



THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

Stories by **TREVOR AARONSON** | Photography by **ALAN SPEARMAN**

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THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

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Music, business, health care, religion help make a strong connection. These articles were first published as a six-part series in *The Commercial Appeal* between Nov. 25, 2007, and Dec. 30, 2007.

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Elvis offers common ground in tense land

It's Aug. 16 — 'Death Day.' To mark the occasion, men in white jumpsuits perform outside a '50s diner. It could be Elvis Presley Boulevard, but it's a Jerusalem suburb.

Zambia

King Cotton's new empire oceans away

Dunavant Enterprises is building a new 'South' in this African nation and again is battling a menace that is threatening its crop — a virus killing farmers and their families.

Cultural beliefs impede outreach

Faith in traditional healers isn't the only cultural impediment to curbing the transmission of HIV.

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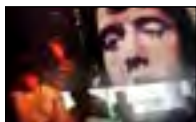
A family struggles with son's drug abuse in a violent neighborhood, while church members try to lead residents toward a better world in a life-and-death test of their outreach mission.

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Brazil

Partnership offers hope for healing

From Memphis, St. Jude Hospital reaches across globe with programs aimed at increasing survival rates and countering effects of poverty on childhood cancers.

Survival of José is a testament to St. Jude

Because of programs that educate rural health agents to identify early symptoms of leukemia, children in remote Pernambuco now have a 70 percent survival rate when receiving treatment.

China

FedEx helps awaken economic giant

Memphis carrier poised to deliver burgeoning market onto world business stage and cash in on company's position at head of line to serve the giant's appetite.

Activists find little tolerance of cause

The Chinese government has been cracking down on housing activists who protest the forcible displacement of residents from Shanghai neighborhoods in the path of progress.

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Soul Brother Records in London sells original LPs of STAX and other Memphis labels to young DJs as well as die-hard soul fans.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Bluff City getting in tune with friends in far-off lands

LONDON — It's noon on an August day, and Fabian Stephenson is sifting through vinyl from behind the counter at Soul Brother Records in the Wandsworth borough of England's capital.

"Jeff Robinson and Liv Warfield personified soul for me last year," the urbane 38-year-old says, a telephone cradled between his shoulder and cheek and a customer on the line.

Stories by **TREVOR AARONSON** | *Photography by* **ALAN SPEARMAN**

Stephenson has one devotion in life: soul music. It started as a boy, when his father would play LPs of gritty, gospel-influenced music recorded in a tinny studio on Mclemore Avenue in Memphis and produced by a company called STAX Records.

“That’s how I got my grounding, from listening to the deep soul music from that early period of STAX,” Stephenson says.

Now, he’s a resident expert at Soul Brother, which carries original STAX records and caters to London DJs as well as middle-aged men with old record players in their basements.

Since 1967, STAX has held extraordinary sway in England, having influenced musicians from the late John Lennon to contemporary tabloid queen Amy Winehouse.

But Memphis’ stimulus to the world is not limited to STAX. Despite being a mid-sized river town in the middle of the United States, Memphis has long had an influential relationship with the rest of the world. While Memphians can now see the effects of globalization in



As Fabian Stephenson worked at Soul Brother Records, London played host to a number of soul-themed events, including this concert at the Crystal Palace Bowl, where STAX fans danced to such songs as “Soul Man” and “Sittin’ On the Dock of the Bay.”

everyday life — Memphis International Airport, for example, provides bilingual signs for Asian visitors to the world’s busiest cargo airport — globalization is nothing new to the Bluff City.

In fact, Memphis has never been isolated. During the city’s early days, a virus known as yellow fever began to migrate from Africa. Carried by mosquitoes aboard slave ships headed to the South, the virus spread across the Mississippi Delta. At a large populated bluff about 400 miles upriver from New Orleans, yellow fever became an epidemic in the 1870s.

The disease killed thousands in

Memphis and spurred such a large exodus from the city that the Tennessee legislature revoked Memphis' charter.

Just as in the days of yellow fever, Memphis is still connected with the world. The difference is that the connections have become shorter in time and space.

