



*Gail Blanchard Huffman  
Missionary to France*

**T**o my dear husband, Robert (Bob) Huffman, who followed his Lord, obeyed His call, and accomplished his task in spite of many hindrances and difficulties.

**I**n reminiscing over years past, the thought comes to mind that God's Hand left its mark so many times in our life together. He answered countless prayers and directed us in many, many ways. Therefore, by putting them in print, I would like to share some of these incidents, first of all with my loving family and with my dearest friends and Christian brothers and sisters, and then with anyone else who may read these lines.

**W**e all remember how certain events fell into place in our past which led us to a particular place, to a special job or profession, or to meet a special person. At times, circumstances held more weight than our personal choices. I firmly believe that these circumstances were divinely sent to guide us to the path He has chosen for each of us. It is certain that in my life I can see how this came about so many times, as well as in our life together.

**I**t is for this reason that I am penning these lines. I trusted Him and followed Him; and I have no regrets.



HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES

Gail Blanchard Huffman

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Missionary To France*

*HIS HAND  
IN OUR LIVES*

*By*

*Gail Blanchard Huffman*

*Missionary to France*



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## DEDICATION

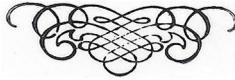
To my dear husband, Robert (Bob) Huffman, who followed his Lord, obeyed His call, and accomplished his task in spite of many hindrances and difficulties. Often he asked the Lord, "Why me? I don't have the aptitude or the qualifications to work with such a cultured and educated people!" And God answered, "But you have perseverance, a burden for these people, and a servant's heart."

*"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people." Isaiah 6; 8,9.*

To our children and grandchildren, lest they forget.

To the people of France, some of whom have heard the message of Christ's love and sacrifice. To those who know not The Savior: May God send others so that all may hear!

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Ro 8:28 KJV*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere and heartfelt thanks to my eldest granddaughter Aloice, who typed three-fourths of the book as she bravely deciphered my handwriting.

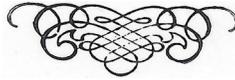
Thanks also to Chantal who managed to type a readable version in spite of additions, retractions, and much rearranging.

Many thanks go to my publisher, H.D. (Doc) Williams and his wife Patricia, for their patience, understanding, and the superb help and guidance along the way.

I am very grateful to my son-in-law Sebastien who kept my computer running and took the photos for the cover; to my youngest grandson Odran, who seconded his dad when the computer decided to take a break; and to my youngest granddaughter Cenedra (Cissi) whose hands are featured on the front cover.

I shall not forget my dear friend Margaret, who not only encouraged me, but also designed the front cover.

To the One who inspired me to put His wonderful works in writing go praise and adoration for upholding me every day in spite of many discouragements. Thank you Lord!

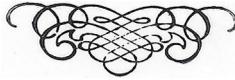


## FOREWORD

In reminiscing over years past, the thought comes to mind that God's Hand left its mark so many times in our life together. He answered countless prayers and directed us in many, many ways. Therefore, by putting them in print, I would like to share some of these incidents, first of all with my loving family and with my dearest friends and Christian brothers and sisters, and then with anyone else who may read these lines.

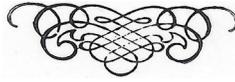
We all remember how certain events fell into place in our past which led us to a particular place, to a special job or profession, or to meet a special person. At times circumstances held more weight than our personal choices. I firmly believe that these circumstances were divinely sent to guide us to the path He has chosen for each of us. It is certain that in my life I can see how this came about so many times, as well as in our life together.

It is for this reason that I am penning these lines. To give credit to the One who has lovingly guided me all these years. He has never failed me when I called on Him, and even though many times I could not understand just where He was leading, I trusted Him and followed Him; and I have no regrets.



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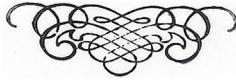


## RESUMÉ

Discover the story of the Huffman family; how God brought them together, called them to serve, and accompanied them for over 40 years as they shared the love of Christ with their beloved French friends and neighbors. Every facet of ministry was explored; each level of society was touched.

With their French brothers and sisters beside them, they taught God's Word, held special meetings, including concerts and films followed by debates, and presented evangelistic messages. They distributed thousands of Gospel tracts, sponsored recorded telephone messages, and offered the precious gift of a New Testament to 28,000 homes in their town. Their children shared the ministry and labored beside their parents, inviting friends, helping with music and with meal preparation for the many friends who visited in the Huffman home.

