opening up to the world and the gospel as Communism came crashing down. In 1993, we joined a group from the Quiet Hour TV and Radio program in CA with Bill and Jackie Tucker, and also with Dorothy and Wilbur Nelson (both experienced missionaries formerly in China),
then doing Health Expos and evangelistic meetings in many cities of Russia.

Bill and I first went to Moscow. As we went around the city, we saw large billboards still present from meetings that SDA Pastor Mark Finley had just held in the Kremlin (a fortified complex at the heart of Moscow), only a few weeks before (the first ever Christian meetings in the Kremlin). He had to hold 2 meetings a day (in the People’s Hall of Congress) just to accommodate 6,000 attendees each time. The thirst and hunger for the gospel was still palpable at that time.

We took the train 3 hours north to Tver, a city of 2 million, the meetings were in the former Communist Party Hall seating about 700. For the week there, it was packed every evening. First, the Health Expo was in a very large foyer as one came in. Hundreds crowded around the 8 different booths depicting practical demonstrations and giving out health pamphlets on the 8 laws of health called in English – NEWSTART – Nutrition, Exercise, Water, Sunshine, Temperance, Air, Rest, Trust in Divine Power. Someone was assigned to each open booth to give a short lecture repeatedly for the crowds that would listen and move on to the next one.

My job each night was to run the Nutrition Booth. Bill and I went with a translator to the open markets and bought all kinds of fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts and made a beautiful display. I would give a different lecture at the booth each night. My translator was a young Adventist medical student from Peru who understood Spanish and – of course – spoke Russian. So, curiously enough, I had to give my lectures in Spanish and he translated to Russian!!

Bill, on the other hand, helped out in various of the other booths such as simple water treatments, the trust booth. It was amazing to see people in awe and point to the big picture of Jesus in the Trust booth and ask who that was. Most under communism had no knowledge of Jesus unless they belonged to the Orthodox church, which was also quite restricted.

The Quiet Hour had a bus painted with their logo and name in English and Russian. We went to lunch as a group every day to a little 7th Day Adventist church where the ladies served us Russian food as only an excellent Russian cook can make it. Those meals were basically of simple ingredients but all vegetarian, tasty and attractive.

The response to the meetings in Tver was so beautiful. Each night gifts were given. One night a big picture of Jesus; the last night, a Bible in Russian. People were in awe raising their hands for one. We went to the 7th Day Adventist church on Sabbath and ate at the pastor’s home. They were such precious people and had suffered under persecution not that long before.
After Tver we all went back to Moscow on the train and flew in a WWII shaky vintage plane to the city of Apsheronsk in the Caucasus area of Southern Russia. Again, Pastor Bill and his wife, Jackie Tucker, led out in the evangelistic meetings and the Nelson’s in the Health Expo each day. Bill and I had the same role and it was so thrilling again to see the interest in health and the gospel. Those were the days before secularism took over which it gradually did over the next few years.

In 1994, we went with some of our own students from here and with Pastor Henry Uhl, from Collegedale. We went to Moscow first, then to Rostov na Danu on the Volga River in Southern Russia. We stayed in a big tourist hotel on the 9th floor and watched a row of 8 or 9 big black Mercedes lined up in front every morning and met some of the men coming and going on the elevators each day. It was pretty clear who they were.

We did evangelistic meetings – again, in a former Communist hall – packed full. We didn’t have a Health Expo but preceded each meeting on the platform with Bill, myself or some of our youth with us doing an interactive health lecture with demonstrations. There were also children’s meetings in an adjacent room and a series of Stop Smoking lectures was carried out as well.

The interest was high, and many people crowded around us each evening, after the meetings, to ask health and spiritual questions. By then, my Russian was a little better and I could carry out simple conversations and give very rudimentary health counsel with some translator assistance. But I did love to try! I remember one man who had itchy, dry skin for several years and nothing helped. I told him to try olive oil – not so simple to obtain in those days. But he found some and reported a few days later it was the first relief he’d had in a long time.

In 1995, Bill and I took our own group of 4 students from Wildwood. When he was director of the educational program here, he started international mission trips with the graduates every 6 months, which continues until now. We planned to wind up in Rostov again, but first we attended the General Conference of SDA’s held that summer in Utrecht, Holland – a worldwide gathering of thousands. After spending the weekend there in the home of a former Lifestyle Guest here (who providentially put all 6 of us plus the Baldwin’s and someone else from Wildwood up at her large home at no charge), we drove our rented van packed with 9 people from Wildwood through Belgium and France. We stayed a couple days at the Country Life Outpost in the countryside called Fontaine Bleau. Bill got real sick with a flu like illness and since he was the principal driver everyone had to wait for him to get better, which with good hydrotherapy treatments and extra rest, he did.

