



**These are the
three Hmong men who went
to a post office to look for God.**

FAR EAST

BROADCASTING COMPANY, INCORPORATED

Here's the story of a miracle --
performed by our God through
a single radio.

December 22, 1980

Dear Christian Friend,

It's a story that begins 23 years ago, in a remote Hmong village in the jungle mountains of northern Laos.

Isolated from the world, life in the little village went on much as it had for generations. The boys learning the skills of manhood -- the girls learning the gentle arts of the women. Fields were tended and crops were harvested. There was music and feasting. Weddings, births and funerals. And always the tales of the elder ones told around the campfires.

But there was also fear -- fear that crept into every area of life.

Because the Hmong were animists -- spirit worshipers. And they believed evil spirits were everywhere . . .

in the trees . . .

in the rocks . . .

in the rivers . . .

Everywhere . . . waiting gleefully to bring suffering, pain, disease and disaster.

But in this little village there was something else:

A radio.

And for these people, isolated by mountains, jungles and rivers, that one small radio was their window to the world -- their threshold into the 20th century.

No wonder then that the "talking box" was a center of interest for the entire village. Crowds gathered to hear the music of other lands -- to wonder at the languages they

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could not understand. There were endless debates on what was heard and what was meant.

But most of all they gathered to listen to the language they could understand -- their own mother tongue, somehow borne on the wind from some unknown place to their village, through the wonderful little box that spoke.

What they heard was a gospel broadcast from the Far East Broadcasting Company in Manila, and a message about the love and forgiveness of God.

"This 'god,'" they thought, "could this truly be Fua Tai, 'the Supreme One?'" They knew their folklore well. Around the campfires at night, the elders had talked of Fua Tai many times.

He was their "supreme god" who created all things. At one time Fua Tai talked directly to man. But he became disappointed in man's behavior and abandoned him to the spirit world.

Could this "god" they heard about on the radio be Fua Tai returned to his people? They had to find out! But how?

The voice on the radio told listeners to respond to a post office box in the capital city of Vientiane. To these simple mountain tribespeople the answer was obvious: The supreme god must be at that post office box address!

So the village elders appointed three men to make the long, difficult overland trip to the city. Somehow they found the post office . . . and waited.

Three days later the missionary who produced the Hmong language broadcast arrived to collect his mail. The three tribesmen eagerly asked if he was Fua Tai -- the supreme god. Wisely, the missionary assured them he was not that god . . . but that he could help them know God.

The three begged the missionary to come to their village and tell the people about God.

And so he did. As the news of his coming spread, other Hmong in other villages walked for days, to hear him speak.

He told them about a God whose plan from the very beginning was to have fellowship with man. And how it was not God who left man, but man who left God to walk the path of sin. He told them how God's love was so great that He gave up His only son Jesus, so that all who believed in Him could be restored to that fellowship.

There -- deep in the Laotian jungle -- it was like a second day of Pentecost! Under the conviction of the Holy

Spirit -- 3,000 people left the dark world of spirit worship behind for new life and light in Jesus Christ.

In the years that followed, thousands of other Hmong were converted. By the early 1970s, more than 45,500 of the tribe's 350,000 members were Christians. Churches sprang up. Translation ministries created teaching materials. A Bible training school was even opened.

But then war came to Southeast Asia. Bombs. Rockets. Poisonous gas. Hunger, disease, despair and death. And when the Communists took control of northern Laos, tens of thousands of Hmong fled for their lives.

One of them was a young Hmong tribesman named Chong Lee -- a second-generation Christian. His parents had been among the first 3,000 villagers converted. He had attended Bible school in Vientiane, met a Christian girl there and married her. Two days after their marriage, Chong and his young bride joined 1,000 other Hmong believers in a desperate attempt to escape the Communists.

They spent 19 agonizing days in the jungle before they finally stumbled across the border into Thailand. Many of the believers did not survive the hunger, disease and exhaustion of that ordeal. But Chong and his wife did -- and today he is responsible for almost all of our programming in the Hmong language.

Today it is his voice that reaches out across the airwaves to bring God's message of life and hope to the Hmong refugees scattered far away from their beloved villages. It is his voice that brings comfort in their darkest hours. It is his voice that brings God's promise of eternal life even as they struggle to start a new life.

Right now our broadcasts in the Hmong language are crucial. The Communists seem bent on genocide -- annihilating the entire Hmong people. To face the dark days ahead, Hmong Christians need to be strengthened and encouraged.

