

# Stories Inside





**SAVE THE DATE**

September 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021

60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



# MILLION DOLLAR SUNDAY



**EEM**

60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Do justice...love kindness...  
walk humbly with your God.

**MICAH 6:8**

# Inside

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# SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER



This special edition of our newsletter holds stories of those who have gone before us to risk their lives to share the Gospel when it was dangerous. We invite you to take a look at the beginning days of the ministry we know as EEM. We pray these stories encourage your spirit, inspire your heart, and challenge your faith. We want to thank Gayle Hensley Cole, the wife of the late Gwen Hensley, and her family, who have taken the time to share many of the experiences as part of the original EEM team in the early 1960s. It is by God's providence that EEM has grown to distribute over 1.35 million Bibles, New Testaments, teen Bibles, children's Bibles and Bible-based materials free of charge amid the chaos of 2020. And this growth has continued into 2021. We praise God for everyone in the past, present, and future who partners with us to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

## **Labor of Love** By Gayle Hensley Cole

There were many individuals who had a part in printing, smuggling and distributing Bibles into

Eastern Europe in the earlier years of EEM. While EEM printed the Bibles, God also provided faithful people in Iron Curtain countries who were willing to receive and distribute the printed material in the former Czechoslovakia, Russia, the former Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland. This labor of love was not without risk.

The missionaries were often followed by the secret police. The secret police knew some of the houses the missionaries visited and had the phones tapped. After the home visits, they often underwent intense interrogation by the police. The police invaded their homes, pulled everything out of their closets and cabinets looking for Bibles and printed material. Even if missionaries lived in rural areas, police searched the barns and outer buildings as well. If police found Bibles and religious literature, they confiscated it and the owners were warned not to receive anymore of this "propaganda." Many were threatened, and some were jailed. And still, because of their love for the unsaved, missionaries would continue to receive and distribute the Word of Life.

## PRAY WITH US

Q2NL21

Pray a prayer of thanksgiving with us as we praise God for 60 years of His faithfulness and provision for this ministry.

1

Pray for more people across the globe to turn to God and be transformed by the Good News of Jesus.

2

Pray for our team to be boldly responsive to God's guidance as we continue to partner with Him to provide His Word.

3

Pray for God to raise up more financial partners to support the increase of hunger for God's Word.

4



# THE TRAIN STORY

The train Story is one of our very favorite stories. We pray continually for everyone to have access to God's Word so they may find eternal life in Jesus Christ!

Two members of the team that later became EEM, crossed the Iron Curtain to enter Budapest, Hungary. Under Soviet occupation it was no longer the beautiful Eastern Capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was now dark and drab. The commercial center was bricked up, no signage allowed, conversations were muted, and no one smiled.



While in Vienna preparing for the trip, the team accumulated names of secret house church leaders and even some who attended a tolerated protestant church. They met one of those leaders, Ivan Martos, on the third day of the Hungarian visit.

Ivan was energetic, positive, and bigger than life. He was an employee of the National Bank of Hungary, and a devoted follower of Jesus. Although he was much older than these young people who formed the original team, together they made a deep connection that would last for several years.

As part of his job, Ivan was allowed to travel to Vienna twice each year for banking conferences. These highly anticipated visits became opportunities for the group to meet together and share their common faith; they also helped lift everyone's spirits.

On one of those journeys, a team member was scheduled to meet Ivan at the train station. When he stepped off the train, Ivan was perceptibly upset, close to tears. He quickly explained the source of his grief.







As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth:

It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

## Isaiah 55:10-11

Earlier, while still on board the train, uniformed guards came through checking everyone's travel papers. Ivan's papers were in order, but one of the guards, noticing Ivan's briefcase, ordered him to open it. The very first item they noticed was his personal Bible.

The guard grabbed the Bible and angrily demanded, "What are you doing with a Bible?"

Before Ivan could respond, the guard threw it out of the window of the moving train.

It was as if Ivan lost his best friend that day.