We then drove on down to Italy, to Torre Pellice, the heart of the world-famous Waldensian Valleys – known for the persecution which
decimated their numbers in the Middle Ages. They were primitive Christians and their crime was to follow the Bible. We stayed the weekend, saw a cave where persecution occurred, went to their museum and other Waldensian tourist sites.

We stayed at a Waldensian ‘foresteria’ (hotel), ate local food (we chose vegetarian, of course, but vegan wasn’t available back then). We went to the tiny SDA church on Sabbath, where Pastor Long has lived in an upstairs apartment for many years with his wife, both retired.

He had been a missionary to Madagascar for some years, later a pastor in France, then Principal of the SDA Theology School in Florence, Italy and finally President of the Italian Union of SDA in Rome. After retirement, he and his wife went to the island of Sicily to strengthen the church there. After 2 years there, and having much success in seeing the work grow there, they finally retired in Torre Pellice, Italy in the home and church his father built many years ago.

As we left Torre Pellice, we wondered at what we had seen and reflected if we would ever see it again. We later became close friends with the Long’s on our many trips back to those valleys and ate in their apartment many times and they would often invite us for Friday evening vespers in their home to welcome the Sabbath at sunset.

We drove the van back to Frankfurt, Germany and the Baldwin’s flew back to Atlanta and on home to Wildwood. Meanwhile, our trip was just started. Bill was always the busy and careful coordinator of all our overseas trips. We drove the rental van to Prague where we left it off.

We then took the train to Warsaw, Poland where we spent a delightful half day sightseeing, going to the SDA Union and Conference offices (where they let us all shower) and visiting a little SDA health food store in the basement below the conference office (where we purchased food supplies for the 2 remaining days of our 3 day memorable train trip).

Next was a stop in Kiev, Ukraine. There we changed trains, got cheated monetarily and weren’t given the accommodations promised us. So, we were very crowded with all 6 of us in just 2 compartments. Our bunk was also the storage for blankets on top. So, Bill and I had one narrow bottom bunk; the 3 girls had one bunk for them (top and bottom) and the boy with us had to go out and find a stranger who shared an extra bunk.

To make matters more interesting, 2 different missionary groups – friends of ours – had just traveled through those countries and been gassed and robbed in their compartments at night. So, I took the precaution to take some coat hangers and duct tape and contrived a tie down from a hook on the wall to the door. We hid our money in tiny packages here and there, where we hoped no one could find it, and then we prayed. Bill trusted God and slept soundly almost all night! I roused at every train stop and peeked through a small crack by the door and
listened and looked up and down the hall! I also prayed a lot that night! Bill was like Daniel sleeping peacefully in the lion’s den while I, admittedly, didn’t have the faith he did!

But in the morning – praise the Lord – we all arrived safely in Rostov na Danu again. How nice to see some Russian friends once more who came and helped us get settled down for almost 2 weeks of meetings with Health and Temperance leaders from most of the 70 churches in southern Russia, called the Caucasus Conference. This time, we stayed with the conference president, Vladimir Predoliak and Olga, his wife. They showed us hand typed devotional books and Bibles, all typed in secret during times of communist persecution. We have long treasured one of them, which they gifted us. Olga later came to Wildwood and worked in the Hydrotherapy and Diet Kitchen departments for about 3 months. She and her husband were very much into promoting health improvement.

Bill had made over 500 health and spiritual overhead transparencies for our lectures with the assistance of a Russian translator at Wildwood. God also supplied us with a brand-new overhead projector, donated to us from a Chattanooga businessman. We held morning and evening devotionals/lectures, many of which Bill provided/taught. Because this was an educational seminar for those leaders, Bill sought to include as many spiritual facets of mental and spiritual health as possible.

The young people, Bill and I did the health lectures in the daytime and quite a few hydrotherapy demonstrations (simple water treatments that could be given at home for pain relief, infections, etc.), as well as other simple natural remedies. The church members provided a wonderful lunch every day at noon in the church basement. People back then avidly took notes on every little thing we said – all done with translators. They were so eager to learn. So much was new to them.