And there are multiplied thousands of Hmong that still live in the fear of animism -- who need to experience new life in Christ.

Right now we have an unusual opportunity to reach out to these people as never before.

By upgrading three of our transmitters, we can effectively triple our signal strength into Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Burma and parts of China.

But to do that -- to reach the Hmong people, and others in Asia who so desperately need the gospel -- we need your

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help and your prayers. Right now millions are poised on the brink of eternity without the saving knowledge of Christ.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will work to prepare hearts for the truth of God's Word. Pray that God will grant us the wisdom to act in accordance with His will.

Then please prayerfully consider how your gift can be used in this vital ministry. Today your gift of \$20 can do two vitally important things:

- * It can help to provide a full 15 minutes of gospel broadcast to the Hmong and millions of others scattered across Asia.
- * It can help upgrade our transmitters into powerful new voices for the gospel of Christ.

Dear friend, I urge you . . . send what you can to help us reach this troubled part of the world with the message of Christ's redeeming love. If you can give more than \$20, please do it as the Lord leads.

That will mean thousands more of the Hmong people will be able to hear the gospel in their own language. And who knows who might be among them. Guerrilla fighters in the jungle. Villagers. Statesmen. Students. Witch doctors. Perhaps . . . someone like Chong, who will complete the cycle of Christian love that starts with people like you.

Thank you for your faithful prayers that enable us to reach out and touch the hearts and lives of these spiritually hungry people.

Your brother in Christ,

Bob Bowman

Robert H. Bowman
President

P.S. My heart wept as I read about the tragic plight of the Hmong people in the October issue of Reader's Digest. If you haven't read that feature yet, please do. It will help you understand why our Hmong broadcasts are so important. Thank you for giving out of a heart of love and concern.



2001 Virginia Dr.,
Orlando, FL 32803,
January 30th, 1981.

Dr. Robert H. Bowman, President
Far East Broadcasting Company, Inc.,
Box 1,
La Mirada, CA 90637

Dear Dr. Bowman,

The miracle story which you featured in your December 22, 1980, letter intrigued me. It reverberated in my heart and mind with echoes of a story with which I was quite well acquainted, since I was the senior Protestant missionary in North Laos, serving under the Christian & Missionary Alliance, whose work I was privileged to begin there in the very early part of 1929 and where I, together with Mrs. Roffe, continued to serve until mid-May, 1975.

The missionary in question in your story was -- and is -- the Rev. Chas. E. Gustafson, currently pastor of the Piedmont Park Alliance Church in Tallahassee, Florida. I sent my copy of your letter to him, asking him to confirm or otherwise comment on the the story as you presented it. Here, in part, is his reply:

The story you sent was a bit different than what I remember, but stories get that way in the telling ...

If I remember correctly, these men were directed to our house ... and stayed about three days. They all three accepted Christ and were so joyful in Christ that they wanted to do something nice for me. So they offered me about 1/4 pound of opium ... They had come to the P.O. to find me. But I don't remember going to any village and 3000 turning to Christ. I just think they got their stories a bit mixed up.

Since you refer to Chong Lee as a second-generation Christian, I suspect that the mixing-up of the story occurred somewhere along the line of its transmission from one or another of those who experienced it at first hand to one or another of those to whom it was eventually transmitted.

As the Field Chairman (Administrative Officer) of the Laos Field of the C&MA at the time, let me share with you some of the items that need to be corrected in this truly remarkable story.

That far back in the history of the work in North Laos (or any other part of Laos) there was not yet -- to my knowledge -- any "Hmong language broadcast." Nor did such an unprecedented number of these tribespeople (3,000) leave "the dark world of spirit worship behind for new life and light in Jesus Christ." In fact, there is no record of the number of those who, at that point -- either in time or precise geographical location -- became believers.

What did happen was that, in the late spring/early summer of 1950,

(OVER)

God, acting in sovereign grace, by-passed the lowland, main-race, Lao and moved upon the hearts of the upland Mèo (now called Hmong) tribespeople, preparing them for the coming of His messenger. In the absence of all the missionaries (who were attending the annual Field Conference of the C&MA in French Indochina), God led a young Bible School student, who had just completed his first four months of school -- the only schooling of any kind he had ever enjoyed, up until then -- to a small village, fairly distant from the homeland of Chong Lee and his fellow-tribesmen, but where the villagers were at least of the same overall Mèo tribe, although quite possibly of another clan.