In all their activities they saw the hand of the Lord guide them along the way, sometimes sown with obstacles which only God could help them overcome.



# CHAPTER ONE: WHERE HE LEADS...

*"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Psalm  
23:2b*

## **Pack My Bags**

"Pack your bags and come" the registrar intoned over the phone 3 days before registration at the university began.

When my step-mother, Eloise, came into the living room that Tuesday morning, I shared the developments with her. My heart's desire was to go to a Christian college even though I had registered for courses at the University of South Florida and was scheduled to begin the following week. I explained, "I really feel this is what the Lord wants me to do! I have turned my life over to Him and my desire is to serve Him."

She stood there smoking a cigarette for an eternity as she thought things over. Finally, she replied, "Well, what do you need?" She knew that to go away to college, I would need certain items, so we began making plans: an alarm clock, a study lamp, a suitcase, as well as warmer clothes.

### **My Longing**

During my last two years of High School, my longing to go to a Christian Bible School or university became more and more intense. However, my parents were opposed to my going away because of the cost and distance. They had offered to fix up the garage apartment, where my Gramps had lived there at home, and had purchased an older car for me to use commuting to USF. Therefore, this new development took my parents by surprise. Because I was the oldest, they had not had the experience of seeing one of their offspring leave the nest and it was not something I had planned to do behind their backs!

### **High School**

My senior year of High School had been filled with tests, outings, friends, and plans for the future. I had ended the relationship with my boyfriend and he had left to join the military. At the end of the year, one of the most important events was in the planning of the Senior Prom! Even though I didn't have a date, I planned to go with girlfriends and had made a beautiful, long white evening gown of peau de soie with a large red bow in the back.

Carolyn, one of my good friends, was engaged to Danny and regretted that I didn't have a date. One spring evening in April, she and Danny

went to the roller-skating rink where they renewed acquaintance with an old school friend who had just returned from doing duty in the Air Force. He was lamenting the fact that all the girls he knew before leaving were either married or engaged; not one single one was unattached! Carolyn asked him if he would be interested in going out with a friend of hers. He was willing to try, so Carolyn set the date for the four of us to go get a hamburger.

### **Blind Date**

When Carolyn called me, I didn't know how to answer at first. I had never gone out on a blind date! But I had confidence in Carolyn, therefore I agreed to go. When we were introduced, I was impressed by his clean-cut good looks, his ready smile, his kindness, and his name, Bob Huffman. We enjoyed each others company from the start, and before they took me home that evening, Bob asked me to go to church with him the following Sunday.

### **Something On His Mind**

While getting to know each other, we were encouraged to learn that we had a similar outlook on several subjects, one of them being our faith in God and the Bible. We continued attending church services together and as I studied the lessons, the Lord showed me my need to be baptized. Others were waiting to be baptized, among them being

## CHAPTER 1: WHERE HE LEADS

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Bob's mother, Helen. So, one July Sunday afternoon we were baptized, one by one, as a sign of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This step of obedience is an outward manifestation of our faith as well as a testimony to the unsaved world. The greatest privilege was to be called to serve the Lord!

Bob and I dated that spring and all summer after we met. We double-dated with Carol and Danny to the Senior Prom, and went out to the lake after the prom to talk and enjoy the summer evening. The next day Bob came over and brought a graduation present, a set of silverware. I was surprised, but it was a practical gift. Eloise said to me later, "He has something on his mind!" His aunt and uncle drove down from Ohio to visit his folks, and Bob took me to meet them, or rather, so they could meet me!

Because both of us were working weekdays, often we only saw each other on weekends. He lived across town from my house and it took a while for him to get home. One nice day we went to the beach, another to the lake, and one night after he took me home, he went to sleep at the wheel and ran off the road into a concrete bridge and totaled his car. I was thankful he wasn't hurt! The police said he was so relaxed he didn't even have whiplash! He was concerned about acquiring another vehicle, which seemed impossible since he

hadn't finished paying for the Ford, and his insurance didn't give him enough to buy another one! The Lord had surprises for us and a few days later he came to pick me up in a 1946 model that his grandparents had given him. They were aging and didn't drive anymore. It was unusual to see a young fellow driving an ancient model such as that!

