



Raison D'être

One teen's amazing discovery at a French camp

by Tim Wilson and Tralita Alderman

Sophie had heard rumors of religious sects isolated in the French Alps, where glaciers abundant wildflowers, sheer rock cliffs, and green pastures fairly cry out, testifying to their Creator. The natural beauty clashes with the dark spiritual condition of the region.

Once a hotbed of the Protestant reformation, this stretch of winding mountain road was devoid of even one evangelical church—and there was certainly no church in Sophie's town. Even Catholicism was dwindling as each priest served about 30 tiny parishes. Ornate cathedrals and picturesque chapels stood as monuments to a history few wanted to awaken in one of the most popular vacation areas of France, the Oisans.

Sophie grew up believing that science had fully explained humankind's existence, and that religion was intellectual suicide. For her and her fellow nationals, "I am French; I am Catholic; I am atheist" held no contradiction.

Bridging the Gap

Sophie, at first hesitant to accept her friend's invitation to Camp of the Peaks, decided to participate in the program located off the road that winds through the Alps. Unbeknownst to her, this relationship-based and missionary-staffed outreach to European teenagers served as a door to Christianity and was vital to church growth in France. Without it and similar ministries, the "irrelevance gap" between Europeans and the church might never be bridged.

The first few days of camp made Sophie uneasy. Christian songs, testimonies about the Bible and faith in God, prayers before meals—she found it all strange. In fact, she asked a staff member if she could skip the singing and sessions since she wasn't a believer. Sophie would have gone home, except she relished the chance to spend time with her friends.



By the fifth day, the 16-year-old began to hear the songs as less invasive. She enjoyed making pottery and participating in drama and games. The strangeness gave way as she discovered something different from anything to which she'd ever been exposed. Sophie sensed a longing in her heart for something she didn't know existed—something her culture insists doesn't exist.

The Camp of the Peaks counselors' sincere kindness and upbeat personalities were countercultural. Sophie was accustomed to feeling shame; it is the French school system's chief means of motivation to ensure conformity. To the French, anything strange is suspect and avoided if possible. But Sophie couldn't help softening to the camp counselors' relaxed, loving faces. And encouragement led to hope.

Hope Blossoms

During the second week, Sophie was as engaged in activities as any other camper. The place was now familiar and fun. The conversations she had with new friends—friends whom she knew she could trust—challenged her thinking. She felt a growing hope. Perhaps life holds more than I've been led to believe, she thought. "Maybe secularism isn't the ideal my teachers and parents say it is."

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Little Fellowship Loves to Witness

Paul's letter to 1st Century Italians still calls... *Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.* Romans 5:1-2



Erica Breitenberg

Erica, a delightfully soft spoken servant-teacher from Monument, Colorado, is off to introduce the life-changing power of Christ to Italian young people this summer. She'll be part of an outreach from their new hometown church in Montefiascona, Italy. The small church (18 members plus children) has a desire to share the love of Christ with their community of 12,000.

According to Michael Carlson, Missionary to Italy, "the most spiritually open group of people in Italy is her young people." An example is Daniela, a non-Christian young person who said after experiencing worship at last year's English Camp, "This is great! Too bad we can't do something like this in Italy." To her surprise, a nearby Italian believer was happy to tell her that they worship Jesus like that every week!



Most Italians don't know what an evangelical believer is. If they've heard of evangelicals, they think they are part of a cult group. The English camp ministry reached over 70 people with the love of Christ last summer. The Italian

church leader of last year's camp said, "This is the best evangelism we've ever done!"

Erica will help by developing and using a Bible-centered English course, training teachers to use course materials, and teaching young people ages 8 to 25 about the love of God.

After the camps are over, she plans to work with older, college-aged youth. Many are fluent in English and enjoy study and debate about life issues. Please pray for these important discussions with them.

Wedding to War

GEM short-temer ties the knot, takes off on a new "mission"



From John Paulding who served with Euroteam in Kandern from July '01 to June '02. He first met Rachel in college back in '97 but didn't start dating until a few weeks before their wedding on November 21, 2004. They were actually married in the Black Forest, and several members of Euroteam pitched in to make the wedding happen in a very short period of time!

John serves with the 17th Signal Battalion based in Kitzingen, Germany, currently deployed just outside of Tikrit, Iraq. Rachel lives and works in Houston, TX but will join John in Germany when his tour in Iraq is complete.

This place is, by no means, without its dangers. We are reminded of just how fragile our lives are every time we leave the comparative safety of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Speicher to go out on a convoy. Even flying by Blackhawk doesn't ease our fears when we go out to visit troops at other posts.

While 14 of 18 provinces are secure, and attacks on coalition forces are way down since the elections, most of our unit is posted somewhere within the Sunni Triangle—the hottest spot in the country. Troops on smaller posts are mortared nightly by insurgent forces.

On one post that we visited, insurgents have for the last week or so been launching mortars almost daily during lunch or dinner hours in an attempt to hit the dining facility. So far none of our soldiers sustained any wounds or injuries from those attacks.