Two years after this incident, Ivan came again on another one of his regular visits. As usual, a team member was waiting for him at the train station. However, this time was as remarkable as that visit two years earlier. Instead of dejection and sadness, Ivan was practically bouncing off the train.

"I got my Bible back!"

Ivan explained that a few days before he was to leave for Vienna, he had received a package by post. The name and return address were unknown to him, but inside was the very Bible the uniformed guard threw out the window two years before!

And there was a note:

***"Some of our children were playing one day along the railroad tracks. They found your Bible. Not knowing what it was, one of them took it to his grandmother who immediately recognized it as a Bible. Word spread quickly. Some of our older people had possessed Bibles before they were banned, and remembered the significance and power of the Word of God. We decided to conceal the discovery while those who so desired would make handwritten copies. That joyful task lasted two years. Please forgive our keeping your Bible so long. But you might like to know that we are now a secret band of about thirty who have baptized each other and seek to follow Jesus in our daily lives."***



# UNTOLD STORIES

By Gayle Hensley Cole

## Sealed and Delivered

There were many ways Bibles were delivered to Eastern Europe during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the men who had a strategic part in getting Bibles into Russia and other Eastern European countries was Brother D. He lived in the former Yugoslavia and wanted the people who lived in Russia and other Eastern European nations to have copies of the Bible. EEM would send the Bibles to his home address through legal channels; customs were paid on the Bibles when he received them. He would wrap the Bibles individually and address them. Then he would put them on his motorcycle and take them to the local post office to be mailed. Sometimes he took them by train to other post offices. He was a vital part of this work.

On a January morning in 1974, the police entered his home and ordered him and his wife to sit in a chair while they went through their house, attic, barns, etc., looking for the Bibles, addresses, and printed literature. They confiscated his mailing lists, his correspondence, and his Bibles. They took him to jail and tried him; he was sentenced to prison. They sent Sister D. a report of the trial in which it was stated that an appeal would only be considered for a few days. Having no experience with such things, she did not know what to do, and by the time she contacted a believer in Zagreb, the time for this appeal had expired. One of the missionaries contacted a good lawyer, who looked into the matter. He concluded that nothing in the law books would allow the court's decision to stand as it is not against the law to mail Bibles to other countries. This was the basis on which the lawyer reversed the decision.

Brother D. was released from prison. However, he received a warning from the police that his continued association with individuals from the West or his activities of mailing Bibles

to other Eastern European countries would result in a two-year prison sentence. Therefore, it was necessary for him to leave the village where he was living. This was not desired, but under the circumstances, it appeared that he had no choice. He wanted to continue mailing Bibles to other Eastern European countries.

He moved to a larger city where he had friends in the postal department. These friends were believers and were sympathetic to his efforts.