Owing to developments in transportation and technology, the world has become a smaller place. People are no longer bound by geography. Ideas develop more quickly. Businesses expand further. Diseases spread faster. These facts have become so widely accepted that journalists such as Thomas Friedman have built careers as best-selling repeaters of them.

For many in Memphis, globalization can seem frightening. Bad mortgages in Germantown have the power to wound European banks, which then make mortgages harder for the average Memphian to acquire, as the subprime lending debacle revealed. The location of a Japanese automaker's factory can be the difference between economic growth and stagnation, as Toyota's choice to build a plant in Tupelo, Miss., over sites in Tennessee and Arkansas indicated.

Jobs in Memphis can be outsourced to nations where labor is cheaper, as

this newspaper's recent decision to send graphic-design work to India showed.

Memphis is an unseverable part of an interconnected world. And just as the world influences Memphis, Memphis influences that world.

"Memphis and the World," a six-week series that begins today, will examine some of the Bluff City's connections to other parts of the globe.

Religious tensions in India, the continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, AIDS in Zambia, crime and violence in post-apartheid South Africa, poverty in Brazil, capitalism in China — Memphis organizations are playing roles in all of these headline-grabbing issues.

In some cases, Memphis' effects on other parts of the world are deliberate and methodical.

Every week, for example, doctors gather in a room at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital to participate in a teleconference with hospital staff in Morocco, Jordan, Brazil, Ireland and other countries. St. Jude's physicians discuss pediatric cancer cases from around the globe — exchanges that contribute to increased survival rates worldwide and provide the Memphis research hospital with data and case studies for publication in medical journals.

In Russia, International Paper has turned the small mill town of Svetegorsk into a community that revolves around the pulp giant headquartered in Memphis. After purchasing what was once a government-owned mill, International Paper has invested more than \$400 million in the mill and its community. The orphanage, family center, hospital wing and sports arena International Paper built in Svetegorsk have helped to salve ego wounds of Cold War-era Russians distressed about working for an American company.

Similarly, Dunavant Enterprises has entered the HIV/AIDS business in Zambia as a way to protect its long-term investments in Africa's cotton industry.

In other cases, Memphis' effects are inadvertent.

Bellevue Baptist Church, for instance, has begun to focus some of its \$5.5 million mission budget on India. But as the Cordova church peddles Christianity in a nation long resistant to the Western religion, Bellevue's missionaries are further inflaming religious and political tensions in India.

Seeing in part the economic boon Memphis receives from the world's busiest cargo airport, the government of Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates,

is constructing Dubai World Center, a massive airport-turned-city that will be able to handle three times as much cargo as Memphis International. Meanwhile, Shelby County leaders realized the potential of Memphis' sprawling airport only after an academic came up with a name for the concept: "aerotropolis."

And the company largely responsible for creating the city's burgeoning aerotropolis, FedEx, is among multinationals whose hefty investments in China are contributing to the razing of neighborhoods and the forcible displacement of China's poor.

Understanding the intentional and accidental roles Memphis plays in the world can help us ask more complex and interesting questions about our city at home.

As Fabian Stephenson weaves through the aisles of records at Soul Brother in London, he looks curious.

"Don't you have stores like this in Memphis?" he asks.

The answer: No.

His reply: "You're joking, right?" ■

A closer look at journalists who produced series ►►

A closer look at journalists who produced series

Trevor Aaronson is a projects reporter at *The Commercial Appeal*. He has won more than a dozen national and regional awards for investigative reporting and feature writing. During his tenure at *The Commercial Appeal*, he has written about malfeasance at Memphis Light, Gas and Water Division, conflicts of interest at City Hall, and waste at the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, among other topics. Aaronson was a finalist for the 2005 Livingston Awards for Young Journalists for a series about corruption and brutality at the Hollywood (Fla.) Police Department, which led to federal indictments against five high-ranking officers. Before moving to Memphis, Aaronson was a staff writer at Village Voice Media's alternative newsweeklies in Miami and Fort Lauderdale. A Florida native, Aaronson has a literature degree from the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Alan Spearman is a photojournalist at *The Commercial Appeal*. He has won national and regional honors for his photography and was recently inducted into the Scripps Howard Hall of Fame. During his career at *The Commercial*



Alan Spearman (left) and Trevor Aaronson (right) stand with Ken Sansakuwa, a traditional healer in Kalingalinga, Zambia, the third of seven countries the pair visited on an 11-week trip around the world for *The Commercial Appeal*.