I wish I had the video of his Sabbath sermon the last meeting, where he exhorted the brethren to be faithful no matter what the future held. Many of the older leaders knew from personal experience what persecution was. He was so earnest with them. I remember I was so touched from his appeal that day. And of course, another serious danger lay ahead. With communism diminished, not too long hence, the quest for the gospel was not as urgent as it had been, and secularism became prominent in everyday Russian life.

We here in this country do not realize how much we will need of the Holy Spirit and God’s protection in the future, when persecution breaks out here. We need to be preparing now, tucking God’s holy Word in our hearts as often as possible, and cultivating a close relationship with Him. Bill emphasized these things to those dear people that last Sabbath. Bill rarely did much preaching here in the U.S., but overseas,
he did quite a bit. He did do a lot of teaching in the Lifestyle Educator course here at Wildwood.

As previously mentioned, we visited the Waldensian Valleys of northern Italy in 1995. In 1996 we arranged (with the local church in Torre Pellice and with the Italian Union of SDA’s in Rome) to do a New Start Health Seminar and a simultaneous Stop Smoking Seminar in an adjacent room in the Waldensian Cultural Center. We did practical demonstrations, lectures and had a good attendance – good, meaning about a combined 60-70 people. Since this had never been done before, we were pleased.

After each evening meeting, which was held several times a week for a couple weeks, there were healthy refreshments for all, mingling with the attendees, and browsing at the book display of beautiful health and spiritual books for sale by 2 young men working as colporteurs. Our publishing house in Italy produces lovely full color magazines and books. One is ‘Vita e Salute’ (Life and Health magazine) which is popular. There is also a comprehensive series of health books with practical advice and a lot of natural remedies. Bill had done all this organizing ahead of time with the local church, conference, and union leaders. The Union President, then Paolo Benini, attended.

We invited Tom and Laurel Rudnik from Wildwood to stay in the valleys and we rented an apartment, first in Bobbio Pellice, later in Villar Pellice. They got a job teaching English in a local grammar school and started making many lasting friends with the people. They stayed about one year, but because of family health reasons they had to return home to MI.

In 2000, Bill had an invitation to be the Interim Director (for 3 months) for the Lifestyle Educator school, recently established at an institution called ‘Hergelia’ (the place of the wild horses) with a Lifestyle Center in Romania, near the city of Tirgu Mures (capacity about 40 guests – a first of its kind Romania).

At the school, with about 20-30 students, were youth from several countries. All the classes were taught in the 1-year course in English. This was a big challenge, as many of them spoke very little English when they came. Bill loved teaching there and running the school until a permanent director was found. I visited there for 2 weeks, then we left together for an 8-hour train trip to Bucharest, through scenic Romanian countryside.

In Bucharest, we were put up by an SDA doctor and her family. I spent a morning in her clinic; then, Bill and I were invited to go to 10th floor of the church-owned building and speak for the Voice of Hope radio to Bucharest – what a privilege! We told a little about Wildwood and then spoke about the NEWSTART principles of living a healthy lifestyle. Bill
and I toured the nearby SDA Seminary and were asked to give a couple talks there. He gave one and I did, too.

On one occasion, we took a trip through Hungary (next to Romania) and visited the SDA college there. Bill especially enjoyed visiting with some of the young men studying theology. We stayed overnight and someone took us on a little sightseeing.

Over the next several years we did a stress seminar and a vegetarian cooking school for the public in Torre Pellice, Italy. We branched out and did health seminars both in our churches and for the public, in public venues in several cities of Italy including: Rome, Rimini, Bologna, Gaeta, Naples, Turin. We always took a small team with us. In the Waldensian Valleys, Bill organized live-in seminars for people to stay varying lengths of time. These were called ALPS 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005.

ALPS 2002 was held in the old Salvation Army hostel/retreat center in the ancient Waldensian town of Bobbio Pellice – 2 towns down at the end of the Pellice Valley from Torre Pellice. We had Dr. Heinz Schaidinger, a religious history professor from Bogenhofen SDA Seminary in Austria, who gave fascinating insights into Reformation history. We had other excellent health teachers.