### **Will You Marry Me?**

One day when Bob came by to get me, he told me his mother had a gold ring with a diamond set in that had been in the family for years. The band was damaged and bent so would I try it on to see if it fit? It was not my size so he measured my ring finger in order to have it repaired and sized. When it was ready he brought it and tried it on my finger. I looked at him and queried, "Aren't you going to ask me something?" "Will you marry me?" was his answer. "Yes, I would be proud and happy to be your wife. But first, before I go in the house wearing an engagement ring, you will need to ask my dad for permission since I am not yet 21." So he climbed out of the car to go talk to my parents who were in the back yard. He hem-hawed around, talking about everything except our future wedding. Finally, after more than an hour, here he came announcing, "He said all right!" So that evening we became officially engaged. To celebrate, the next day he brought an electric frying pan as an

engagement gift. Yes, he really did have something in mind!

We didn't talk about setting a date or anything pertaining to the future because I had told him, first I wanted to get more education. So we continued seeing each other, going to church together, and working in our respective jobs.

About a month later, on a Sunday morning after church, one of the girls in youth group came to tell us goodbye. She was leaving for a year of study at a Bible Institute in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Her parents were driving her to Tennessee Temple University.

### **The Desire**

The deep desire of going to a Christian college re-surfaced in my spirit and I began asking her questions about Tennessee Temple. The more she explained, the more questions came to mind. To prepare to serve the Lord became a burning desire, and I couldn't stop asking questions. Barbara's parents invited Bob and me to their home for a quick lunch so that I could look through the catalog from the Bible college. As I looked and we talked, I became convinced that this was where I should be going. It was not just a personal desire, it was also the Lord who gave me this longing to study there. Barbara's parents sensed the intensity of this desire and offered to take me with them on Thursday.

## **HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES**

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Bob and I got in the car and went to a place where we could pray and talk. That evening after church services, we had prayer again after talking more about all the details of a possible departure. The next day was Labor Day – a holiday, therefore nothing could be done. It was a long 24 hours for me. Tuesday morning dawned bright and sunny. As soon as the offices opened at 8:30 A.M., I picked up the phone and asked about the possibility of registering for classes which began the following week. The Dean asked several questions about my salvation experience, Christian life, and high school grades. Then he asked for my pastor's phone number and said he would call me back after talking with him.

### **Pack Your Bags**

I was sitting right next to the phone when it rang. The Dean's first words were, "Pack your bags and come!" I'll never forget them! He had as much faith in accepting me as I had in leaving my home, my fiancé, my family and my job, and setting out for the unknown! Deep down it felt so right, and I was more than excited about going; I was elated!

After I told my stepmother about this unexpected development, and she was able to think clearly, we began making preparations. With a large family there was rarely any extra money, so she got out her precious hoard of green stamp books to

## CHAPTER 1: WHERE HE LEADS

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use as collateral for what I would need, and left to make the purchases while I began packing. That afternoon when I went to work at the drugstore, I gave my notice, which was accepted without any problem since they knew I would be starting college anyway. The next day I got out the pattern and material I had purchased recently, cut out a dress and sewed it up, leaving the hem to do later by hand.

Before leaving, there was one bit of unfinished business that I needed to take care of. When I called Bob to inform him of being accepted at the Christian College, I told him I wanted to see him before leaving on Thursday. He came right after getting off work, so since the children were all home from school, we sat in the car to talk. I told him that I didn't think it would be right to hold him to an engagement if I was far away, and more important, I had no idea what the Lord wanted me to do during my studies and afterwards. With tears in my eyes I gave his ring back and said that he should date some of the nice girls at church as long as we weren't sure about the future; whether it held the possibility of us being together or separated. He was touched by my honesty and promised to call me sometimes on weekends. Thus we parted with heavy hearts.

### Off to Tennessee

On Thursday morning, the Turner family came to pick me up, and I was off to Tennessee to begin college. I remember, as we neared Chattanooga, going through the tunnel in East Ridge, looking out over the city in the valley and thinking. "I wonder what the future holds for me in this place." Upon our arrival at the welcome desk, we were assigned to our dorm rooms and given a schedule for the first days before classes began, which included testing, orientation, and student revival meetings in the evenings.

Classes began the following Monday and my next preoccupation was; how will I pay my school bill? My savings would be gone in a couple of months and I had no scholarship. My parents couldn't help because there were six other children back home, of which I am the oldest. I needed to find part-time work!

