



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Bangkok, Thailand

17 March 2003

Dear Fellow-servants,

Last Thursday we had our last day at *Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center* for this term. For the occasion each of the students were required to play one piece on the keyboard and sing one song – in English. This is fantastic since most of our students had never learned to read music or play piano until coming to Legacy School. Then the students put on a play written by our son Bronson – again, all in the English language! Some of our students could barely speak a few words in English when they first came to the school Last May. We invited local Karen families and some of the teachers from the local Thai secondary school as the audience. I gave a special award for academic excellence to Miss Tanyapon, who was by far, our top academic achiever. All in all, it was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the fruits of our labors in action. Friends and family members were all very proud of what has been achieved in only 9 months.

Our students have now left to visit with their families. Several will return in a few weeks to work at the farm or help translate booklets into Karen and Thai languages. Next June we will have 8 returning for a second year of training and, if we can get enough qualified volunteer teachers, possibly as many as 12-15 coming as first year students. So far I have received requests for two applications from India, six from Kachinland and a letter inquiring about Legacy School from a young man in Laos. We look forward to an exciting new school year starting only a few short months from now!

### **Passover in Burma**

I had a very interesting phone conversation several days ago with Evangelist Lazum Brang, who was in Rangoon visiting COG7 Pastor David Ye Gyan. It was providential that I caught him at Pastor David's house because I needed to ask his advice about travel arrangements for one of our Kachin students - Seng Htun. Seng Htun asked to be sent to Pastor Brang for the break in order to learn more about the Bible and Church of God doctrine. But getting him there from Chiang Mai is not a walk in the park! He must travel from Chiang Mai to Mae Sai and cross the river to Tachilek on the Burma side. Then he must travel by road to Chiang Tung. Since there is no public transportation, he must negotiate a ride on a truck hauling goods smuggled from Thailand. The hard part is the leg of his journey from Chiang Tung to

Mandalay. This is treacherous mountain and jungle terrain, which would not be so bad, except that there are bandits and rebel army patrols along this route! If he makes it safely to Mandalay, he can take the train up to Hopin and then up the mountain road to Pastor Brang's village of Na Mawn.

Getting Lazum Brang's advice was extremely important since he travels frequently to all parts of Burma and Kachinland and knows the various difficulties and dangers involved. After discussions with him we decided to arrange a flight for Seng Htun directly from Tachilek to Mandalay. This will be more costly, but with God's help, it will get him there in one piece.

Gloria and I plan to travel to far western Burma for Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. We will go to a village in the Chin Hills area called Kalaymyo. Here we will gather with Pastor Peter Zemung and the newly formed Church of God congregation who left their former fellowship after studying our Burmese language Holy Day and Sabbath booklets and other literature supplied by Lazum Brang. Pastor Zemung has invited us to teach them more about the true doctrines of the Church of God. Pastor Brang and a contingent of members from Kachinland and central Burma plan to join us there also. He has informed me that there are a number of individuals coming from central Burma who wish to counsel for baptism at that time.

Please pray for us that God will see fit we carry through with this important trip. It is important because there are many new people being called to repentance in Burma. We will have a chance to teach God's Truth to them and baptize those who demonstrate the fruits of true repentance. And please pray for our safety on the journey. Travel in Burma can be unpredictable and Satan is always looking for ways to stop us in our efforts to carry out our calling. And please don't forget to pray for a safe and successful journey for all who will gather together with us from various remote areas of Burma to keep God's Feast Days.

### **Interview**

Several months ago I was asked to respond to a series of interview questions emailed to me by Mr. Rick Beltz, publisher of *The Church of God Newsletter*. We appreciated Rick's giving us a chance to go into detail and I thought it would be helpful and informative to put the entire interview and my answers into this current Legacy Letter. From time to time we get questions from new readers and others interested in Gloria's and my background and how and why Legacy Institute was formed. My hope is that this interview will answer many of those questions:

***TCOGN:** Could you tell our readers a little bit about your background in the Church of God? How were you and Gloria called to God's truth?*

***TLI:** Gloria grew up in the WCG. Her parents immigrated to the US from Germany after WWII. Her father Werner Jebens worked for the German Department and later the News Bureau at church headquarters in Pasadena for many years. I was in the US Navy when I was called to repentance. I later received a Conscientious Objector discharge and went to Ambassador College where I met Gloria.*

***TCOGN:** A good number of brethren are probably aware of your former affiliation with WCG*

as well as perhaps another church group after that. What was your motivation for starting The Legacy Institute and when was it organized?