Just last week on a convoy headed from here to a FOB about 20 minutes North, one of our trucks was hit by an IED (Improvvised

Explosive Device) planted on the side of the road. The .50 Cal gunner, who is always in the most exposed and vulnerable position, took a piece of shrapnel in the back of his shoulder. Chaplain Thomas and I visited him in the hospital later that night, and he couldn't wait to get "back out there." Considering the size of the blast and damage it did to the vehicle, it's absolutely amazing that those soldiers were not killed or severely wounded.

The good news in all of this is that all our troops have thus far been kept safe and the morale among almost all of our soldiers is still very high. We know there is a job to be done here, and we are equipped to do it. There can be no doubt that we are blessed with the very best equipment in the world and are outfitted better than any other army in history. From armored Humvees with ballistic glass to Interceptor Body Armor, Kevlar Helmets, and ballistic eyewear, there is not a soldier in our unit that does not have every confidence in his or her equipment.

Yet even more important than the strongest armor and most advanced equipment are the prayers for protection that you are constantly offering on our behalf. I regularly get cards, emails, and letters from many that I know and love reminding me of how much they pray for, love, and support us. On top of that, I get almost as many messages from people I don't know, and I have no idea from where or whom they heard about me and what I do here. It's impossible to say thank you enough, or to describe how meaningful and important your prayers and words of encouragement are to all of us here.



No Room at the Inn

Never guess who had other plans

Helen Steele

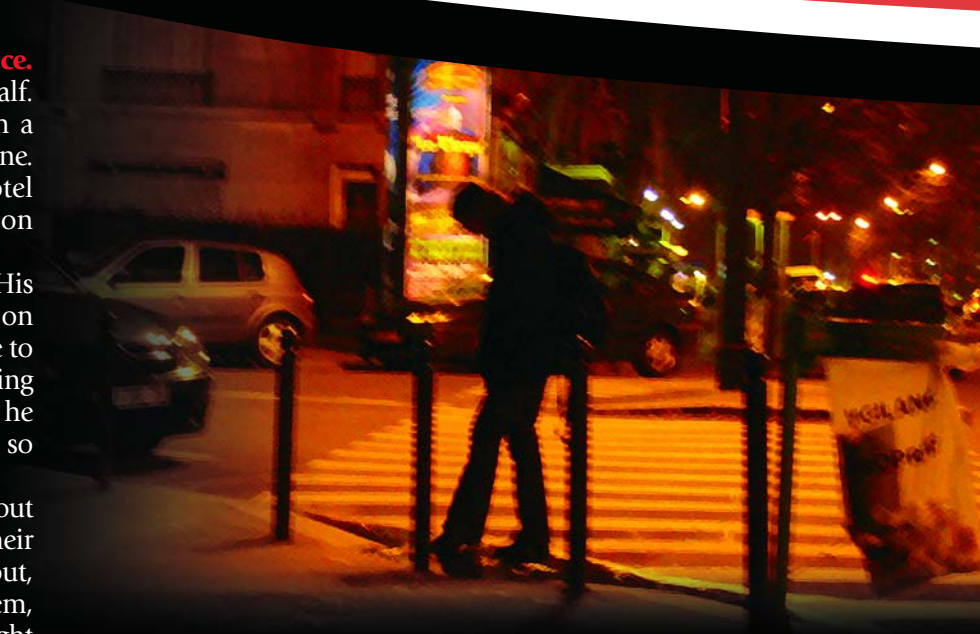
A miracle happened to me on the way to Greece.

My plane stopped in Europe for a day and a half. I had never been to France so I decided to catch a cheap flight to Paris via Thompson Fly Airline. I arrived in Paris at 10:00 PM without hotel arrangements and found the hotel reservation counter closed.

Not having a clue what to do, I prayed for His wisdom and guidance. Pretty soon a young fellow on his way home from a solo bicycle trip from France to Israel arrived and stood next to me. He was waiting for his father from Versailles to pick him up and he asked me to watch over his bicycle and backpack so he could search some more.

We struck a conversation and when he found out I did not have a place to stay, he invited me to their house pending his father's consent. As it turned out, I spent two days at their house, ate with them, witnessed to them, and they also took me sight seeing.

How I praise God for His answer to my prayers. He reminded me, as I head off to teach at the Greek Bible Institute:



"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Phil 4:6-7

Our Lord Provides

Lose a job and still give? What one family discovered.

When Richard and Susan Gallimore decided to send monthly support for GEM missionaries Rich and Carol Bonham, they didn't know that unemployment loomed around the corner. Rick is a skilled electrical engineer who can, from a mere vision, design and create highly complex printed circuit boards. When massive layoffs hit the computer industry, Rick was able to stave off the inevitable until the final wave of downsizing three years ago.

The world as they'd always known it suddenly evaporated. Instead of job security, benefits, monthly pay checks, and investing for the future came uncertainty, doubt and fears. How would they be able to keep their home and provide for their three children? Amid the fears, Rick and Susan were firm on one thing. They believe that when the Lord asks them to do something, He will provide. So without hesitation they committed to continue their church tithe and missionary giving.