### The Influence of God's Words

A couple weeks later, as I was thinking about recent happenings, the thought came to mind, What am I doing here? I am studying at a Christian College, preparing to do what? Nearly all the students that I met had grown up in Christian homes and knew that the Lord had called them to be a preacher, a teacher, or perhaps a missionary. I picked up my Bible and continued reading in

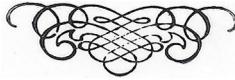
## CHAPTER 1: WHERE HE LEADS

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Romans, where I was in my devotions, chapter 8. Verse 28 jumped out at me like a flashing light.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Yes, I loved the Lord and wanted to do His will. Was I called? Only He could have placed me here and worked out all the details! This verse was a great discovery for me; the answer to all my doubts and questions concerning the future! The Lord was in control and I could leave everything in His hands! He would lead, guide and provide!



## CHAPTER 2: “WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES!”

*“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” Matthew 6:31,32b*

### **Found a Job**

Not too long after, I went by the personnel office where I checked regularly about a part-time job. That day there was a position for a team of students to run a line at McKee’s Bakery in Collegedale, TN, working from 3 to 10 P.M., five evenings a week. A married student who had a car offered to take us and we would help with gas and other expenses. The pay was enough to cover my school bill, my tithe, and with enough left over for personal expenses. I accepted the position, thanking the Lord for His provision, not only for a job, but also for a way to get there and back.

So, we started out learning to run the line that made Little Debbie peanut butter wafers. First of all, one person mixed up the huge bowls of batter. Then he and his teammate measured out the correct amount of batter into the upright waffle

## **CHAPTER 2: WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES**

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irons, which were heated to just the right temperature, and cooked the wafers. As they came off the waffle irons, they were sent down a short belt to cool off before being spread with the peanut butter filling. A cover was added and the two large filled wafers were sent by belt to a large roller, where they were compacted to just the right thickness.

The next step was to cut them into bars, which was done by a machine with thin wires running horizontally and vertically. These bars came off the cutting machine spaced out just right, and then sent into a tunnel where a spray covered them with hot chocolate syrup. The tunnel continued from one end of the line to the other and was refrigerated so that the bars came out cold and hard, ready to be wrapped individually and packed into boxes. That's where my friend, Sharon, and I worked. As the cookies came out of the tunnel, one of us would quickly slip them into slots on the wrapping machine, which was positioned at a 90 degree angle, so that each bar was wrapped in cellophane. At the end of that machine, one of us stood with a large table to the left and a huge pile of boxes with place for 12 bars in each. With the right hand we flipped the box open and set it down, slid four bars at a time into the box with three movements, then pushed the box away to the left

## HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES

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where another person taped each box shut and filled a large carton with them.

In order to vary our tasks to avoid monotony of the production line, three or four of us would train for the different positions and switch off during the 8-hour stretch. The young man who ran and adjusted the machines was very production-minded, so as we trained he would slowly increase the speed of the machines. Thus, when we became agile at each task, we could work so fast that you could hardly see our hands. Soon we were going at top speed, and unless there were problems like pile-ups in one of the tunnels, we worked so well together and so fast that our team was at the top of the list of the production output!

At first, we enjoyed tasting the different bars and cakes, since the other lines made cream-filled oatmeal cookies or jelly rolls, but after a few weeks the odor took away our appetite for them, and to this day I cannot enjoy any of the products made there.

### **A Warm Coat**

In October, the days began to be cooler; winter was coming! Being from Tampa, Florida, I had no winter coat, but the Lord knew all about it. Near the end of the month a package came from home for my birthday. To my surprise and delight, it contained, among other gifts, a soft warm beige

## **CHAPTER 2: WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES**

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full-length winter coat. Before I even asked, the Lord had provided! My stepmother had exquisite taste, and also a flair for finding good quality clothes at unbelievably modest prices! I was now prepared for cold weather and thanked God for providing! Then I called home to thank my family.

The days were busy with classes, studying, working at the bakery, plus the church meetings. Once a week a special phone call came from Tampa. That young man to whom I had been engaged kept in touch even though he was dating other girls from church. He had found a better job at a print shop in Tampa, all the time seeking the Lord's will for the next step in his life. While working, he listened to Christian radio programs on the radio, and cried as he asked the Lord what He wanted him to do.