Appeal, Spearman has produced major photographic essays on the Mississippi River, Morocco and Memphis music. Prior to coming to the Bluff City, Spearman worked as a photographer at the *Concord* (N.H.) *Monitor*, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, *Oregonian* and *Miami Herald*. In addition, Spearman was a co-creator of the award-winning documentary film "Nobody," which was an official selection at the Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in Durham, N.C. Born in Atlanta, Spearman is a graduate of the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia in Athens. ■

India

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

Bellevue Baptist goes on global 'mission'

Story by

TREVOR AARONSON

Photography by

ALAN SPEARMAN

HYDERABAD, INDIA — They come at night. More than 600 Indian women — old and young, unmarried, married and widowed, all poor — travel from villages across the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh: Pathikomba, Konala, Koyyada, Suddapalli, Magaluru. Their destination is the same, a walled compound in southern Hyderabad known as the National Training Institute for Village Evangelism.

They come for a one-week conference — underwritten by the largest congregation in Memphis — on how to evangelize to and convert Hindus in some of the most remote areas of India, where less than 3 percent of the population is Christian.



On a mission: Bellevue Baptist missionary Leslie Gary listens to a sermon at Grace Church in Atmakur, India, during the recent mission she and about 20 other women from the nation's second-largest Southern Baptist congregation went on to spread the word of God.

Most travel by bus across miles of bumpy, dirt roads. They hold their saris over mouth and nose to block the plumes of dust that pass through open windows.

For some, such as Yadamma Alloju, the journey is more difficult emotionally than physically. A slender 45-year-old with a gold nose ring and a warm smile, Alloju lives with her husband

and two sons in a small concrete-block house around the corner from the compound. She is the first Christian in her family, and when she told her husband and sons of her plans to attend the seminar, they forbade her. During the day, she pleaded. At night, she begged. Finally, her husband relented on one condition: She not be baptized.

"I cannot tell my husband what



Converts: More than 600 women, led in prayer by Pastor Edgar Sathuluri, join Bellevue Baptist Church missionaries at a conference for women in Hyderabad, India. The women, mostly from India's poorest social class, had their transportation, expenses and meals paid for by the Memphis megachurch fostering Christian conversion in the largely Hindu nation.

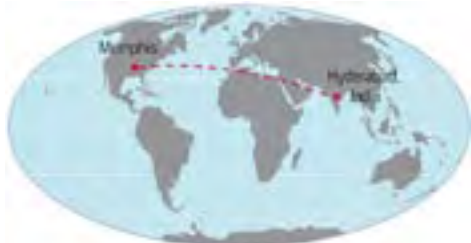
happens here,” Alloju says as she stands in front of the compound gates wearing a purple sari and black sandals.

What happens here is funded entirely by Bellevue Baptist, a 30,000-member church in Memphis, the nation’s second-largest Southern Baptist congregation. Every year, Bellevue shells out \$5.5 million — one-fourth of its \$22 million annual budget — for missionary work around the world. At any given time, Bellevue is supporting missionaries in more than two dozen countries, and annually sends its Memphis congregants on international mission trips to Central America, South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

India is particularly important for the congregation. The country is at the center of what Bellevue and other evangelical churches refer to as the “10/40 window” — the area 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator, from North Africa to Japan, where 95 percent of the people are “unevangelized” and where only 8 percent of evangelical missionary dollars are spent.

“It’s really called ‘The Last Frontier,’” says Steve Marcum, Bellevue’s minister of missions.

In July, with the help of Indian Pastor Edgar Sathuluri, who named the wom-



‘WINDOW’ OF OPPORTUNITY

With \$5.5 million of its \$22 million annual budget earmarked for mission work, Bellevue Baptist Church considers on-the-road evangelism one of its most important religious endeavors.