With a zero bank account balance, savings gone, mortgage to pay, no health insurance, groceries to buy, and all it takes to just "get by," their faith was put to the test. Susan says it's easy to look at circumstances, like Peter did when He took his eyes off the Lord and almost drowned. But now they can look back and see how God has answered prayers and brought just-in-time relief. Like the time Rick met a former associate in the grocery store. The associate happened to ask Rick about his corporate benefit package distribution. Rick hadn't heard about it, but rushed home and called the benefits administrator. It turned out to be the final day for filing the necessary paperwork. Had that "chance" meeting not occurred, Rick would have missed an opportunity to get the lump sum payment that got them through the next few months.

Rick is able to put his talent to work on an outsource basis doing contract work. The Lord continues to provide the necessities. According to Susan, it is an incredible journey to experience God's faithfulness and the love and support of their Christian community. As hard as it is day by day, she says, "It is worth it."

The Gallimores covet prayer. Will you take a moment to pray for them and others facing similar circumstances?

Resolve to Stay

Missionary prayers honored with creative solutions



They say the Chinese character for crisis consists of a character for opportunity over a character for danger. Gordon and Caryl Saunders write of how they turned the danger of the rising euro into an opportunity to apply creative solutions for ministry outreach and daily living. Gordon, GEM's Europe Director, writes that their first major step was to move close enough to the office for him to walk to work. That allowed them to have only one car. With a new, less expensive apartment, they saved another 35% in rent costs. They use airline miles for one of their three business trips to the states each year and use free internet telephone when feasible. Every expenditure is checked as they examine how they can not do just as well, but better, with less.

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Dateline Austria

The evangelical church in Kapfenberg, Austria, where Devere and Lee Curtiss assist in ministry, celebrated the grand opening of its new church building—"Wende Punkt"—which means "turning point"—on Saturday, May 21, 2005.

Approximately 300 people attended the various meetings and programs held on the festive day. The new building, situated on the main street between the twin towns of Kapfenberg and Bruck an der Mur, Austria, makes a prominent statement of church vitality and growth.

Photos of the day show Kapfenberg's Buergermeister Manfred Wegscheider addressing the crowd, and children enjoying an afternoon puppet show.



Resolve to Stay

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Some dangers bring about excitement and cause the adrenalin to flow. Not this. Missionaries say it's more of a steady ache that gnaws at the gut. For Gordon, Caryl and all GEM missionaries in Europe and North America, the euro challenge became an opportunity to act in faith and seek His will. A time to do what they know how to do and learn things not yet known. They want to know Him better so they can show Europeans the love, care, creativity, boundless resources, and greatness of our God.

July starts a new fiscal year for GEM. It's a great time to let your missionary know that you are standing with them.

Raison D'être

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Believing in the Bible as God's Word was still too great a stretch for Sophie. Yet the beauty of creation all around her blossomed into a testimony of Someone beyond. "How could the warmth I feel be artificial?" she wondered. The Holy Spirit—together with the ingredients of observation, time, and participation—was at work.

At the end of two weeks, Sophie's mom came to pick her up and was delighted in her daughter's demeanor. She had never dreamed a teen could enjoy being at a place with so much structure.

The next day, Sophie, sleeping bag under her arm, returned for the optional third week of camp. Ecstatic campers greeted her, happy to have their friend back. The counselors noted something small but significant: Sophie clutched her clarinet, an instrument she'd not touched in years. The sudden creative flair astonished Sophie's mom.

Trusting the Creator

The message Sophie heard at camp embraced her heart. As Jesus said, "I tell you, if they [my disciples] keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (Luke 19:40). Indeed, the majestic praise of the stony cliffs of the French Alps continue to frame a door of hope for teens like Sophie to hear about their Creator.

And at Camp of the Peaks, religious prejudice is met with the reality of changed lives. Teens are finding Jesus Christ relevant in a society determined to live without Him.

Sophie is no exception. Several months after camp, she invited Jesus Christ to live within her for eternity. Neither the lack of area churches nor the firm humanistic stance of her culture could stop her from experiencing abundant life.

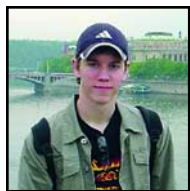
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GEM in Focus

A witnessing fellowship within reach of every person.

Ever wonder how GEM missionaries evaluate their work? What do three hundred missionaries all serving according to their gifts and talents have in common whether they work in an orphanage, set up computer learning centers, teach English or Bible courses, work with youth, are stationed in Morocco, Spain, or the Baltic?

No matter what function a GEM missionary performs or where in greater Europe they are stationed, they all ask the same question about their performance, "Does the result of what I do bring us closer to our goal of having a witnessing fellowship within reach of every European?"



Joshua DeVries

Wooden Shoe Like to Know

Daryl and Cheryl DeVries - Little story, huge reminder about faith challenges GEM-K's face day in and day out in Europe.

One of our son's teachers in his Dutch high school recently asked the class: "Who believes in God?" Joshua was the only one to raise his hand. Then last week his religion class showed a movie highlighting the similarities between man and the apes. It was a poignant reminder to pray for our kids... all those kids who serve alongside their parents in this European context.