It became clear to him that he should join me in Chattanooga and begin preparing for some kind of service for the Lord. A few days before Thanksgiving he arrived in Chattanooga and found a room. We were so happy to see each other again, and he spent as much time as he could on campus so that we could be together. Once again he asked me to marry him. I still was not sure, so I asked him for a week to pray about it. I not only prayed; I agonized, asking the Lord what He wanted me to do. The problem was, I definitely felt that the Lord wanted me in full-time work for Him, and Bob didn't

## HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES

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know if he was called or not! After telling the Lord that my desire was to do His perfect will in my life, and that I would be willing to do anything or go anywhere, He began to show me that if I had confidence in Him, He would take care of Bob and make him into someone who could serve Him in a great way. That evening when I saw Bob, I told him 'yes' and shared how the Lord had given me complete peace about marrying him.

### **Bob's Starting Pay was \$56.50!**

We began making plans for Bob to begin classes the second semester in January, and for our wedding in June. A few days later as we were talking, Bob lamented, "After all that time in the barracks I really don't want to live in the dorm, not even for a semester!" Without thinking, I answered, "We could always get married after the first semester ends in January, and stay out one semester!" Immediately he said that was a good idea, and began going over the possibilities. The shock hit me as I realized that January was only two months away. How could we do it?

I began thinking about details. I called my stepmother to share the news with her, and she said she was willing to help get our wedding planned in just over one month. We called our pastor in Tampa and made arrangements with him. Then we began the paperwork at city hall, shopped

## **CHAPTER 2: WHERE GOD GUIDES, GOD PROVIDES**

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together for wedding bands, and got material for my dress. Bob continued looking for work and found a position in a print shop just two weeks before the wedding. His new boss even gave him a week off to get married! We could definitely see the Lord's hand in all of this, because since I was not yet 21, my dad would not give permission unless Bob had a job making at least \$55 per week. Bob's starting pay was \$56.50 per week. The Lord's hand was seen clearly in this answer to prayer! He doesn't make any mistakes! I asked for a week off from my job at the bakery, so the main events were lined up.

Things don't always line up exactly as one would wish, and even though we tried to take care of most of the details, my poor step-mother had her hands full. She had to find dresses for my two sisters that looked like the dress my maid of honor was to wear, among other things. It was a difficult task, but she came through with flying colors! Once, in all the hassle, she called me and said she felt like taking a shotgun to me for all the trouble I gave her. But her anger was temporary, and everything calmed down.

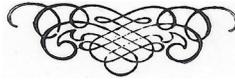
The last week in Chattanooga was exam week, so I had to concentrate on reviewing, plus working and taking care of last minute details. Since I didn't have a sewing machine, I found a seamstress who made my dress for a very

## HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES

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reasonable price. Eloise had given me the ultimatum by saying that they couldn't afford a formal wedding. Therefore, my dress should be simple and street length, not floor length or with a train, and that it not be white because I would never wear it again. So, I found the palest pink and it looked nice with the blue dresses the girls wore.

After I finished my last exam on Friday, January 19, 1962, Bob and I set out for Tampa in his old car. We arrived late that evening, and the next morning the ladies from my parent's church had a surprise shower lined up. The ladies brought very nice and practical gifts, and I was overwhelmed at their kindness, especially since I didn't know any of them. Oh, the ignorance of youth! At age 17, I had never even been to a shower, and the only wedding I had ever attended was when my dad and Eloise were married 2 years earlier.



## CHAPTER 3: OUR WEDDING

*“And they shall be one flesh.” Genesis: 2:24*

The wedding was scheduled for Tuesday evening so that we could have a couple of days together before returning to Chattanooga. It took a lot of organization at home in order to get six other children fed and dressed for a wedding. Eloise was so good at organizing that everything went very smoothly. I tried to stay calm because she didn't need an excited or teary bride to deal with, too!

### **No Photos**

When Bob arrived at the church, he took the last few snaps on the film in his camera, then put in a new role of film and asked his uncle to take pictures of the family and the ceremony. Somehow, the gears stripped the film and it didn't turn, leaving us with no photos. The Lord always has surprises for us, and when the pastor's wife learned about this, she had doubles made of the snapshots she had taken. We were very thankful and relieved to have a few nice photos, and had one enlarged to frame.

Before the ceremony began, the pastor took Bob and his best man into the little room behind

the pulpit to give last minute instructions. He looked at Bob and said, "If you change your mind, it's not too late! I'll go out and tell everyone the wedding has been called off." I'm so glad he loved me enough to commit himself for life.