**TLI:** *This question warrants quite a bit of background information.*

*I was called to the Church in 1970 while in the military. The same day I was discharged I became a freshman student at Ambassador College. During the time I was a student in Pasadena, I studied Thai language and culture at classes taught by a teacher from Thailand. After graduation, I served for several years as a community liaison for the Thai community with offices at the Wat Thai temple in Los Angeles. I later taught at Chiangmai University in Thailand and wrote several articles that appeared in the Plain Truth magazine. I met King Bhumibol for the first time in 1979. He wanted to meet me because of my service to the Thai community in the LA area. At that time, I also helped to start the AF project-teaching refugees in Thailand. I was later asked to work for Ambassador Foundation full time and help out arranging meetings for Herbert Armstrong with leaders in Asia and help arrange for 2 more educational projects in Sri Lanka and Nepal. After Mr. Armstrong's death, I was told to return to Pasadena and work there. In 1988, I was transferred into the field ministry were Gloria and I served in Mojave, California and Dallas, Texas. I remained affiliated with the WCG until 1995 when I was terminated for refusing to preach that the Sabbath was "done away." Gloria and I did not affiliate with any other corporate group. I wasn't sure exactly what God had in mind for our futures, but I needed to earn a living, so I decided to use my contacts in Bangkok to start an import/export business. While there, I came in contact once again with 2 Karen COG refugee families who were in Bangkok being processed by the UN for immigration to the USA. They were confused and disheartened by the doctrinal changes from Pasadena. They asked me to please meet with them on the Sabbath and give bible studies. I agreed. Contact with them led to contact with other Karen families along the border. Soon, while visiting these other Karen refugee families, I learned that some needed help with physical needs such as food, shelter, clothing and medical attention. I appealed to COG brethren in a letter published in The Journal, and God's people began to send financial aid. Soon after, I visited Lazum Brang in Kachinland and learned about the existence of the Kachinland COG and their needs. Legacy Institute was formed in 1999 as an outgrowth of helping the Karen and Kachin Church of God members with both their physical and spiritual needs.*

*It just happened. It wasn't a calculated plan on my part to start a ministry in Asia. In hindsight, I see that it was God's Spirit opening the doors. I just walked through them.*

**TCOGN:** *Did you receive any criticism from any individuals or COG groups when you decided to do something of this magnitude, perhaps without someone else's approval? (as having things approved has been the accepted thing in the church for many years)*

**TLI:** *I heard that there were some few criticisms. But that is natural anytime someone does something that is "unorthodox." Gloria and I are more concerned about what God thinks.*

**TCOGN:** *Since that time, do you think you are accomplishing what you set out to do through this organization?*

**TLI:** *Far more has been accomplished than we ever dreamed. And we are just beginning. The fields of Asia and other parts of the "Gentile" world are ripe for the harvest. In*

*Thailand, we began helping 2 Karen families with spiritual and physical food. Now, this year (2002) at the Feast we had 48 Karen attending. We have 20 more waiting in the refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border wanting to talk to me about baptism. In Burma, I just baptized 4 more people at Atonement. One Karen man was a former lay pastor for 30 years in his protestant church. He returned to Central Burma to keep the Feast and evangelize his own congregation. The COG7 congregation in Rangoon has fully accepted the Annual Holy Days. A True Jesus Church congregation in Kalaymyo, Burma, after reading literature sent by Church of God evangelist Lazum Brang, accepted the Holy Days and other COG doctrines; tore down their church sign and nailed up “Church of God.” At the Feast in India we had over 20 Hindus show up to keep the Feast and learn about the True God. It is like starting at the foot of a mountain whose top is obscured by mist. We cannot see the top. We have no idea how high the mountain is. But we must keep climbing in the direction God guides us!*