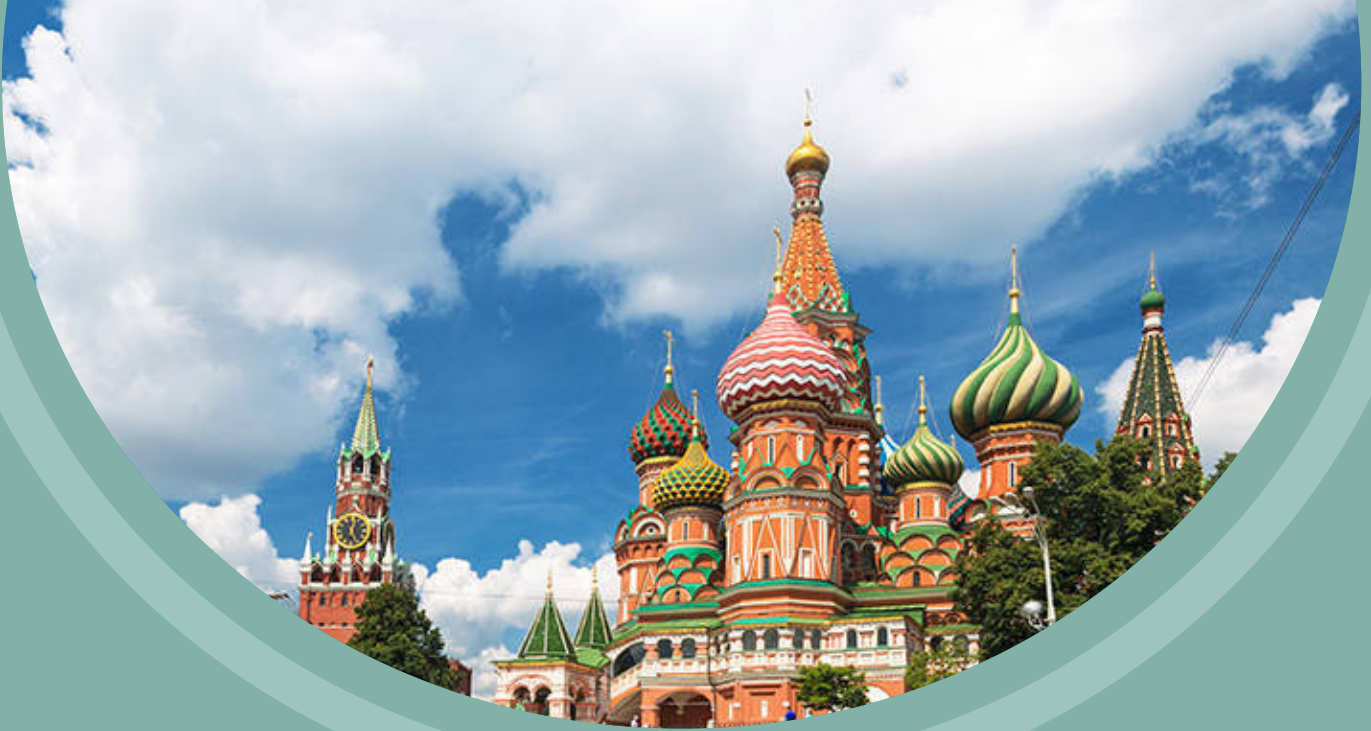
It wasn't unusual for American missionaries, when caught, to be interrogated several hours and expelled from the country. Unfortunately, nationals like Brother D. had no options but to live under this system. Brother D., and disciples like him, were an essential link in helping supply those hungering for the Bread of life.

## Hidden in the Haystack

Brother K. lived in the former Czechoslovakia and originally studied to be a priest. During his studies, he realized that he didn't agree with the teachings of the Catholic church. He was later baptized by Bob Hare and worked tirelessly to share God's Word. Brother K. had a keen mind (he spoke five languages) and a bold but gentle spirit.

The missionaries would take the Bibles and religious literature to Brother K., and he would hide the books in the haystacks in his barn. He would then take them to different people who wanted to have a copy of the Bible, and he started several house churches in the area. He would ride his bicycle each Sunday to surrounding villages to preach to these illegal house churches. This faithful brother was responsible for distributing more than 100,000 Bibles and New Testaments over the years. The police carefully observed him. They





even warned and fined him many times for his religious activities. Because of this, he also had a hard time keeping a job; several employers fired him because of his faith. Then the police issued a decree and warned everyone in the area not to hire him. At the time he was working as a security guard for a company, and the owner came to him and told him he was the best employee he had ever had, but he was being forced to fire him.

Brother K. wanted “Everyone to get it.” His faith and love for people didn’t stop because of the threats of the Communists.

## 300 Lives for Christ

In 1968 we had a 75-year-old guest who came to Vienna and traveled with Gwen to Eastern Europe. Brother M. immigrated to America at an early age, and it was on Ellis Island that he became acquainted with the Bible. He began studying with a group of Russians and soon after, Brother M. was baptized. He later returned and baptized half of the group. He then traveled from city to city, working in his profession as a barber, seeking Russian-speaking people to whom he could teach the Word of God.

In the 1930s, he returned to Russia to preach to the people in his hometown and the

surrounding area. Several churches were established before he returned to America.