Two years prior to the appearance of this lad in that village, which he visited in fulfillment of his assignment to a period of vacation-time ministry, God had announced to the villagers, thru' the local sorceress, that a messenger of the God of Grace would come to them before two years had gone by. Questioned, at the close of a simple message, by the interested villagers as to whether this was, indeed, the messenger whose coming she had foretold, she replied, "Yes, and to prove it I will be the first one to believe."

What followed was that, not only in that village, but in villages over an ever-widening area turned from darkness to light so that by early summer -- when the missionaries returned to their stations -- there were 1,000 believers where there had not been a single one before. A veritable mini-people's movement swept the area, but the total number of Protestant believers, as of 1975, never did exceed 10,000 in North Laos, rather than the 45,500 reported in your letter, with the bulk of them coming from the Hmong tribe, but with a substantial group of believers in the Khamou tribe, as well.

It is true that "translation ministries created teaching materials," but not in the language of these new believers, as your letter seems to imply. It was only in the final, pre-Communist era that this was done in the Hmong language, with by far the bulk of it being produced in Lao.

A "Bible training school was even opened"? Yes, but not the way your letter would lead the reader to think. That school was opened in Vientiane in late 1939, but all missionary work -- including that connected with the Bible School,--was interrupted by the Japanese war of expansion. (Incidentally, most of the students in that original school were Khamou, not Hmong.) The school was reopened in Luang Prabang, but not until late 1948, to be transferred to Xieng Khouang -- the scene of the awakening -- in 1951 to serve the immediate needs of the rapidly-expanding Christian community, chiefly among the Hmong. (Preceding that, early in 1951 a Short-Term Bible School was carried on by a missionary couple moved over from Luang Prabang a few months prior to regular furlough.) The main school was finally relocated, this time in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, circa 1962, where a definitive campus was in full development when the Communists took over in 1975. From start to finish, practically all instruction was given in Lao, the national language, thus making it available to the multi-language, plural community which made up the Church.

My concern in writing to you is that much of the original story has

been distorted. I know that this has not been deliberate, but it seems to me that anything of this nature would be thoroughly researched before such an article would be permitted to appear in print.* This is the second occasion in the very recent past that I have felt obliged to point out factual errors of considerable magnitude that have been passed on to supporters of Christian endeavors and I have undertaken to do so with a single purpose, viz., that of setting the record straight.

The end result of too many stories being presented with a foundation in fact, but larded with so many errors, could be a deplorable loss of confidence on the part of those in the Christian community who give and pray for the on-going interests of the cause of our common Lord, vis-à-vis those who use such material in an effort to raise up otherwise well-deserved support.

Should you be inclined to check on my credentials, I refer you to your own (and, formerly our) Frank Gray. I trust that this letter will be welcomed in the spirit in which it is written, i.e. with a sincere desire to see every aspect (including that of promotion) of the Lord's work done decently, in order and in all truth and honesty, and with every reasonable effort being made to safeguard the veracity of the promotional material used.

Respectfully yours,

cc; Dr. L. L. King, President (Rev. Dr.) G. Edward Roffe
The Christian & Missionary Alliance

* May I refer you to one definitive source-book on the subject? Moody Press, in 1975, published THE CHURCH IN ASIA, edited by Dr. Donald T. Hoke, with 31 chapters, most of them contributed by a wide selection of missionaries. C&MA personnel provided the material for four chapters covering the S.F.A, mainland.

In addition, there are numerous articles that have appeared in The ALLIANCE WITNESS, official journal of the C&MA. Even one such gave 1949 as the year of the awakening in North Laos, an error which took me months of correspondence to correct; at least an acknowledgement of said error was finally obtained!

FAR EAST**BROADCASTING COMPANY, INCORPORATED**

February 23, 1981

Dr. G. Edward Roffe
2001 Virginia Drive
Orlando, Florida 32803

Dear Dr. Roffe:

Your letter of January 30th has come to Dr. Bowman's desk while he is away from the office for an extended period of time. It will be called to his attention upon return from his present out-of-town commitments.

My purpose in writing is to let you know that your correspondence has reached its destination and that there will be a slight delay in the matter of a personal reply from Dr. Bowman.

He would want me to send along his warmest regards as I write.