*TCOGN: How is The Legacy Institute organized and run? Do you have a Board of Directors? What about various "ranks" of ministers like the corporate Churches of God are organized?*

*TLI: Since Legacy Institute is not a corporate church organization; we have no “ranks of ministers.” Legacy is a non-profit, charitable foundation and has a board of directors as required by Texas state law.*

*TCOGN: It must have taken a tremendous amount of courage and soul-searching for you to leave familiar family and friends in the U.S., sell many possessions, and then move half way around the world. Could you comment on this?*

*TLI: Of course it was a big decision to be in our early 50s, leave our family and friends, give up a home and what little security we had for the future and move to Thailand. But it became a necessary decision if we were to put all our efforts into what we see as an important calling from God. So we took the plunge in faith, knowing that, if we are obedient to the direction Jesus is giving us, He will provide for all our needs. It is His Work. We are His servants.*

*TCOGN: How have you and Gloria done in adjusting to a completely new way of life and a radically different culture in Thailand? Aren't most of the people there Buddhists or of some other Gentile religion?*

*TLI: Both of us have to continue to adjust. It is not always easy. It helps that the Thai people are very polite and courteous. Thailand was never colonized by a western power. Therefore, the culture is very alien in many respects. I think it is important to also realize that most cultures in Asia do not base their moral decisions on Judeo-Christian ethic. So their cultures THINK differently. But we rely on prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

*Gloria and I have the advantage of previously living and working in Asia for Ambassador Foundation. We also have experience working around the Thai culture in Los Angeles while we served as community workers for Wat Thai Temple Community Services. Speaking the Thai language helps a great deal. Thailand has become our second home.*

*We do miss our families. Gloria has all her relatives living in southern California. My sisters are in Ohio. My brother is in Montana and our eldest son and his family live in*

***Texas. Our youngest son Bronson serves as a volunteer teacher here at the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center in Chiangmai. We stay in touch with our families mostly by emails since international telephone calls out of Thailand are so expensive.***

***TCOGN: How much of a need is there in Asia for spreading God's truth at this time?***

***TLI: "How can they hear unless they have a preacher? And how can they preach unless they be sent?" We cannot fulfill The Great Commission of Matt 28 unless we GO to these countries to preach the Gospel. Jesus said that the fields are ALREADY ripe for the harvest. But we need to get out there into the fields if we expect to gather the wheat! This cannot be done by periodic visits for a few days and asking the people to come to see us for a few hours at a 4 star hotel. We have to go to the people – not have them come to us! Asia needs a sustained and permanent presence in order to do the job God gave us to do. That is why we moved to Thailand.***

***TCOGN: Would you care to estimate how many brethren there may be there in Asia?***

***TLI: Elijah thought there was only one – but God showed him 7000! It is difficult to answer your question. Any figure would be only a guess. I like to quote Lazum Brang. When I asked him how many church members there were in Burma and Kachinland, he said, "I keep no church lists, Jesus already knows who are His."***

***TCOGN: Do you feel that God may be somewhat finished for the time being in working with the lost tribes of Israel, but is now instead working more with the Gentiles in the world? (Compare this to what God did in the first century church and how He worked powerfully through Paul with the Gentiles after the disciples preached to the House of Israel)***

***TLI: I cannot say whether or not -- nor to what degree God is "finished working with the lost tribes of Israel." All I know is that the Gospel was preached powerfully to what we believe to be modern-day Israel for over 60 years, mainly through the ministry of Herbert Armstrong. On the other hand, more and more in the Gentile world are reaching out for the Truth of God's Word. It is up to God. If He is truly shifting gears and wants to concentrate on taking the Gospel to the Gentile world, we must follow His lead. If we resist, thinking He is only going to work with the US and British Commonwealth peoples, we could find ourselves resisting God Himself. We must learn to recognize the fruits of the Holy Spirit, no matter where those fruits appear, and follow the lead of the Lamb.***