Miguel Larcher, a French cook, and his nurse wife, Nadine, provided a gourmet vegan spread of meals over the 2-week seminar. In that seminar were about 20-25 attendees from several countries. One evening Bill had arranged for the Bobbio Waldensian choir to give a program in traditional costume, singing ancient Waldensian hymns – heavenly music. There were more in the choir than in our group

ALPS 2003 was especially wonderful with Dr. Alan Lindsay and wife Diedre. He was author of the well-known video series, ‘Keepers of the Flame’; stories of heroic pioneers of God’s faith through the ages, which included some videos on the faithfulness of the Waldenses in the Middle Ages under fierce persecution. This several week seminar focused on health and personal spiritual growth. We had a small group from several countries including England, US, Italy, etc.

ALPS 2004, unfortunately, didn’t work out even though Bill had spent a lot of time and effort on it. It was partly the venue requirements and huge preliminary deposits as well as the keynote speaker backed out because of illness in the family. This was a big disappointment to many who were planning to come from several countries.

In ALPS 2005 we had a nice group of young people for about 6 weeks (from the U.S.) studying health and spiritual topics. They did some cleanup work around the ancient School of the Barbs, where the medieval Waldenses trained their ministers in the bitter winters in the mountain. In fair weather, they took fragments of Scripture sewed into
their tunics and – under the guise of silk merchants – would carry their wares to the more affluent class of citizens all through Europe.

Some got caught and were detained by the authorities or put in prison to spend their lives there until death. For several hundred years those were days that tried men’s souls. Bill taught many of the classes along with several other teachers. The youth at the seminar returned home determined to be faithful to God no matter what. Sometime after returning to the States, a young man who didn’t appear very interested met us at another college in VA. He told Bill that he had other plans on returning home, but that on reflecting on what he had learned in Italy, his life was turned around and – instead – he chose to commit his life to study to be in God’s service.

Bill organized a trip to Czech Republic for a seminar at the SDA church retreat in the countryside. Church leaders were there, as was a young lady by the name of Jana who had recently been a student at Wildwood. She was our main translator. I heard just a weeks ago that she is still very active in the health ministry in the churches there.

Another year, Bill arranged for a seminar in Slovenia for the public and another for the church. We went with some of our young people from Wildwood, including Sao Ferreira, who is now living in Austria with her husband.

In 2006, Bill arranged with the Italian Union to do a Health Expo during the Winter Olympics in Turin (Torino). We took a small training group (including Carol Bearce) and trained a nice group of Italian SDA youth in the mornings. In the afternoons we held a Health Expo for the public in the basement of the SDA church in Turin. The Italian Union Youth Director was there with us, too.

Bill arranged with the Italian and Romanian churches (they met in the same building) for our group, the youth group and some members of the Italian and Romanian churches to distribute health and religious tracts in Italian and English, in the city, several different mornings. Altogether, it was estimated that between 75,000 -100,000 tracts and health magazines were given out. Of course, some would be tossed, but there is no telling what hearts the good seeds landed in and took root.

And so, the years rolled on. We returned to the Waldensian Valleys over 20 times – sometimes twice a year. We made many friends there and Danielle Seban, a French nurse who spent some time here at Wildwood, has now stayed there over 20 years. She has cultivated many friendships there, does witnessing for Jesus, cooking classes, Bible studies with friends, teaches Sabbath School to the young people and even preaches on Sabbath, at times. She entertains hundreds of guests a year from all over the world (usually SDA tour groups of up to 50 or more), to whom she often feeds her tasty vegan food and often tours many of them to the
local famous historic Waldensian sites, such as a cave where persecution occurred, monuments, museums, etc. Bill and I have kept close contact with her all these years.

In June, with Bill’s health seriously declining, I returned to the valleys for 2 weeks (I put Bill under the loving custody of the Lifestyle Center here) to expedite a transfer of 4 acres of mountain property and 2 nice little apartments, which we bought about 16 years ago, to Danielle’s name. She uses this property a lot for gardens, hosting, etc. They were bought with donated money. But, there was one tiny mistake in the documents I got translated and the lawyer there forgot to tell us we would have to get an all-important document called an Apostile (only available in Atlanta). So, a few weeks later (in July 2018) we went to Atlanta to secure and send the document that same day, which cost over $700.00 (including FED EX fees). By then, Bill’s health was declining rapidly. He was barely able to walk with a rollator. By a miracle, Danielle was able to get the property and papers taken care of on time (past a certain time they would have doubled the price of the ‘donation’ - $11,000 US money – this took over half her inheritance money from her deceased parents).

In November 2002, Bill had surgery for colon cancer. Fortunately, no metastasis were discovered nor further treatment needed. This was followed immediately by double pneumonia and blood clots in his leg. But thankfully, he finally recovered and had a number of productive years after that.