My maid of honor, Carolyn Mallory, was the friend who had introduced us just after Bob got out of the Air Force. My bridesmaid was my sister Carol, four years younger than I, and my flower girl was my little step-sister, Alice. The best man was Charles Briggs, Bob's buddy from high school who had witnessed to him and was overjoyed to learn that he had accepted Christ while in the Air Force. Charles' brother Danny, who was Carolyn Mallory's fiancé, was the groomsman. He had also been instrumental in introducing us.

### **The Ceremony**

When the music began, I started down the aisle holding my dad's arm. Being the oldest, I was the first one he had to give away. Halfway down the aisle he almost tripped and I had to steady him so he wouldn't lose his balance. I realized he was more nervous than I was, but he was able to sit down a few minutes later and relax. One of the ladies was playing the Wedding March, followed by the interpretation by one of the young ladies that was in youth group of a song we liked entitled, "God Gave You to Me," written and put to music by

## CHAPTER 3: OUR WEDDING

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Charles Weigle. We repeated our vows and then kneeled and began our married life together with a prayer of benediction.



**Our Wedding Day, January 23, 1962**

### Surprises

After the ceremony, we lined up with the family to greet our guests with the intention of leaving right after we changed clothes. The pastor took the microphone and announced, "The ladies of the church invite you to stay for a reception in the Fellowship Hall." A surprise reception! Unbelievable! As we entered the room, we saw a beautiful wedding cake surrounded by lovely flowers and decorations, and a table piled high with gifts. Our dear friends at church knew we couldn't afford such extras, so they planned it all without breathing a word. We spent an enjoyable evening with our families and friends from the Northgate Baptist Church where we were members.

As we prepared to leave, I went into a classroom to change into my going-away outfit: a turquoise wool suit that I had made while in high school, on which I had changed the collar and buttons from imitation leopard to white rabbit's fur for the occasion. Bob had rented a room on the beach and we were looking forward to relaxing and beginning our married life together. Our Sunday school teacher, Helen Elliot, who was helping me change, slipped around behind me and began putting rice in my undies. It was so uncomfortable, especially in the girdle I had on to look firm in my straight skirt.

## CHAPTER 3: OUR WEDDING

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In the meantime, Bob's parents had gotten into our well-decorated car while waiting for us to arrive. Someone gave us the keys to their car, so when our car left with everyone honking behind them, we got in the line and honked too! After a while we all stopped and switched cars, and we drove over to Clearwater Beach where we spent our one-night honeymoon. Unfortunately, because of so much activity, plus accumulated fatigue, I began running a fever. The next morning Bob took me to his doctor who gave me an injection before we started our drive back to Chattanooga. Both of us had to be back to work at the end of the week and needed to be in shape.

### **Picture Perfect**

A couple of weeks earlier we had rented a furnished three-room apartment on Bailey Avenue, so upon arriving we unpacked our gifts and took in the couple pieces of furniture my folks had given us. My new husband had an interesting surprise waiting for me; 12 white shirts that had to be starched, dampened and ironed. He had saved them instead of sending them out since he now had a wife to take care of them. The next day I ironed them and hung them in our one and only closet, and when he came home he checked them and asked me to button the top button on each shirt so the collar would stand up straight! That was my initiation to the ways of a perfectionist.

## HIS HAND IN OUR LIVES

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During our first months of marriage, we adjusted well to married life, each enjoying our new "roommate." I invited the girls from my dorm for dinner one evening, and they were surprised that I knew how to cook! I continued working evenings at the bakery and Bob worked days at the print shop. When summer classes began, Bob quit his job and looked for something part-time. His boss liked his work, so offered him a raise and other benefits if he would stay. Bob said to himself, "*Get thee behind me, Satan*" and began classes.

### Living on Less

We had found a less expensive apartment and moved before that summer. Our new landlady, Mrs. Jennings, was a widow who had brought up seven children, and a dedicated Christian who was a member of Woodland Park Baptist Church. She treated us like part of the family, and would bring us big bowls of beef stew or some other tasty dish saying, "Gail, honey, I made too much again and I get tired of eating the same thing every day. Would you like to finish this? I can't seem to cook for one person after cooking for my large family!" God provided for each and every meal, plus other expenses. While Bob looked for part-time work, we lived on \$30 a week, which is what I made as a cashier in a large department store. We were just barely getting by, but told no one except the Lord. We continued to give our tithe and in the back of

Bob's Bible, we started a list of answers to prayer. In searching for a part-time job, Bob went to the unemployment agency downtown, and the only thing they had to offer him was a position going door-to-door selling waterless cookware. This was definitely not suited to his personality, but he tried it. In order to practice, he tried the "speech" on me, then on Mrs. Jennings. He soon learned that the names and addresses of families that he was to contact had been visited by someone previously. He returned the pans and went back to looking for a more suitable position.

