

Bill Ardill

From: Bill Ardill [bill.ardill@sim.org]
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To: 'ardill-news@sim.org'

Subject: we are still speaking to each other

We were supposed to be in the middle of a cornfield but found ourselves wandering in suburbia. At times we were floating in thin air but were really in the middle of six lanes of traffic. Such was the data from a GPS (global positioning system) we were using at the beginning of our trip. We bought it four years ago for my parents and since they were not using it much we commandeered it for our trip. As new neighborhoods sprung up and highways changed, the GPS was still directing us into cornfields and thin air. In exasperation we went out and bought a newer model with the illusion it would answer all our navigational concerns and help us arrive safely to the many points of interest along our pilgrimage. As soon as I got it home I programmed in the key places we would be stopping along the way so we could very easily head out each morning with the confidence the satellite gods above were watching over us – directing our paths – so to speak.

All had been going well and on several occasions we praised the little box sitting on our dashboard for being a capable guide as we wound our way through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Canada, Michigan and Illinois. Not bad for a piece of plastic with a little brain consulting the heavens at every turn.

Yesterday reality hit hard – not so much that we lost faith in the electrons, but we were confronted with our own fallibility. As we headed for Kansas City from St. Anne, Illinois for the 8 hour trip to visit the Huffs, at the 7 ½ hour stage, we had this sinking feeling we were a bit off track. Reluctantly admitting the GPS had led us astray we pulled out the map and realized we were 2 hours (120 minutes) off course. We were sitting in our car in the middle of Missouri instead of the northwest corner and it was 6:30 pm. As we reconstructed our error, I had programmed in the wrong address (somehow!) and the little box did exactly as I told it instead of using some modicum of common sense and taking us to where we wanted to go and not where I told it to go! After helping the children recover from their painful cries of distress and hunger, we reprogrammed in the correct address and headed out again. It was a quieter trip as you can imagine but we finally arrived in Kansas City at 9:30 and as we pulled up the driveway, our girls said, “This is not the right place. This is the Huffs grandparents’ house!” We knocked on the door and two surprised elderly people greeted us and told us we had 13 more miles to go. They were pleased because we were the first visitors they had ever had to their house in the country. Shrugging off this honor we sheepishly crawled back in the car and Dorothy called the Huffs and demanded they stay on the phone and guide us all the way to their driveway. Needless-so-say, we were pleased to see them waving at us in their driveway and I was glad to pry myself from the driver’s seat after being on the road for 14 hours (with a 2 hour stop in St. Anne.) I know there are some profound illustrations, life lessons and sermon illustrations in this sad tale, but I am too tired to think about them right now.

We had a good rest and a restful day today. I got a few emails out, mailed a couple of important letters, washed the car and hope I can get to the newspaper before the night is over. Even though yesterday’s journey was a long comedy of errors, we are fine knowing it was not an accident, car trouble, armed robbery, impassable road or other crisis more common as we have traveled in Nigeria.

Our trip last Saturday was also long from upstate New York to Grand Rapids. We stayed with a wonderful family, Jon and Missy Ertle, and thoroughly enjoyed getting to know them and their four delightful daughters. (They have 5 ducks, 2 goats, one dog, a cat and several rabbits!) On Sunday we spoke in Sunday School and church and were thrilled to see so many who we remembered and who reminded us they were praying for us. We got together with a friend of Dorothy’s from her days working at Moody and had a great time catching up on their news and family developments. On Monday we drove to a lake near Cadillac, Michigan and enjoyed the day with Glenn and Berniece Verbrugge. Glen and Bernice served at Evangel a number of years ago and I learned a great deal of surgery from Glenn when I visited Evangel in 1983 as a surgery resident. Glenn is a surgeon (like me) and Berniece is a medical technologist (like Dorothy); we have both served in Africa in medical missions and so having so much in common we had a great day with them. They took us out on their pontoon boat, the kids learned how to fish (David caught the biggest one); the kids went tubing behind the boat, canoed and used their neighbors’ paddle boat. We all had a refreshing swim (you say that when the water is freezing!) and a lovely lunch. They have supported us faithfully for many years and we value their friendship a great deal.

Tuesday morning Dorothy spoke to a group of women at Berean Church in Grand Rapids and then we headed for Kalamazoo to visit our friends the Carol and Ed Bos at Worldwide Labs and then a brief stop

to see Marion Schindler in Berrien Springs before landing at Greg and Caroline Kirschners in Chicago. It was terrific to see their growing kids and we are so excited they are going to Jos next week for a 5 month visit to help at Evangel. They will be living in our house in Jos so we had a lot to talk about both in terms of the house idiosyncrasies but the developments at Evangel in the past weeks. We pray they have a safe journey and a great experience as they invest in the lives of many at Evangel and in the Jos community.

On Wednesday we had an amazing stopover for breakfast at a little church in the middle of a community surrounded by hundreds of acres of cornfields. When my parents were attending Moody Bible Institute in Chicago as they prepared to go to Africa as missionaries, they joined SIM and then visited various churches in the Midwest to raise their support. The First Baptist Church in St. Anne, Illinois started supporting them and for the past 59 years they have faithfully supported my parents! Wow! We were humbled by their commitment and faithfulness and wanted to thank them on behalf of my parents. We enjoyed a delicious breakfast and then shared some of what God is doing in Africa. During the breakfast, Mr. Abrasart told Dorothy that he has been praying for us every day. The whole trip was worth that one statement and reminded us again of how many fantastic people are supporting us with their prayers, gifts and encouragement. This trip has been full of those kinds of conversations and has been the fuel to keep us going both on the trip and as we go overseas.

So today, we are recovering from "GPS-itis" and hope we are fully recovered by tomorrow. (In spite of the fact it was not the GPS's fault, I still need someone to blame other than myself so please don't point that out to me when you respond.) Thanks for your prayers as we head out tomorrow for Dallas. We speak on Saturday evening at a church group and then again three times on Sunday at Grace Bible Church.

So stay tuned for more travel adventures... (By the way we are now consulting the map more often!)

In Christ,
Bill Ardill

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