But, in January of 2014, he had his first serious back pain. In May of 2014, he fractured T12 and L4, requiring kyphoplasty surgery (placing cement in the vertebra to stabilize it). Over the next 2 years, he continued to break bones – 13 vertebrae in all – with a total of 10 back surgeries (including an L2-5 laminectomy for spinal stenosis causing numbness down his legs). This required a 3-week rehab stay at Siskin’s Rehabilitation Hospital. Two of the vertebral fractures were too high: T6 &T7; so the treatment was a big, heavy brace for 4-5 months. During these 2 years, he also had pneumonia several times and a ruptured ear drum.

He had a relatively healthy few months in 2014, so we got together with some of our close friends from 50 years before. We planned a Friday evening Vespers, Sabbath School and Church service, luncheon and Sabbath evening Vespers with an outdoor light supper for all. This took several planning sessions over 3-4 months. Four couples were all courting simultaneously at Wildwood back then and all married within a few weeks of each other; all have been productive in God’s work.

The whole idea of the weekend meetings was to show the students which come here from all over the world that God’s plan in courtship and marriage works. Bill and Lois Dull spent the last 30 years in India
establishing Bible and industrial training schools, orphanages, and a school of midwifery. Danny and Norma Miller spent their career with Danny working for the Christian Record – a ministry for the blind. Paul and Louise Eirich pastored several churches and Bill and I were in mission work either at Wildwood or overseas, most of the time. It turned out to be a wonderful weekend.

Over the last 5 years, it seems God was testing us both. In September of 2016, Bill fell and fractured his left hip, which resulted in a total hip replacement, 3 blood transfusions, then a 3 week stay at Siskin’s Rehab Hospital. He did quite well after rehab for a number of months. He developed quite a cough and a pulmonologist diagnosed COPD and put him on an inhaler. He began to have very swollen feet and legs, which diuretics hardly touched. In September of 2017, he suddenly suffered a partially collapsed lung and had to have a chest tube. He was also in congestive heart failure with a large left pleural effusion, which the doctors drained partially (1600 cc). They changed his diuretic and he seemed to improve for some time.

On November 15, 2017, one more insult to his body nearly took his life. He took our 2 dogs to the dog park in Red Bank and was about 30 feet inside the enclosure when a young lady entered with a large 1-year old, frisky, half black lab, half golden retriever. He made a beeline for Bill’s chest, taking him by surprise, and knocked him to the ground – unconscious. He was taken by ambulance to Erlanger Hospital in Chattanooga. A CT scan showed 3 bleeds in his brain (subarachnoid hemorrhages) and he also suffered a fracture of a left wrist bone with a torn ligament, in addition to big bruises to his left chest and hip. In the hospital he was conscious, but critical.

He was sent to the Neuro Trauma ICU for 2 days, then to the floor for 5 days. After that, he was transferred to Siskin Rehab Hospital for 3 weeks. That was probably his 4th admission there in 3 years. Once discharged, he was then evaluated a few days later for outpatient PT (physical therapy), OT (occupational therapy) and speech therapy, but was felt too weak to start yet. So, we had to wait another 2 months, and from March to May of 2018, he had 3 months of outpatient PT, OT & speech therapy 3 times a week. He suffered from swallowing difficulty with liquids and balance problems ever since.

He did not progress as we had hoped and – in fact – was told by OT that his reaction time to testing was too slow and that he should not be driving anymore. This was a very hard blow for him and his reply was “Well, I’ve been driving 70 years and never had an accident.” He didn’t realize that in the previous 3 weeks of May, he had come close to an accident through driving mistakes. I was with him, and screamed out, but he could not seem to recognize them for what they were. I started doing all the driving. Now I realize that – at times – his ammonia levels
were probably too high, causing momentary sluggish thinking, even in Rehab.

In January of 2018, I at last took him to a surgeon, after taking him off and on to several doctors and ER visits over 1 ½ years. By then, his suffering with a large inguinal hernia came to the point of almost emergency surgery; so, although very frail, the doctor did the surgery. Bill stayed one night in the hospital and did very well. This was a tremendous relief to vague groin pain he had had all that time. I was quite sure it was a hernia for a long time and it was finally very obvious.