More and more, Bellevue is concentrating on what evangelical Christians term the “10/40 window” — a large swath from 10 degrees north to 40 degrees north of the equator. Encompassing 59 countries and 4 billion people, the 10/40 window is home to Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and many more of lesser-known faiths.

Although it contains some affluent nations, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia and Japan, the 10/40 window has 82 percent of the world’s poor — the marginalized people who, as in India, are more likely to turn to Christianity.

Mark Muesse, a religious studies professor at Rhodes College, questions how successful Christian organizations can be in that part of the world.

“Christian organizations have been sending missionaries to China and India for years,” he says, and they’ve only made marginal gains in conversions. There’s something about the outlook of Chinese and Indians, particularly their worldviews, that seems to be resistant to converting to Christianity.”

en's conference after his mother, Grace, Bellevue covered the transportation costs for the hundreds of women and paid for their meals during the five-day religious gathering in Hyderabad.

Bellevue officials declined to specify how much money they've paid to Sathuluri, saying only that his organization represents one of the church's most significant international investments in 2007. Additionally, Bellevue supports Sathuluri's organization by making monthly contributions.

Donna Gaines, the wife of Bellevue Pastor Steve Gaines, led the summer mission to Sathuluri's compound. A tall

former beauty queen with a mini-bouffant, Gaines speaks in a thick southern accent about Bellevue's work in the "10/40 window."

In India, Bellevue and Sathuluri have for years targeted a specific group for their evangelism: the poorest women in a crowded, complex country of more than 1 billion people.

"Edgar doesn't invest in fields where there is little return, and there is such a hunger and such a desire for Jesus in these villages," she says.

Bellevue puts faith — and millions of dollars — in international partners. But by investing money and



Many beliefs: In the Muslim-influenced area of Hyderabad, religions and cultures mix on the busy roads. Tensions among Hindus, Muslims and Christians have turned violent at times.

people in central India, the megachurch has entered a world vastly dissimilar to its Cordova surroundings. Bellevue has put its members at the center of increasing religious tensions amid allegations of persecution and fraud.



On a July afternoon, a day before the compound is set to host the 600 women, Edgar Sathuluri escorts around the site a dozen women and several men from Bellevue. A soft-spoken 49-year-old with a mustache and pronounced limp, Sathuluri invited the Bellevue missionaries to India as part of the Grace Sathuluri Conference for Women.

In years past, this conference has been supported by money from several churches, including Bellevue and Grace Evangelical Church in Germantown. This year, as part of its expanding missionary work in India, Bellevue became the sole sponsor of the conference and dispatched to the region a group of seasoned and first-time missionaries.

Sathuluri takes the group into a



Far from home: The Memphis missionaries enter a culture that is already rich in religious fervor, including a Hindu sect that worships Kali, a powerful but violent deity. This freshly decorated idol is at a small, 100-year-old roadside temple outside Hyderabad.

small building near the edge of the compound. The women, dressed in loose-fitting clothing, crowd shoulder to shoulder in a small room.

As Sathuluri introduces his nephew, Aaron, and tells the women about how treacherous conditions are for Christians in India, three Hindu men walk up to the compound, as if on cue. Dressed in kurta pajamas, a traditional Indian outfit consisting of a baggy cotton shirt and bottoms, the men peer into the building and eye the Memphis missionaries.

“Excuse me, please,” Sathuluri says as he walks outside.

The men amble over to an area where three dust-covered sport utility vehicles are parked. Aaron continues the discussion as the Bellevue women sneak glances outside, trying to figure

out what’s happening. Sathuluri and the men talk in Telugu, the language of Andhra Pradesh, for several minutes before Sathuluri raises his voice and points to the gates. The men walk away, into the surrounding neighborhood.

“They know Americans are here,”



Hard life: Thorona, a 20-year-old Christian convert, loads granite into containers as a quarry for 12 hours a day for just over \$1.50. Iswar, 30, (left) holds the couple’s 3-year-old child. In a culture where women perform much of the backbreaking labor, Thorona earns the family’s wages before taking a break to breast-feed the child and make lunch for her waiting husband.



