

To Glorify Jesus' Name

Swedish Pair Gives Up Home To Serve in Canary Islands

By CHARLES RANDISI

Three years ago, Bertil Hakansson owned a car wrecking firm, "the largest private wrecking company in Sweden," where he lived with his wife Noomi and their three children.

He was unhappy with his life; he felt there was something missing.

So he and Noomi began to read the Bible, and to take it seriously. They have since been "born again," he says.

God, they feel, called them to do missionary work in the Canary Islands, a Spanish possession off the West African coast. There they journeyed, stayed, prayed, preached, and starved, all to "glorify the name of Jesus."

Now they are in Rochester, staying with Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Puff of Pixley Road. They met the Puffs at the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship, a charismatic convention in New York City.

The Hakanssons are non-denominational Christians, and they like it that way. "We found that by merely going to church and doing what we had to do, we had no life. It is Christ's wish that all may be one," says Bertil. "I have seen that God is working in all denominations."

God told him, he says, to go to the Canary Islands. "We didn't know what we were going to do when we got there, but we went."

In order to pursue this calling, the Hakanssons had to give up all their material possessions, "not only our spirits, but also our bodies. I gave my future, my business, my family to God." ("Even television," his 11-year-old daughter Gunilla sallied.)

"We said to God, 'We want to give ourselves to You completely.'"

When they arrived at the islands, all they had was their faith, Bertil says. "We had much to learn. We read the Bible and prayed, and God revealed. He brought people in our way."

Eventually, they obtained the use of a tourist chapel, where they held Bible meetings. They also held meetings in their home, "on our simple stone floor."

The Hakanssons were not the only Swedish missionaries on the Canary Islands. In 1971, they met Ulf Magnusson, then a practicing alcoholic, there for a rest. His marriage was falling apart.

A mutual acquaintance introduced Ulf to Bertil and Noomi,

and the Hakanssons introduced him to their way of "living in the hand of the Lord."

His alcoholism now under control, Ulf has patched up his relationship with his wife. "It's a new marriage," Wivica said.

"Jesus set him free," Bertil offered.

"Amen," answered Ulf.

(The Magnussons are also staying in Rochester, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Domenic Mancini on West Side Drive.)

Though none of them explicitly said they believed in miracles, Bertil did give credence to divine healing, or the power of prayer over physical ailments.

His nine-year-old son Thomas, he claimed, had a problem with his leg. "He couldn't stretch it," he said, "and had trouble walking. I asked Jesus to fix it, and within minutes, he was walking fine."

Money was a continuing problem for the group, but not one of great concern. Once, while on the islands, they were "starving," living on the last crumbs of bread they could find, and water. This, they said, went on for two weeks.

"We didn't know where we were going to find food from meal to meal," said Noomi.

"One night," said Bertil, "I prayed, 'God, now I want food.' I awoke at seven the next morning, and went out to our garden. A man came along and said he wanted to buy some of our bushes. He gave me twenty dollars."

They also described other curious happenings. Once, on their first visit home since their mission began, a woman they knew called them, Bertil said, and offered to pay their way to New York, where a Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship was being held.

"She said God told her to pay for the ticket," he said.

They have no steady source of income; most of their money comes "in letters from friends and Christian people that know about us," Bertil said. "We just seem to get the money we need at the right time. We praise the Lord. It just works."

Bertil was quick in saying that with all the good things that have befallen them, "we have to give too. The conditions are to do the will of God."

Part of the will of God, for the Hakanssons and Magnussons,

involves "fighting the enemy," or the devil.

It is the devil's mission, Bertil said, "to destroy the creation of God. When Jesus died, he achieved a victory over the devil. What the devil does now is a lie. We must be able to look through his lies."

The devil, he said, is the chief cause of sickness, because, "if we are sick, we can't fight for the Lord."

When he occasionally wakes up with a head cold, Bertil says the devil is telling him, "You're going to be sick." Through prayer, the cold and the devil go away.

They have been called fanatics. "It hurts," said Bertil, "but after a while you get used to it."

On the whole, they have been "satisfied" with their decision. "We feel at home when we love Jesus," he said. When he first realized his mission, he said, "Though I am not an emotional person at all, there was so much joy inside me that I went to my workers (at the wrecking company), and I had to speak with them about Jesus."

A couple of Sundays ago, the group attended a Mass at St. Augustine's Church. "It was wonderful," Bertil said. "At the communion, I nearly had tears in my eyes. I knew that the Lord was really there."

They will stay in the United States for as long as they can, traveling and preaching. Whether or not they will return to the Canary Islands, is, according to Bertil, up to God.

"The Lord has called us to His ministry," he said. "We will follow Him wherever He leads us."



Noomi and Bertil Hakansson [with finger raised] stand with Ulf and Wivica Magnusson, behind the Hakansson children, Christina, Thomas and Gunilla.

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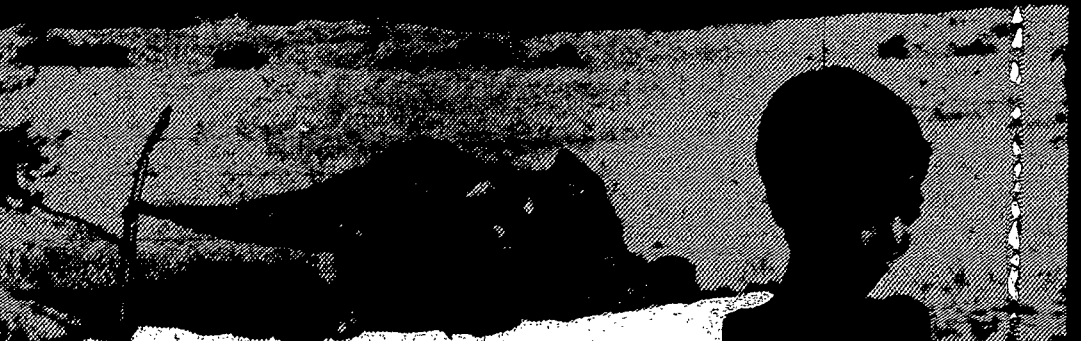
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