Cordially yours,



(Mrs.) Doris Fredson
Secretary to the President

PIEDMONT PARK ALLIANCE CHURCH

3210 Thomasville Road • Tallahassee • Florida 32312

C. Ed Gustafson, Pastor

Phone (904) 386-7157

January 27, 1981

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Dr. Ed Roffe
2001 Virginia Dr.
Orlando, FL 32803

Dear George:

The story you sent was a bit different than what I remember, but stories get that way in the telling of them.--

If I remember correctly these men were directed to our house in Ban See Than and stayed about 3 days.-- They all three accepted Christ and were so joyful in Christ that they wanted to do something nice for me, so offered me about 1/4 pound of Opium.-- Which I refused, as they wanted to do something nice for me.-- They had come to the P.O. to find me.-- But I don't remember going to any village and 3000 turning to Christ.-- I just think they got their stories a bit mixed.--

We received a letter from Ralph about Edwina.-- That was a shock.--


We would sure like Tommy and Ruth to drop in on us.--

George Dewey will be in Florida in February.--

The day of the Christmas Dinner we were in Deland all day getting to Helen and Pauls in time to change clothes and bug off to the dinner.-- We thought for sure you guys would be there.-- We reserved a table with two seats for you and Thelma.-- The next morning I had a 8 a.m. breakfast appointment with a young man we thought we might hire as a youth director.-- From there we went back to Deland, interviewed a couple and on to Daytona to interview another couple and at 4 p.m. headed for home.-- So in the rush I forgot to call and only remembered as we were on the way home.-- Sorry.--

Why don't you come see us?-- Do you know anyone who would like to buy my Lao stamps?

Blessings on you,


Ed

Love from Helen.

CEG:et

FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANITY IN A TWENTIETH CENTURY SETTING

FAR EAST**BROADCASTING COMPANY, INCORPORATED**

March 3, 1981

Dr. G. Edward Roffe
2001 Virginia Drive
Orlando, Florida 32803

Dear Dr. Roffe:

Greetings in our Lord's name.

I appreciate your letter of January 30th. I have been on the road so much of late I have not had opportunity to answer before now.

I do appreciate your concern and I want to answer as concisely as I can. Today is my last day in the office before being away until about the middle of April.

Let me tell you how I got the story. It was about 22 years ago. I was in the city of Hong Kong. The C&MA missionary, Ed Gustafson, was in the hotel where I happened to be and we sat down for a few moments prior to his take-off for Laos. He had a story which he wanted to tell me.

He told me that a group of Meo tribal people (now referred to as Hmong) in a mountain village had been listening to FEBC. When they heard the Vientiane post office address given on the broadcasts, they desired to make contact. Since they had no real mail service, the village people decided to send a delegation down to Box 3, Vientiane, to try to make contact with those connected with the broadcast.

The postal authorities put them in touch with a Catholic priest first of all. The priest went back to the village with them and a group of Christians was formed into a little church which had about thirteen families connected with it.

Dr. G. Edward Roffe
Orlando, Florida

March 3, 1981
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They met with the Catholic priest for a period of time and finally realized that what they were being taught was not the same as they had been hearing over the air. So they sent another delegation down to Box 3, Vientaine.

This time they came in contact with the missionary who later came to the village with them.

As I recall the story as it was told to me, the village chief called the people together and heard the message again from the missionary. After discussing the message, it was decided that they all wanted to become Christians.

That is as the original story was told me by Ed Gustafson many years ago--as nearly as I can recall, at least 22 to 25 years ago, possibly longer.

It was a few months ago that I was talking with Lee Chong who has been doing our programs in the Hmong language for several years. Something he said in our discussion reminded me of that story which I had not referred to in many years. So I said to Lee Chong: "Lee Chong, I have a story I want to tell you." And I repeated the story that Ed Gustafson had told me. When I finished I asked him if it sounded familiar to him. With a smile he replied: "That was my village." He told me that he was eight years old at the time.

I asked him the question: "Lee Chong, how many people were there in the village who decided to follow Christ at that time?" And he replied: "A little over 3,000."

A number of years ago when one of our men was traveling in Southeast Asia taking pictures, he went to the area. He told me that he had talked with Wayne Persons about the story, since I had asked him to try to verify it. When he told me of Wayne's response--from then on I completely forgot the story until my experience with Lee Chong.