Ritual mark: Satyavati, a Hindu temple keeper, places a *tilakam*, or red mark, on the foreheads of two men riding a motorcycle. She then blesses their motorcycles and asks Kali to protect them from harm in their daily commute.

Sathuluri tells the women as he returns to the building. It's as if Sathuluri was given the introduction he needed.

For the next 10 minutes, he talks about the religious persecution Christians face in India. He tells a story of how people he refers to as “radical Hindus” from the neighborhood once stormed his compound, turned over tables of food and vandalized cars.

On another occasion, Sathuluri explained, he and his older brother, Mohan, also a minister, were preaching in a small village in Andhra Pradesh when a group of locals charged toward them. A Christian family took them in, barricading the brothers in the house until police arrived to break up the demonstration.

“The men had sticks, clubs,” Sathuluri says. “They wanted to kill us.”

Craig Stockdale, owner of a Memphis landscaping company who came to India to escort his wife and the other women, shakes his head. “The persecution he faces here is unbelievable,” Stockdale says.

Sathuluri has been unafraid to market that alleged persecution. On Jan. 11, six months before the Bellevue group arrived in India, he sent an e-mail to the church, which was posted on its Web site. In the message, Sathuluri described how his compound was attacked by members of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a political party that advocates the strengthening of traditional Hindu culture.

“There was total mayhem as they were beating up the little children, kicked their rice plates from their hands and threw all the food on the ground,” Sathuluri wrote.

Although questions exist about the legitimacy of Sathuluri's claims, Hyderabad and other parts of India can be religiously volatile. Tensions among the Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities are common and at times have turned violent. In May, for example, a cell phone-triggered pipe bomb exploded at Mecca Masjid, a large mosque in central Hyderabad, as more than 10,000 people worshipped inside. Sixteen people were killed.

Conflicts between the dominant Hindu community and the growing Christian community aren't infrequent in India. Christian Solidarity Worldwide, an organization that publicizes persecutions of Christians, regularly reports the arrest and detainment of Christian missionaries in India. Some are detained unnecessarily and illegally — India's laws provide for freedom of religion — while others are harassed by authorities for resorting to unjustifiably brash tactics, such as distributing Christian materials inside and around Hindu temples.

Most Christian missionaries in India, including Bellevue's, refer to Australian Graham Stewart Staines to illustrate the dangers they face. In January 1999, Staines and his two sons were burned alive while sleeping in their car in Orissa, 620 miles southeast of New Delhi. Police believe Staines and his sons were murdered by members of Bajrang Dal, a radical group affiliated with the Bharatiya Janata Party.

But that political party has long claimed it is not responsible for such attacks.



The offices of the Bharatiya Janata Party are in a cavernous, marble-floored building guarded by men with AK-47s. Open windows create cross-breezes and wind tunnels throughout. The noises of Hyderabad's congested traffic seep through the walls, creating background choruses in all the rooms.

On the second floor, surrounded by staff and messengers, is Vidyasagar Rao. A former Parliamentarian and cabinet member of India's previous ruling government, Rao is now the chairman of BJP in Andhra Pradesh.

Rao, a Hindu, is accustomed to mixing religion and politics in conversation. Here, in a state of 76 million

people, politicians joke about the religion of the chief minister — he's Christian — the way Americans laugh about a U.S. senator being nabbed by police in an airport bathroom.

Those who snicker the loudest in Andhra Pradesh tend to come from BJP, which is partially responsible for laws that prohibit Christians from using gifts and money to induce conversions. Owing to the party's political assaults on organizations they believe are encumbering

traditional Hindu culture and values, BJP is often blamed for physical attacks on Christian groups in India.

"As a state and national party, we are not responsible for any attacks on Christians," Rao says. "These are lies."

While the party chairman supports Christian groups' freedom to operate in India, he questions how many are obeying the country's inducement laws since Christian conversions in India happen disproportionately more among



Possessed: This woman, claiming to be possessed by Kali, marches with followers to Jai Kali Temple in Hyderabad, where they sacrificed a goat to release Kali's spirit from her body. One form of the goddess is believed to protect the villagers from mosquito-born diseases common in the monsoon season, while another form protects the fields and farms from epidemics.

poor people than middle-class and wealthy Indians.