He returned to Europe in the summer of 1968 to visit these congregations. Unfortunately, the Russian authorities did not permit him to go to the villages - but did allow him to visit the first border town.

He came to the border with a big family Bible in his hands. The guards said he couldn’t take it with him. Brother M. explained that his wife wanted her family to see it, so they stamped in his passport that he had the Bible. The guards told him he would have to take the Bible back out of the country when he left Russia. Unknown to the guards, Brother M. had several small Russian Bibles concealed on his person.

Three hundred members of the congregations that were established as a result of his first visit made the journey to the border town to visit him. He was allowed to say a few words to the local church and preached for several hours.

When Brother M. left Russia, the guards asked to see the family Bible. He told them, “My wife’s family wanted to keep that Bible and to tell you the truth: I am more afraid of my wife than I am of you!”

# LIFE BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Gayle Hensley Cole, her son Greg Hensley, and daughters Heidee Whitaker and Hollye Conway have provided a glimpse of what life was like behind the Iron Curtain.

## God's Faithfulness in the Face of Challenges

### Gayle Hensley Cole:

When Gwen was convinced God wanted His Word printed for Eastern Europe, he researched and decided a Heidelberg Press was needed. He stepped out in faith and ordered one. Gwen could not have done this on his own. The Lord blessed his faith in many ways.

The funding didn't come without much sweat and tears on the part of many people, but God paved the way and blessed EEM with funds needed. This was an effort of many people working together; the funds came from so many sources. Our God provided the resources - from the elderly couple who faithfully gave \$3 per month from their fixed income - from children's Bible classes who saved their money and sent it to EEM - from churches who faithfully placed EEM in their annual budgets - from friends and relatives of the missionaries - from those who had been blessed with abundant resources. God also introduced special people to the work who made the purchase a reality. So, you see, this was not through Gwen's efforts, or EEM's efforts, but the combined efforts of people who love the Lord and who want others to know Him. People working together to fulfill the commission to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel." This is a letter Gwen wrote in November 1973 in response to a contributor's letter:

"I guess the Lord decided to use you for an extra bit of encouragement. The day before I received your letter, I had to come up with \$10,000 at the bank here in Austria. For several days, we had been hoping for some answer to come as a response to our prayer. The mail arrived at the office and nothing. We had to do something that day! Then the

mail arrived at home and Gayle called to tell me that we had heard from Quannah and \$10,069 was on the way or in the bank at Quannah. We celebrated!!! We gathered all the Christians here at the office and poured out our hearts in praise and thanksgiving to the Creator of this good earth. Your letter was also right on course; we did not get it until the next morning. **WHEN THE LORD ANSWERS PRAYERS HE LEAVES NO DOUBT THAT IT WAS HIS RESPONSE!** This means we were able to cover our bank account and were able to deposit your check to cover bills."

### Greg Hensley:

"I often think back to my childhood growing up in the hills of the Vienna Woods. These charming hills that surround the western edges of [the city] are not only beautiful but also full of fascinating history and have some of the most incredible views of the city of Vienna. It was easy to be awed by the sight of ancient church steeples and castles that have histories that date back hundreds of years. However, I will never forget



Gayle  
Hensley  
Cole



standing with my family on an overlook of this city in the evening hours. My dad told me that just beyond the eastern horizon where dim lights could be seen reflecting off the clouds was another city by the name of Bratislava. Bratislava is very close to Vienna, but back then, life was very different for the people who lived there. Back then, that city was a part of the Soviet sphere of influence and people who lived there did not have the same freedoms we in the west enjoyed, including the freedom to own a Bible or the freedom to worship. Living so close to the frontiers of the "Iron Curtain" made me understand in very real terms how important the work of Eastern European Mission was. The people working at EEM had a strong passion to share our God's Word and love with all people living beyond that Iron Curtain. I recall going on trips with my family to visit some of these Eastern European countries. We would sometimes lay a small mattress in the back of the family car for us kids to be able to sleep while we travelled. Sometimes, there would be Bibles placed underneath the mattress. When stopping at border crossings, border guards would not want to wake sleeping children to search for contraband items such as Bibles."

