

The Dream that Rocked the World

By

Jim Poitras

Three and one half minutes rocked the world. The memorable rendezvous was January 21, 2009. It was the day that, out of obscurity, Susan Boyle, with her Celtic twang, encumbered by learning difficulties and shyness, stepped onto the stage of Britain's Got Talent in Glasgow. She literally shocked the panel, and mocking crowd, when she started to sing eight words, "I dreamed a dream in time gone by...." One of the judges gave her the biggest yes ever awarded in three years of the contest. She arrested and then liberated the hearts of millions. There have been more than three hundred million hits on the YouTube capturing of those short moments. Susan's "I Dreamed a Dream" holds the global record for the most preordered albums of all time. She defied preconceptions, probabilities, and set the stage for anyone and everyone with a dream.

All I ever wanted was to make a difference! To take my talents and place them in the Master's hands, use them for His glory, and hear Him say, "Well done!" That aspiration took me to West Africa over twenty-seven years ago, a week before my twenty-third birthday. I was armed with a degree in education, only three years in the United Pentecostal Church International, deficient of religious pedigree, but with a vision of "teaching all nations" beginning in thickly populated Nigeria. I was so naïve back then. I had never travelled overseas, but did prepare my last will and testament before departure (thankfully and obviously I have never had the mishap of using it). I couldn't sleep that first night thinking that a powerful python was going to crash through the hotel window robbing me of my dream and my life. I survived! A couple years later, in the jungles of Africa, I met my wife, a teacher from Alabama. We've been on a journey ever since. Our mutual heartbeat has been unwavering: teach others so they can reach their own people.

My relentless dream is to entrust, empower, and equip the next generation. I still dream of taking God's Word to the world, touching people, transmitting truth, and transforming nations. More than that, I get to live out that dream, thanks to my leadership in the Foreign Missions Division, on a minute by minute basis. They have graciously allowed me to serve as the coordinator of their new global Bible school program.

I dream of raising the standard of excellence and relevance in our Bible schools globally through the Global Association of Theological Studies and my leadership of the Global University of Theological Studies (See English: <http://gatsonline.org/> and Spanish <http://agetenlinea.org/>). GATS is made up of seven academic programs, in multiple languages, with a growing edge: certificate, two levels of diplomas, associate degree,

bachelor degree, distance education, and faculty development. It's a gigantic project. It causes us to stretch heavenward to our supplying God; outward to a waiting, wanting world. It calls us to continuously improve. It is a revolutionary concept for training leaders globally using a partially standardized curriculum. The purpose of GATS and its membership schools is to develop and equip men and women to reach their potential in apostolic ministry. My dear friend, Dr. S. L. Poe sent me this encouraging note, "I have worked in our Bible schools since 1985 after changing careers, and GATS is without doubt the most positive step I've seen."

Bruce Howell, the General Director of Foreign Missions states, "Ministerial education is crucial to the future of the United Pentecostal Church International. The Church marches forward only to the extent that we evangelize the world and educate our converts. GATS is a cutting edge education program that uses the foundation of our past to build for our bright future."

Dozens of visionary-minded friends and churches joined our efforts in last year's general conference. One hundred men, women, and churches pledged \$5000.00 each for the development of a course to be used as part of our global curriculum. To date over half of the funds pledged have come in. Others will be sending in theirs up until the end of 2010. What a wise investment. Bill Bright wrote, "None of us has a long time here on planet earth. It's our split second in eternity when we have an opportunity to invest our lives to help fulfill what our Lord came into this world to do."

I dream of establishing a global distance education program to multiply the number of those trained. This includes Portable Bible Schools International, Reaching through Teaching Ministries <http://reachingthroughteaching.com/> and the Global College of Ministry <http://globalcollegeofministry.com/>, and the GATS distance education program designed for educating and motivating believers toward maturity and acts of service in God's kingdom.

I dream of establishing a global faculty education program for Bible school instructors overseas. To advance Bible schools it is crucial we advance educators. Missionary Bennie DeMerchant commented on the value of faculty education, "This is a good solid move for the future of Bible schools. Trained teachers produce great students who develop into great leaders. Training faculty starts dominos falling in the right direction." Ongoing faculty development is a priority. A twenty-four lesson basic program is being created and is called *Advance Educators Series* <http://gatsonline.org/advancementforfaculty.html>.

I love the inscription on the Bible school and headquarters' facility in the Ivory Coast, built by one couple. They requested these words to be placed on the dedication plaque, "A man and a woman blessed of God, passed by here." That's me! I want to be like that. Writer A. W. Tozer said, "A man by his sin may waste himself, which is to waste that which on earth is

most like God. That is man's greatest tragedy and God's heaviest grief." God grieves when I waste my split second in eternity and fail to attempt to measure up to my fullest potential in accomplishing His divine plan and purpose. An Arabic proverb teaches that the dawn does not come twice to awaken a person. Opportunity knocks but once. An opportunity missed will eventually bring ample repentance. I have one chance to impact my world.

A Middle Eastern Blessing says, "When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced. May you live your life so that when you die, the world will cry, and you will rejoice." I'll be the one rejoicing when I get to heaven and see multiplied thousands there that are recipients of a dream and of the truth that rocked their world.

Bio: James Poitras is the coordinator of the Global Association of Theological Studies, a prolific writer, and he and his wife, Linda, serve as career missionaries of the United Pentecostal Church International.