Bill always loved to be involved in missionary endeavors here at home and abroad. But, as he got weaker over the last couple years, he got more involved on the computer, making some devotional PowerPoints. The last one he made was very long one, entitled: ‘Jesus – the Lamb and the Lion – our Redeemer, Conqueror and Best Forever Friend’. He last worked on it on June 3, 2018. From then on, his interest in computer, reading, etc. gradually disappeared. Finally, he even ceased listening to the news or to devotional material on his iPhone, as is illness progressed.

During the summer of 2018 he seemed to get weaker, shuffling his feet and going from walking sticks, to walker, to Rollator. His abdomen was more and more uncomfortable and bloated, and his appetite less. We couldn’t pinpoint what was wrong. I finally asked for a CT of his abdomen and it showed advanced cirrhosis of the liver, which raises ammonia levels and causes confusion. I took him within a few days to a hepatologist (liver specialist) in Nashville and they did a lot of blood work which pinpointed the problem. He had specific antibodies for Primary Biliary Cirrhosis (Primary Biliary Cholangitis), which had likely been going on for years starting with a low-grade autoimmune hepatitis. He was put on Lactulose to lower the ammonia levels, but which causes diarrhea. His diuretics were further increased.

About 3 weeks after seeing the hepatologist in Nashville for the second visit, I decided to take Bill to his primary care physician to get some labs. On the way down our sidewalk by our house he fainted and collapsed. I barely managed to lower him gently to the cement without getting hurt. I called 911 and he was taken once more to Memorial Hospital and found to have a partial small bowel obstruction a couple days later. This gradually resolved over 6 days and he came home.

I finally had to move him to the Lifestyle Center to live, where a man would be available to help me do transfers from bed to chair, among other things, when needed. I could no longer care for him alone at home. I bought him an electric recliner and set it up facing the big glass door. He enjoyed this chair very much and would spend several hours a day in it.
Then – about 6 weeks before he died – his sister Margaret and her grandson, Bryan Thompson, drove from Rolla, MO to visit Bill over the weekend. They arrived on Friday evening and had a nice visit. On Sabbath, they spent several hours with him. It was one of his best days in a long time and we took pictures together in the front foyer. Although unable to talk much, their visit was the highlight of many weeks. He told Margaret, “meet me at the tree of life.” They knew it was their last visit together.

He also talked on the phone to his sister Dorothy and husband, Frank in Lampe, MO a few days before and told them how much he wanted to be in the resurrection and rest in Jesus.

During that night he became more and more short of breath and by 6 am I called 911 and the ambulance took him once more to Memorial. This time he had a large aspiration pneumonia. Remember the dog accident? Ever since then, he choked easily, and as he got weaker, he aspirated more and more. He spent another 6 days in the hospital. Two physicians had said he wouldn’t leave the hospital, but I was praying he could. I wanted him to die at Wildwood. By then, we knew his time was drawing to a close.

He was already at the level of a liver transplant criteria, had he been much younger. It is a uniformly fatal disease and he was given 1-2 months to live. He lived about 3 ½ months. Actually, he basically quit eating and if I hadn’t pureed all his food to a thin liquid and thickened his water and juices and fed him with a 20cc syringe (5 cc at a time), he would have died much sooner. He was not a candidate for a feeding tube because of the liver disease, but I couldn’t just stop feeding him, either. He only took small amounts each day and his poor, wasted body began to look like someone with severe malnutrition.

He loved it when people visited, encouraged him, read the Bible and prayed with him. Even though he could speak very little (the last couple months) – too much effort – he and I appreciated the cards, the love, visits and prayers of friends more than you’ll ever know. We appreciated very much (through these last 5 years) the several pastoral visits by Pastors Wilbur Atwood and Steve Cook of Wildwood, Pastors Rob Snider and Dan Hall of Dunlap, among others.

These were defining days of the final phase of his life – further purifying and refining his character for heaven. His suffering was intense. He pled with me over and over, “just let me go, Roby, just let me go! I want to rest in Jesus. I’m looking forward to the resurrection.” I reminded him over and over that God only allows suffering to those in whom He sees bright, shiny gold that can come out of the furnace once the dross is burned off. He told several people (whether they asked him or not) that he felt he was ready; he assuredly said “Yes” on several occasions, including to me. I felt assured of his salvation.
On one of his last walks around the parking lot, he and Annie Walsh had their picture taken. His last few weeks were a steady decline from Rollator to recliner and wheelchair, and finally to bed. One of his last times in the wheelchair he wanted to be placed by a big sunny double glass door in the Lifestyle Center which he called “my Florida sunroom!” I would roll him around the center and people greeted him cheerfully. I took him outside as often as possible which he loved.