“BJP is in the forefront to highlight these issues — that there are certain missionaries who are trying to convert people to Christianity by doing things that are illegal, such as giving money or gifts,” Rao says.

He believes most claims of persecution are fabricated by Christian organizations hoping to pull at the purse strings of wealthy American churches. “These people will do anything for American money,” Rao says.

Asked about Sathuluri’s and Bellevue’s claims of BJP attacks, Rao denies having any knowledge of Sathuluri’s organization. “But I can’t assure you these attacks didn’t happen,” Rao says. “For that, you would have to talk to the local party activists.”

Those local activists worship in a temple around the corner from Sathuluri’s walled compound. On a July evening, Ramreddy Kolanu is standing barefoot on the steps of the temple. He wears a tilakam, a red mark, on his forehead. Inside the temple, a priest is standing near a statue of Ganesha, the Hindu deity with the head of an elephant.



Sacred wine: At a Sunday service in Atmakur, a local woman drinks communion wine, the Christian rite in remembrance of the Last Supper, in which Jesus likened his body to bread and his blood to wine.

“I’ve lived here for years,” Kolanu says. “I know what happens here, and I can you tell you that attacks have never happened over there. I would know if they did.”

Kolanu says he and his neighbors don’t care what goes on inside the walls. “Everybody’s faith is their own,” he says.

Sathuluri isn’t as easygoing as his neighbor. When he discovers that an interpreter, who is Hindu, is in the compound the day he is to perform baptisms, Sathuluri threatens to call police to remove her and a Commercial Appeal reporter and photographer from

the property. He says the interpreter hired by the newspaper could be a “spy” for the government.

“I could be killed,” Sathuluri says in front of several Bellevue missionaries.

“India is a strange place in that any day the radical Hindus can get upset and attack a church or a known group of Christians when technically by government standards people have freedom, the right to worship,” says

Ellie Marcum, wife of Bellevue minister of missions Steve Marcum and one of Bellevue’s most seasoned missionaries to India, as if to explain Sathuluri’s hostility.

How much of the Indian pastor’s reaction is out of fear for his safety or trepidation about an independent interpreter is unknown. Some evidence suggests the latter: Sathuluri consistently exaggerated facts he would give the



Children of God: Leelarani Chitti Prolu and Pradeep Banothu, both 9, portray Adam and Eve in a skit while their pastor fathers attend the Grace Sathuluri Conference for Women in Hyderabad.

Bellevue women, claiming, for example, that the 600 women who attended the conference were so poor they only had one sari when, in fact, many said they were better off than Sathuluri suggested.

Others, who would talk openly of being beaten by husbands and sons for converting to Christianity, said they had never heard of attacks on Sathuluri or his compound.



Yadamma Alloju isn't thinking about her orange sari as she steps into the water. Mohan Sathuluri, wearing black pants and a white button-down shirt, is chest-deep in the small pool in the middle of the religious compound. He takes Alloju by the hand; she steps forward, deeper into the pool as the sari's light fabric wafts in the water.

Positioned to the side of Alloju, Sathuluri prays. He gently places one hand on her back, the other on her forehead, and pushes her beneath the water's surface. A second later, he pulls her up; she emerges, wet and crying.

The Bellevue missionaries watch from a viewing area next to the pool. Some offer tears, others camera flashes. None get close to the baptismal pool and wet women.

"This is why I am here," Alloju says

as dozens of other Indian women wait in line to be baptized. Against her husband's instruction, Alloju was reborn in Christ. But in her excitement, she hadn't thought to bring a second sari, and if she were to return home wet, her husband would know what she'd done. He'd beat her, she says.

Alloju runs off to borrow an extra sari from another attendee and let hers dry in the sun.