### **Right up His Alley**

After several more weeks of searching, he found an opening at a pharmacy that delivered many of their prescriptions, so he began driving the "Pill Wagon." This job fit like a glove, not only because he enjoyed driving, but also because they adapted his hours to his schedule at Bible College.

It was about this time that we began working at one of the chapels or "church plants" in the outskirts of Dalton, GA. We drove down early each Sunday morning to help with Sunday school and morning service, took our lunch and spent the day, holding evening services as well. This experience helped us learn how to teach children, lead singing, organize the services, as well as understanding

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church government, and how to deal with spiritual problems.

That fall, Bob signed up for classes and I continued working as a cashier in a large store called Jubilee City, where I had found part-time work in the spring. I ended my time at McKee's Bakery because the sharp corners on the chocolate covered wafers cut my hands. I did not sign up for classes as planned because we found out in August that our first child was on the way, due in April, and my morning sickness was quite severe. Instead of gaining weight, I lost weight and no one could tell I was expecting! One evening at work when we were on break, we gathered in the ladies' room and my friend Sharon, who was expecting in April too, noticed I had on a maternity top for the first time. She pulled it up and burst out laughing at my more than flat tummy! I didn't "show" until I was more than 6 months along! This didn't prevent the baby from weighing almost 9 pounds! She didn't suffer from my discomfort.

### **Provisions**

I continued to work as a cashier until after Christmas when I was laid off. In order to make ends meet, I began sewing for friends and students, and I prepared meals for a fellow who lived alone. The \$7.00 a week that he gave us allowed us to buy groceries for the three of us. The

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Lord always provided, for we never missed a meal and always gave the tithe of our income.

Eloise sent her maternity clothes early on, and later she sent the baby clothes she had saved after my little brother, Ralphie, was born. She also gave us the crib and stroller so we had the basics. I never wondered how we would manage. To me it was evident that the Lord would provide. Before we even asked the Lord for a washer, Bob's parents gave us the money to purchase one. With diapers to wash every day, it was well-appreciated.

Lauri Luann Huffman was born on April 18, two days after her due date. She weighed 8 lbs and 15 ounces and was 52 cm long. She was a big girl for being the first one. She resembled her dad's baby pictures and had blond fuzz and dark blue eyes. She was such a happy baby, always smiling and was content and sociable. She gained weight steadily and filled out early. When she was three months I took her to Florida so our families could become acquainted with her. Bob's mother especially enjoyed her since she had always wanted a girl.

Being a mother was especially rewarding for me, since my teenage years had been particularly difficult. Having a little one to care for, to talk to, and who needed me, gave me much satisfaction and made me feel worthwhile.

### On Again, Off Again

In the fall, Bob returned to the Bible Institute and I stayed home with Lauri since I had already completed my first semester the previous year. In order to help out financially, I continued sewing for the girls at the college and worked evenings at the store where they had put me back on the payroll. Then, right after Christmas, I was laid off again, and we depended on the Lord to provide until we could find adequate work. God continued to provide in different ways and it was always exciting to see just how!

The following summer Bob found a much better paying job at Southeastern Wire Cloth in Chattanooga on the evening shift from 3 P.M. to midnight. Our two rooms became more and more crowded as Lauri grew and needed accessories. We prayed about what to do, and decided to purchase a house trailer and move to East Ridge. However, the payments, in addition to paying rent for the lot, proved to be too expensive since we were also paying our school bill. We ended up selling the trailer and moving into a rented apartment in Brainerd.

During our years in Bible college, we were certain that we were in the Lord's will but didn't know as yet just where the Lord wanted us in the future. Bob felt inadequate, saying that he couldn't

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be a pastor because he couldn't preach, nor a song leader because he couldn't sing, nor a teacher because his grades weren't top. We began praying that the Lord would show us what He would have us prepare for and where.