I'm afraid it didn't occur to me that, since the original story was told me by a C&MA missionary and after all these years was confirmed by a young man who is working in the broadcast ministry with us, I needed to check it any further. And, some little time ago Frank Gray, who is in our office here, showed me the Alliance Witness which contained a story which was quite similar, though in not all the details which we had in ours.

Dr. G. Edward Roffe
Orlando, Florida

March 3, 1981
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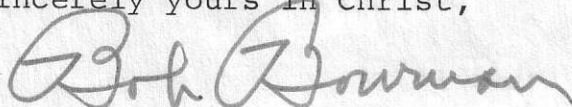
The statistics that were used came out of some literature we had in our file here. In discussing this with our staff people who are responsible for the final writing of our material, they stated that the figures must have included Catholics as well as Protestants in the rather large figures given concerning Christians there. Frankly, when I read the final draft I questioned the figures also.

Again, let me thank you for being so straight forward in bringing this to my attention. I assure you, Dr. Roffe, that we put forth our best endeavors to be accurate in what we are publishing and whatever inaccuracies there might have been were certainly unintentional.

We are praising the Lord these days for the excellent response that is coming out of China. Since two years ago, we have received approximately 24,000 letters from every province in China. We're receiving letters from many who have indicated that they had been listening for years, though they had been unable to correspond with us, and had come to know the Lord through the broadcasts. It's cause for much rejoicing.

Thanking you again, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bob Bowman".

Robert H. Bowman
President

RHB/df

2001 Virginia Dr.,
Orlando, FL 32803,
March 26th, 1981.

Dr. Robert H. Bowman, President
Far East Broadcasting Company, Inc.,
Box 1,
La Mirada, CA 90637

Dear Dr. Bowman,

Thank you for your most gracious letter under date of the 3rd.

I sincerely appreciate the spirit in which it was written and readily acknowledge my own error (already given potential admission in my letter of January 10) in regard to the existence of the broadcasting, by radio, of gospel messages to Laos as far back as the date under discussion. My age is, indeed, beginning to tell on me and my memory.

Happily, we agree on some of the essentials: The identity of the missionary who, in the first instance, shared the story with you; the probability that the large number of conversions (some 3,000) reported would include Catholics as well as Protestants, since a Catholic priest seems to have been directly involved in initial contact with this village; etc.

As Lee Chong was only eight years of age when the event under consideration took place, it would not be surprising if the details had, in the process of time and retelling, been unintentionally expanded, or otherwise modified.

So much for the basic story relating to the manner in which the gospel reached Lee Chong's home village.

However, I stand by what I wrote in regard to the claim that the number of believers among the Hmong rose to 45,000. Even taking into account the possibility that this could include Catholic believers, there is no way whereby this could even be an approximate figure.

In Dr. Hoke's THE CHURCH IN ASIA, the chapter on Laos (prepared by me at his request) gives the total Christian community in Laos as numbering about 50,000. Of that number, there were some 38,000 Catholics, but that figure includes not only the Hmong, but also all other nationalities and/or races in Laos: French and other westerners, Vietnamese (a not inconsiderable group), and all other members of the Catholic Church in Laos.

The statistics presented were gathered directly from the official bodies and/or documents concerned. The Evangelical Church in (North) Laos had an estimated membership of 10,000, of which some 2/3 were Hmong, with the remainder being Khamou, Lao, and others. South Laos reported a membership of not more than 2,500 and there would be no Hmong among them whatsoever.

Putting all these pertinent figures together (6,500 - 7,000 Protestant Hmong; even allowing for double than many Catholics -- an improbable number) would leave the overall total of 45,000 Hmong believers, as reported in your article, far in excess of the actual number.

It is in regard to these items that I regret the lack of research prior to their being shared with your readers, although I can easily understand that it might not occur to you -- given the circumstances -- that there would be no need to check these details.

Again let me thank you, Dr. Bowman, for your very kind letter and for its decidedly and most welcome irenic tone. I assure you that my septuagenarian bark would prove to be more objectionable than my bite!

We rejoice with you in the blessing of God on your corporate ministry; we pray for it and -- from time to time -- support it as the Lord enables.

Cordially yours in Him,

cc: Dr. L. L. King, President
Christian & Missionary Alliance

G. Edward Roffe

P.S. I also repeat that the "translation ministries and the opening of a Bible training school" references in the article leave me, at least, with a wrong impression. Perhaps I am drawing unjustified inferences or coming to unwarranted conclusions in reading into what was written more than what was intended in connection with these aspects of the article. GER