## Heidee Whitaker:

"I treasure my childhood and the memories I carry of witnessing my parents live their faith. I never doubted their love for our Father or their trust in the path He prepared for them. I remember falling asleep on long road trips to Eastern Europe with many Bibles hidden under my mattress in the car, smuggling them into countries that would not allow Bibles to be in your homes. I remember dad telling me about the men and women he met who risked imprisonment to hide these Bibles and later hand them out to those hungry to hear God's Word. I remember dad telling me about his friends who were put into prison for being caught with Bibles. Their families could not find where they were being held in prison. The fear they must have lived with is something I have heard about but I have not



Left to right: Hollye, Greg, Heidee

had to live it. My father was banned from some countries because he continued to smuggle in Bibles. That is the life I grew up in. Fast forward to November 9th, 1989. My husband of 3 months comes home to his wife sobbing. The television is on and he sees the Berlin Wall, the people, the news headline: "The Fall Of The Berlin Wall." All I could think of was: "GOD you did this!" and "I wish dad was with me to celebrate this!" No more smuggling Bibles, no more prison for those hungry to learn of God's Word. People can receive his message freely. The song that comes to mind is: "Our God is an AWESOME GOD, who reigns from Heaven above...." I am so thankful for those serving with EEM who continue to share God's Word with those hungry and searching for the message from our Father.

## Hollye Conway:

"We would leave home as a family with Bibles hidden throughout the car, the floorboard packed with Bibles. Therefore many bibles were smuggled in. Saying bye to my dad each time he went behind the Iron Curtain was always difficult and emotional. I knew the risk was great each time! I always felt inner trepidation until he returned safely. He always did return, but with harrowing tales at times. I felt like the Vienna team's prayers had a part in chiseling away the wall!"

# LETTERS FROM GWEN

## 1966

"We had a good trip to Russia. We traveled over 3,300 miles via car and visited Lvov, Kiev, Kharkov, Orjol, Moscow, Smolensk, Minsk, and Brest. We arrived at the border and went through the formalities of entering the USSR. We were concluding the formalities with a routine check on the contents of our luggage, and several customs officials were involved in examining our car. Most of them gave our car a quick "once-over" and were through, but one took the trouble to go through every piece of paper in my glove compartment. Somehow one Russian tract was left there, along with some other tracts in German. Upon finding this tract, he demanded to know if we had any more. As a matter of fact, we did... over 125 pieces. We all had literature and New Testaments in our coat pockets. When they found these, they searched the car again from top to bottom. They took out the seats, the

spare tire, everything and gave it a thorough search. It was as if we had 100 pounds of heroin or opium. (In fact, Lenin once said, "Religion is the opium of the people.") We were then led into private rooms and interrogated separately. They treated us as criminals of the state and even photographed us as such. We were then subjected to a "waiting game." They told us that they might confiscate our car. (We were a little concerned, as this happened to a young preacher from England for doing the same thing a few weeks before, and we were aware that they had confiscated his car.) We waited for six hours for a decision on our case. Every once in a while they would call me back into the main office for further questioning or take me to a garden (away from the other tourists who were continually coming and going), and give me a lecture. Finally, the verdict was that we would be allowed to enter, but they were confiscating all our Bibles and religious materials. We had a little discussion with them, and they finally allowed us to take our personal Bibles with us.

This trip deepened my appreciation for the Bible in its printed form. The USSR recognizes the power of one printed Bible, even if it is separated from any religious teacher. You are not asked if you have liquor, cigarettes, or the usual commodities as when crossing other international borders, but printed matter... that is another question. Just to see how they reacted on the border when they learned we had Bibles (26 copies) was worth the trip, in that you see their estimate of the worth of the Bible and what it can do."

## 1968

"Upon arriving in Ponelle de sub Munte, Romania, we learned that several of the people we wanted to visit were in a worship service. We were taken to this place by a young man we met on the road.