I have increasingly seen him for long periods on his knees praying in recent years. His greatest desire had been to be more and more like Jesus, to be ready for his soon coming in the clouds of heaven. I’ve seen his character mellow, become softer wanting all imperfections gone to reflect Jesus’ image more fully. Our theme – together – ever since our wedding day has been ‘to meet Jesus alive – to be translated when He comes’, but if that is not to be, that we be ready and be able to say “this is our God – we have waited for You! – even so, come Lord Jesus!” Our other theme is ‘we want our crowns heavy with stars so that many others can rejoice with us!’ What a day that will be!

For a long time, I was singing hymns to him at bedtime, reading the Bible and devotional books and having prayer with him. He would often fall asleep during this. Nonetheless, he had a hard time sleeping at night and would wake up repeatedly calling me, “Roby, Roby – water, water or urinal, urinal, etc.” I miss those calls; but I wouldn’t want him back now, only in his glorified state when Jesus comes. He is resting quietly in the grave until this:

“For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” – 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

His earthly life ended on Tuesday, December 11, 2018. We had a nice graveside service with over 200 family/friends present. He was awarded military honors (which included Flag Folding/Presentation and Taps) and was buried in Deakin’s Cemetery (also known as Resurrection Hill), an old community cemetery on campus, on the hill just above the Wildwood SDA Church.

**Epilogue**

I’m so glad he is peacefully resting in the grave on Resurrection Hill. What a bright, lit up place that will be with myriads of heavenly angels to accompany each saint there that is resting – some for many years, others only recently – but in God’s eyes time is measured differently – but a moment!!
And Bill and I would wish that each of you present today will be on hand to witness the event of the ages very, very soon according to Bible prophecy. It is such a glorious hope to embrace.

What of the future? It is bright with God’s promises – Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV) says, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”

I (as well as many others) will always remember his patience and sweet smiles, despite the years of great suffering. His motto was Job 19:25, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” I look forward to – not only seeing my dearest Bill and other loved ones, and making millions of new friends – greeting those for whom we had a part in their being there – all throughout eternity; but we will get to see our four children wrenched from us before their time to be born. That will be a fun time, raising them in heaven!

I so look forward to knowing God’s will for my life each day now, and with that hope and cheer in my life, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” If we will let Him, fully consecrating our lives to Him each moment of each day, He will give us pleasant surprises and flowers to brighten our way; if we but look for them. We could focus on thorns but of what avail is that? So, I choose to count my many blessings! May that be the experience of all of you is my prayer! There is work to be done now for dying people – physically and spiritually – may we each do our part!

**Sherman Family**

Still living are three of Bill’s sisters: Margaret (95; living in Rolla, MO), Dorothy (89; living in Lampe, MO) and Ruth (83; living in a nursing home in MO). He is also survived by many nieces, nephews and cousins, many of which could not be here.
Thank You!

I want to gratefully thank all who have expressed their concern, love and support through: cards, text messages, Facebook posts and messages, phone calls, in-person encounters and especially prayers.

Thank you to all who have so willingly participated to make a meaningful day for family and friends in remembering and cherishing the life of a mutual friend, Bill Sherman. He was my most precious possession on earth and I so look forward to seeing him again soon when Jesus returns in the clouds of heaven.

Good Night Father
Poem written December 1950,
by Thomas Edward Hirst
September 1888 – December 1950
(Roby Hirst Sherman’s father)

Good night Father – I have no fear
I know that Thou will stay so near
That as I reach in darkened pain
Thy hand I’ll feel and once again
My heart will joy in loving peace
My tears will staunch, my fears will cease.

Good night Father – so good to me
My love is Thine – I do love Thee
No matter what to me befall
I give to Thee my life, my all
There is no doubt – should sleep be mine
I rest in peace – in love divine.

Good night Father – when morning light
From out Thy throne – makes all things bright
I shall awake – and O the bliss
Of that glad day – I would not miss
Good night – good night – and then glad day
To be with Thee – always for aye.
Four couples, which courted at Wildwood simultaneously and married within weeks of each other in 1964, celebrate our 50th anniversary together.
Courtship at Wildwood, GA
Summer 1964

William Maynard Sherman
& Roby Angelina Hirst Sherman

Roby A. & William M. Sherman, August 17, 1964
Bridesmaid: Lois Langley | Best Man: William Jackson