***TCOGN: What types of activities are being done in that part of the world relative to spreading God's truth to those who are being called? You have mentioned a number of times in your co-worker letters about various house churches. Are there any other church groups working there in SE Asia?***

***TLI: Of course there have been many missionaries from various Catholic and Protestant groups working in Asia for many years. So a form of Christianity is not new to Asia. As far as Sabbatarian groups and COG organizations in particular are concerned, The SDAs have been very active in Thailand and Burma and the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Baptists in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and COG 7<sup>th</sup> Day in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century have done some missionary activities here. There are also some Sabbatarian and various COG groups active in border areas. The True Jesus Church, a Sabbatarian organization, has various small church groups numbering into***

*the millions in China, northwestern India and northeastern Burma. Lazum Brang told me he estimated that there were over 15,000 Sabbath keepers in Burma and Kachinland. I just recently heard about a group calling themselves the COG Israel in Mizoram, northeast India, who have 400-500 members and keep Sabbath and Holy Days.*

*WCG had a very strong presence in Sri Lanka in the 1980s and 90s because of the Ambassador Foundation project, PT and television show, and at one time, a growing church congregation of over 100 persons. India had small, scattered congregations in the south and north. Thailand and Malaysia had small but developing WCG church congregations. Singapore and Hong Kong were small but growing. The Philippines had, by far, the largest WCG group with active and growing congregations. Of course, that all changed within 10-12 years of the death of Herbert Armstrong. The doctrinal apostasy brought with it almost total disintegration of these fledgling churches.*

*Today PCG and LCG have a few members in Thailand, India and Sri Lanka. The COG An International Community has a few members here and there. The UCG has a very strong and growing presence in the Philippines. But still, in most places the people are scattered and there are very few ministers to feed them on a regular, consistent basis.*

*We can't plant a tree and just walk away. We must continue to water and nurture if we expect fruit to be born. It is apparent that the seeds of the True Gospel have been scattered throughout Asia. It is now time for us to actively water those seeds.*

*The single, most important need now in Asia is workers for God's fields and financial support to sustain the activities of His servants to water and nurture those He is calling.*

*TCOGN: Could you comment on how it has been to recruit fellow brethren to join you there in Southeast Asia in the work of teaching those who are being called?*

*TLI: All our volunteers at the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center receive no salary and pay their own way over to Thailand. It is not easy for people to give up a year or more of their lives to come and help with no pay. It takes a spirit of adventure, a high level of commitment and it helps to be a little bit "unconventional." Living and teaching in a foreign cultural setting is not easy, especially when the students know very little English. While we make sure that there are opportunities for our volunteers to travel and have "free" time, it can become a real grind when one is away from family, friends, and things that are familiar. Most people here do not speak English. There is no hot water, no A/C, no regular western food and little western culture, mosquitoes, bugs, ants, spiders, scorpions, snakes, foot-long lizards that live in your house, heat & humidity; but at the same time it is an adventure of a lifetime living and working in an exotic environment teaching people a way of live according to the TRUE principles of the soon coming Kingdom of God.*

*God has blessed us with who we needed to get the Legacy Leadership training Center off the ground. We have 3 very wonderful, dedicated young people (Heidi Hanisko, Bronson Sexton, Bonnie Turner) who are doing a fantastic job. They are tough and actually enjoy the surprises living in Thailand bring. For instance, recently a 10 foot long Burmese Python was killed on our Legacy farm. Bonnie skinned it out all by herself and now it looks like she will be getting a new pair of boots! I DO wish more qualified young men would volunteer. But many I have spoken with are already tied up with other commitments or so*

*far in debt they have become enslaved to monthly credit card payments and cannot break free. Too bad. They are missing out on a real life adventure.*

*TCOGN: Could you tell our readers about Lazum Brang? How did your meeting him ever come about and what has been his role in spreading the truth of God in Southeast Asia and helping with the ministry there?*

*TLI: I met Lazum Brang in January 1999 after he sent me a letter inviting me to visit him in Kachinland. I discovered a thriving group of Church of God brethren living in a remote village in the mountains of Kachinland who had never had any affiliation with WCG or any of the offshoot groups. Here was a Church of God congregation that had been raised up SEPARATE from the rest of us! It was an important and humbling lesson for me that God doesn't need our big, western corporate church organizations to do His Work.*