For five days just like this one, 600 women crowd into the compound. Each morning and night, they gather under a large pavilion built weeks earlier by Bellevue volunteers and with Bellevue money. They listen to hours of sermons in Telugu and English. In the afternoons, they break into smaller groups,

BAPTISTS WORLDWIDE

Bellevue Baptist is among the leading financial partners in the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program. Funded by the nation's Southern Baptist congregations, the program supports more than 5,000 missionaries around the world. Steve Marcum, Bellevue's minister of missions, says the church's contributions to international programs are made only after the congregation is satisfied that its local outreach goals are met. "We're very much committed to our Jerusalem, which is Memphis and Shelby County."

each with a Bellevue missionary, to discuss the Bible and its teachings and how they can more effectively talk to other women in their village about the Bible.

The conference is particularly moving for Susie Wright, a 52-year-old Memphian who was born in Kerala, a state in south India whose Christian community dates back to the arrival of St. Thomas on the Asian subcontinent in the year 52.

As with other Bellevue members who believe their religion is the only way to a peaceful afterlife — Donna Gaines, for example, describes Hinduism's holiest city, Varanasi, as "the darkest place I saw in India" — Wright sees her native country as a much bleaker place than the one she adopted.

"It is dark with sin," she says of India. "Satan has blinded the eyes of every person, Hindus, here. The only way



Converted: Local women offer prayers to Jesus with the Bellevue Baptist missionaries of Grace Church in Atmakur. Built by Edgar Sathuluri, the church provides vocational training for women in the village.



Meeting villagers:

Missionary Donna McFarland jokes with women in Atmakur as she learns how hard it is to carry a heavy bowl on her head. The women transport goods to and from nearby cotton fields.

the darkness can go and the lightness can come is through Jesus Christ. ... But God is going to raise a lot of Christians here. The Christians here in India, they are the most devoted, humble, godly, fire-for-the-Lord Christians. With their prayer, with their eagerness to bring this country to the Lord, one of these days God is going to raise these people.”

But these people, the 600 sleeping in open-air pavilions at Sathuluri's compound, have little in common with Wright.

While she has a master's degree in microbiology from an American university, many of the women at the conference are either illiterate or read at rudimentary levels. The Telugu-

language Bibles they carry are for many more symbolic than useful, and determining whether their Christianity is comprehended or recited is at times difficult.

Most speak in a rough, uneducated Telugu, but when asked why they believe in Christianity, some answer, “When God has given His life for me, I must do at least that much,” in perfect Telugu. Others admit they know little of Christianity and came to the conference for the free meals and the new sari they receive for attending — inducements potentially illegal under Indian law.

Donna Gaines sees only the hope, the mission, in Sathuluri's and Bellevue's work in India. “Edgar's doing

for women what Christ did for women in his time,” she says. “And, really, India, in the primitive, remote areas, reminds me so much of what Biblical times must have been like, looked like, smelled like.”

Gaines and other Bellevue missionaries see great purpose in their presence in India. Not only are they sharing their religion with others, they believe, but they are saving others from what they term a “pagan religion.”

In Hinduism, the world’s third-largest religion behind Christianity and

Islam, followers worship a variety of deities and incarnations. Although Hinduism has its fringe sects — some, for example, worship Kali, a violent deity with a blood-soaked tongue — many of its believers consider Hinduism more of a way of life than a religion.

However, Gaines sees Hinduism as nothing more than idol-worship. “It’s sad, actually, because we were and are created in the image of God,” she says.

“God placed, Ecclesiastes said, eternity in our hearts. So we have that longing. I call it the God-shaped



Secret Christians: Women listen to a sermon at Grace Church in Atmakur. Even after converting to Christianity, many Indian women continue to wear a *bindi* — the mark on their forehead. Some wear it for cultural reasons, while others keep their Christianity secret in order to retain government benefits given to lower-caste Hindus.



Spiritual climax: Late one evening, as part of a large ceremony, Darlene Stroud washes the feet of Indian women. This was the spiritual climax of the Bellevue evangelists attending the conference.

vacuum, the hole in our heart. We're searching and we try to fill it. Every other religion is simply man's attempt to work his way up to God, and it's only in Christianity that God came down to man, through his son Jesus Christ."