There were about 180 people crowded in a small building. They did not have songbooks. One of the men had a few songs





written down on paper, and they were worn to where one could scarcely read them. A few had portions of the Bible, and a few were blessed with a copy of the entire Bible; this was a Russian-speaking assembly. It comes together for 5 hours on Sundays, and services are not over until 2:00. We were spotted as strangers immediately, as the people in this area have their own peculiar ways of dress. (Everything is made by hand, including the material itself. Even the shoes are made in an unusual manner.)

The leaders acknowledged our presence by going outside and returning to sit by us to find out who we were. I gave them a tract or two in Russian. After examining them and asking several questions, they asked us to speak to them. Brother M. hardly spoke for 20 minutes when the police sent someone into the building after us. We were told to meet them at the police station. The police would not ride with us, but we were accompanied by one of the leaders and one of the young men of the congregation. I gave the young man about 30 Russian N.T.'s, and he disappeared. The police made several charges against us. Among them were: we were in a restricted area without permission, we had not registered with the police upon arriving there, and we were accused of selling Bibles (this is a crime in a Communist country). After much talk and proof, we were able to prove all charges as false.

The police then searched our car and found several Bibles and tracts. After further interrogation, they took us to the regional police station for a long wait. A group of unidentified officials arrived and spent a long time with the police officials who had taken us into custody.

The police prepared a long document, including an itemized list of the tracts and Bibles that we still had with us. They wanted me to sign it but I requested the right for counsel with the American Embassy in Bucharest. The permission was granted, but I had to go to the post office to place the call, as I was not allowed to use the police phone. My call came through and the American Embassy counseled me not

to sign the document. The police had already told us that we were being sent to the police headquarters for that state in another city, which was about a six-hour drive from there. I mentioned this to the embassy official and he assured me assistance should we have further difficulties. On the way to this city, we finally found a restaurant; it had been 30 hours since we had eaten. We arrived late that night at the police headquarters. The head of the police of the entire northern province began dealing rather roughly with us, but he was interrupted. Another official called him to another room on the telephone. I understood three words.... "telephone.... American...Embassy". He returned in quite another disposition and dealt kindly with us. He called and made arrangements for us in the hotel and pronounced our sentence upon us: we were being expelled from the country, but we were being allowed to spend the night. Our crime: distributing religious propaganda.

They confiscated 24 Bibles or New Testaments along with about 300 tracts. We had been able to distribute about 40 Bibles and untold numbers of tracts. In the West we cannot appreciate the value of one copy of God's Word...these people can, and I am learning more every day."

## From Gayle Hensley Cole:

**Gwen came home and shared the experiences of this trip with me. Then, with tears in his eyes he said, "Gayle, some of these villages have only one copy of the Bible-some villages have just a hand-written portion that is passed around the village from person to person. The preachers don't even have a copy- and how can they know what God wants them to do if they don't have His Word? If it is God's will - and I believe it is - I am going to see that these people receive the Bible in their own language!"**



# EEM

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The Bible. We Want Everyone To Get It. <sup>SM</sup>

## LEAVE A LEGACY

The Hensley Legacy Society (HLS) was created as a tribute to the mission and vision of EEM co-founder Gwen Hensley.

HLS honors individuals who support EEM through one or more estate gift arrangements.



A gift must be documented by EEM for membership. Estate gifts include: documented bequests, trusts, gift annuities, remainder interests in a residence or farm, life insurance, retirement accounts and more.

Each member will be presented with a special-edition Hensley Legacy Society Bible. These treasured keepsakes are a representation of the original Bibles that were printed and smuggled behind the Iron Curtain.

**For more information visit [eem.org/hensley](http://eem.org/hensley)**



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### Memorials and Honors

To see a list of recent Memorials and Honors visit  
[www.eem.org/memorials-and-honors](http://www.eem.org/memorials-and-honors).

### Newsletters

Newsletters are available in digital or print format. Contact us at 800-486-1818 or email [newsletter@eem.org](mailto:newsletter@eem.org).



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