*Lazum Brang was working for the equivalent of pennies a day gathering straw in the fields. His sister and mother were gathering medicinal herbs in the jungle to sell at the local market. Every spare cent went towards paper, envelopes and stamps to send out a few more tracts and letters. Pastor Brang had been offered a well-paying job running a hotel in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachinland. After much prayer, both he and his wife agreed to refuse this opportunity because it would tie him down and he would not be able to travel and do God's Work. I arrived 3 days later and was able to give him enough funds to feed his family for one year, thereby freeing him up to evangelize full time. They made the right decision. I believe I was the messenger boy sent by God with the answer to their prayers.*

*Now Legacy sponsors his evangelistic efforts in Burma, Kachinland and the China Border region. He actually speaks 24 languages and dialects! I have personally heard him speak 9; Jingpo, Lisu, Burmese, Hindi, English, Shan, Karen and 2 different Chinese dialects. He is also learning Thai. He was born in China, grew up in Kachinland and served as an officer in the Indian Army in the border area of Assam. He attended 4 years at the SDA seminary in Burma. The COG congregations he serves are now observing the Annual Holy Days.*

*Brother Brang (as he likes to be called) is what I call a "pure evangelist." His entire life is absolutely dedicated to preaching the Gospel. He travels by train, flatbed truck, bicycle and on foot throughout the length and breadth of Burma, Kachinland and the mountainous border regions near China. When no vehicles are available or not running because of monsoon rains, he will walk for days to reach a remote village where someone has written a letter requesting a visit. He is one of the most dedicated ministers I have ever met and a constant example (and prod) to me.*

*TCOGN: More and more of God's people have mentioned in the past several years that having some type of outreach and doing good works was very important to Christians. How do you think the Church of God has done in the past and is doing now with this vital aspect of the Christian way of life?*

*TLI: I don't think what one might term "outreach" should be something we have to "plan" or "organize" as Church of God members. It should be the natural and daily fruit of a converted mind. We ARE true Christians therefore we HELP others! One of the reasons we formed Legacy Institute as a charitable foundation and not a church was because we recognized the need to DO good works projects as well as preach the Gospel. We must*

*remember that, Jesus not only taught the people about the true bread of life, he ALSO fed them bread and fishes.*

*Legacy Institute supports various educational and cultural projects in Asia whenever we see a need and have the resources to help. For instance, we support Michael Hubert's Early Rain Foundation in Madras with his projects helping educate street children and former prostitutes. We fund children's ongoing education in Burma and Thailand. At the Legacy Institute Leadership Training Center in Chiangmai, we do not discriminate because of ethnic or religious affiliations. We have Kachin and Karen tribal students from various Christian backgrounds (including COG). We also have a girl student who is Buddhist!*

*Jesus said he came "so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." What we have been given by God is not just for us, it is for ALL MANKIND.*

*Too often in the past (and, in some cases, still today) we adopted what I would term the "us versus them" attitude toward people who were not part of the Church of God or even part of our particular COG group. This is not of God. We should instead adopt what I call the "us FOR them" attitude.*

*TCOGN: What are your current and future plans for The Legacy Institute in Asia? Do you think you will be able to expand your operations in the future as more people are called in that part of the world?*

*TLI: The Work of God is growing rapidly in Asia. One of the cardinal principles of Legacy Institute is that we will not presume to plan out the future for God. We can only follow the lead of the Holy Spirit wherever that might take us. We seek out where God is working and support what we see He is already doing. Jesus said that we should look on the fields – that they are ALREADY ripe for the harvest. He also said that we should ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into that harvest. So far, God has given us the resources (always sufficient for our needs – not for our wants) to do the job. We pray in faith that He continue to do so.*

*TCOGN: What is your feeling about the current status of the corporate Churches of God? Someone recently stated that they felt that the corporate churches were "dying of old age." What is your take on this?*