Working full-time made it difficult for Bob to study as he desired, and his grades suffered. At the end of his second year he transferred to Bible Institute in order to bring his grades up. He decided to finish Bible School, and in 1967 he received his Bachelor of Bible diploma. His mother was so happy and proud, for he was the first one in the Huffman family to receive anything higher than a high school diploma. She and Tang drove up from Tampa to be there for the graduation.

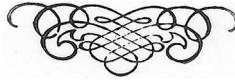
They took advantage of the time in Chattanooga to spend time with their new granddaughter, for the Lord had blessed our family with a second daughter born four years after Lauri. When she was five months old I returned to classes and was able to finish my fourth year and receive my B.A. with a major in English in June of 1968, a year after Bob finished. For a time, he thought he was through with his studies, but since I had only one year left, he signed up for the fourth year of Bible School and only lacked 2 years of Greek to receive his Graduate of theology degree.

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**Bob receives his diploma, June 1967**



## CHAPTER 4: GOD'S CALL

*"Then said I, Here am I; send me." Isaiah 6:8b*

### Searching For His Will

Every year in November the church where the students attended had a missionary conference and invited missionaries and representatives from many different countries. We always invited one of the missionaries to share a meal in our home, thus giving us the opportunity to ask questions. Each year we noticed that very few missions were reaching the countries of Europe. While Bob was stationed in Libya, North Africa, he was able to get free hops to visit several European countries, as well as to attend a couple of Christian conferences. Even back then the lack of outreach in Europe was obvious; a fact that turned our thoughts and hearts toward this need.

During one of the missionary conferences someone recommended the book LET EUROPE HEAR by Bob Evans. It focused our attention on the lack of Baptist and Evangelical churches in Europe where one could hear the Gospel and receive Christ. One afternoon the question of our future was especially on our minds, so we had a special time of prayer and told the Lord that we would go

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where He called us. We considered the different countries, and France kept coming to our minds. This seemed logical because I had studied French for two years and Bob for six months. It seemed the Lord was narrowing down the choice.



### **God calls us to France**

In November 1967, we made application to Baptist International Missions as candidates to go to France; the first couple to go to there with BIM. After acceptance, we began sending letters to churches that were mission-minded, sharing our burden to reach the French people for Christ. The first church that asked us to come was in Olney, Il

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so we drove up to present the spiritual needs of France. We had bought some slides and borrowed others for a presentation, and had cards printed with a family photo, our address, and a resume of our desire to serve in France. More invitations began coming in, so in June after graduation we began traveling full-time, trusting the Lord for finances after Bob resigned from his position at work. We also gave up our apartment, packed our belongings in trunks and barrels, and stored them at the mission motel, where there were cabins for the missionaries to stay in while they were traveling on deputation or furlough.

Our travels took us from the Chattanooga area to Georgia, Alabama, Florida, then north to North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, New York, Massachusetts, Vermont, then out west to Indiana, Missouri and Texas. Our vehicle was a small Toyota, one of the first sold in Chattanooga, and we put many miles on it! Since space was limited, we only took three traveling outfits and two Sunday outfits, and we washed twice a week so dirty clothes didn't accumulate. In most homes where we stayed, folks were kind enough to ask if we needed clothes washed, and other days we found a Laundromat. The people in the churches we spoke in were open and understanding, and very generous in sharing their homes and hearts with us. We made acquaintance with many wonderful

people. Many have remained our friends over the years and still keep in touch.

### **By January**

By January of 1969 we felt we were ready to leave, but the Lord kept us there until March, knowing we would need more monthly support than we had. We began looking for tickets, sold our car a month after making the last payment, added a few more belongings to our barrels and had them shipped. Ferrell and Barbara Kearney wrote and asked us to arrange for a stopover in Reykjavik, Iceland to spend a few days with them. They had been there for two years without having contact with other Christians and needed the fellowship. We enjoyed getting to know them and their two boys, and were amazed at how clean the capitol city of Reykjavik was! It was due to the fact that homes and buildings are heated with water from the hot springs. Dogs are not allowed in town so even the streets were extra clean! It was interesting to discover that being so close to the North Pole the nights were very short in March and everyone closed their shutters to keep out the sunlight and be able to sleep.

Three days later upon arriving in France at the Le Bourget airport north of Paris, George and Vera Palmer so graciously welcomed us to France and took us to the Aldin's home for dinner that