*TLI: Our Church of God experience covers, at best, only approximately the last 70 years. But Jesus founded the Church almost 2,000 years ago. Over the course of the centuries, there has been a constant ebb and flow of Church of God activities. Sometimes the preaching of the Gospel has been very loud with thousands being converted. At other times it has been only a whisper with a few hundred hanging on to the Truth. Our Church of God experience is only a small part of the entire puzzle. Take, for instance, the Celtic Church of God which flourished in the non-Roman parts of England, Ireland and Scotland from approximately 35 AD until well into the 600's AD. One of their chief evangelists was a man named Patrick. Pay no attention to the stories one, large apostate church organization claims about him. He preached the Sabbath and Holy Days. Highly organized Church of God communities had a married priesthood, observed Passover and not Easter, and ate no pork. The Church of God communities in these areas numbered in the thousands. Where are they today? Gone. One can find only a few persons on secluded islands off of Scotland*

*that still keep the Sabbath and trace their roots back to the Celtic Church. This is only one example. There are many more historical examples such as these in far-off places such as India, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. All of the human Church of God organizations created today are OUR inventions. None of them are the sum total of God's Church, historically or otherwise. Jesus founded ONE church, and it is a SPIRITUAL creation. The splits and divisions among us are nothing new. They started almost immediately in the first century Church (read Paul, Peter and John), and have been going on throughout the history of the Church of God. They are not from God but are the result of human nature and a lack of seeing what God has been doing historically, and now doing today, in our present age.*

*TCOGN: With no apparent end in sight for the splits, divisions and squabbling among the ministry and brethren, what are your observations or predictions on the current and future condition of the Sabbatarian Church of God, especially in the U.S.? (Feel free to comment on this in as much detail as you wish)*

*TLI: Legacy Institute does not get involved in what I call "Church Wars." People need to learn to respect the active fruits of the Holy Spirit in one another and what another group is accomplishing, even if that person or ministry does not belong to their particular church organization. Meeting Lazum Brang and seeing the fruits of his ministry taught me a very big lesson. It is God's Work, not some particular person or organization's work. It is presumptuous to believe that His Holy Spirit is the exclusive property of one person or group. God does what He wants. He will empower whomever He chooses, whenever He chooses, and in whatever part of the world He chooses, with or without the approval or even the knowledge of any particular church organization. He is God.*

*TCOGN: Based on your understanding and experience in the church, what would be a viable solution to all the problems in the church?*

*TLI: Humility.*

*TCOGN: Finally, what advice or recommendations do you have to church brethren as world conditions continue to deteriorate and a new world power is coming on the scene (probably the United Nations)?*

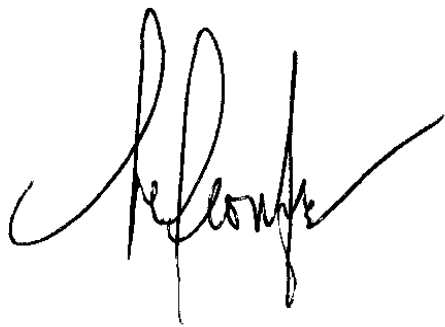
*TLI: Repent and pray that those God chooses as his people are counted worthy to escape all that is prophesied to come upon this sick and dying world. And, most important of all, NEVER stop doing the Work God has called us to do. There is much still to be done. We must continue to pray earnestly that God sends more fellow-workers into His fields to help out with the harvest of those God is now calling – wherever that might take us.*

*In God's service,  
Leon and Gloria Sexton*

That's about it. I hope this interview answers a few questions. Please remember to pray for all of God's people, wherever they may gather for the spring Holy Days. The world is becoming a very dangerous place and we all may have only a few short years left to gather together freely in peace and safety. Lets make the best of the opportunity God gives us to gather to worship the King of Glory. May God grant you all safety and, more importantly, the willingness to

forgive past wrongs so that all brethren, worldwide, can share in taking the blood of the New Covenant together in unity. Have a wonderful and spiritually refreshing Passover.

A Servant of the Lord Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leon Sexton', written in a cursive style.

Leon Sexton

**WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?**

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a private, non-profit, charitable foundation and is not affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.