That's the message Gaines is trying to deliver in India. "Because America is so saturated (with Christians), you realize there are places in the world with a much greater need," she says.

But conversion to Christianity is a complicated matter in India, particularly for the poor women Sathuluri and Bellevue target. These women are at the bottom of India's ancient caste system, which organizes society according to birth.

Brahmans, at the top of the caste system, are society's priests and thinkers, while Dalits, at the bottom of the caste system, are subjected to society's hardest and dirtiest jobs. The women attending the conference make a living performing backbreaking work, doing everything from climbing coconut trees to collect fermented liquor (known as "toddy tapping") to breaking and lifting rocks at a quarry.

Their conversion to Christianity is so discouraged by the Indian government that Bellevue's missionaries are forced to enter the country using tourist visas.

Since lower-caste Indians are marginalized by Hindu society, they are the most susceptible to Bellevue and other

Christians, whose missionaries peddle equality and sin-cleansing.

Yet in modern India, accepting Christ and giving up Hindu caste identity, while legal, can have severe consequences for lower-caste Indians. Legislation similar to affirmative-action laws in the United States affords Dalits and other lower-caste Indians places at companies and universities. By becoming a Christian, they lose those benefits, though Indian courts are currently debating the issue of extending benefits

to lower-caste Christians.

However, many of the women Sathuluri and Bellevue convert are not sophisticated enough to understand the implications of becoming a Christian in India. Poolamma Gyana, a 16-year-old from Suddapalli who was baptized a few days before the Bellevue-funded women's conference, shakes her head upon learning that she has lost the special benefits provided to her caste.

"Is this true?" she asks.

The answer to that question isn't



Baptists in saris: Shari Ray (from left), Jerri Nelson, Donna Gaines and Susie Wright pray with a number of other Bellevue missionaries at Grace Church in Atmakur, south of Hyderabad.

something Sathuluri and Bellevue offer to their converts.

“In my charitable interpretation of this, either the people at Bellevue didn’t know about the caste benefits, that they themselves are ignorant of this, or theologically they are predisposed to thinking that converting to Christ is the highest good and any kind of material benefits one receives in this world tails behind the benefits one would receive in salvation,” says Mark Muesse, a religious studies professor at Rhodes College.

“If people are given full understanding of what this conversion might mean, it might give them pause to make that commitment. They still might make it. You really would hope that people who commit to Christianity would do so with the understanding of what that means for them and the benefits they might lose from the government.”



Late one evening, as part of a large ceremony, the Bellevue ladies and the Indian women gather in about a dozen circles. The Indian women sit at the circles’ edges as the missionaries, in the



Weeping: This Indian woman cries after her feet were washed by the hands of women from Bellevue Baptist Church, as act of humility in emulation of Jesus.

centers, wash the feet of each woman.

“It’s a spiritual picture, obviously, of what Christ did for His disciples but also of us being willing to humble ourselves,” Gaines says. “It’s one of those paradoxes of Christian life: When you humble yourself, you’ll be exalted.”

Many of the Indian women break down, tears falling from their eyes, as their feet are being washed. And when they do, their counterparts from Memphis begin to cry as well.

“They become very emotional. It’s understandable,” says Aaron, Sathuluri’s nephew. “Who would bend down to wash another’s feet? This means a lot in India, where unlike in America, we

do not wear shoes; we wear sandals. But for many of these women, they usually do not even wear sandals. Their feet are hard and cracked.”

For Bellevue’s representatives, the foot-washing ceremony is a departure from their weeklong, arms-length missionary work.

During the conference, the Memphis women drink from separate communal cups. During lunch and dinner, they eat different food in a separate area, away

from the stink and flies that complement the meals of the women they are in India to reach. And at night, they sleep in a three-star hotel in neighboring Secunderabad, an hour’s drive from the heat and mosquitoes that accompany the Indian women’s rest.

■

Just before 5 p.m. on the final day of the conference, Alloju opens the gates of the religious compound and walks out along the dusty road. Wearing her



Mission accomplished: Edgar Sathuluri (from left), Donna Gaines, Ellie Marcum and Jean Stockdale laugh along with the other Bellevue missionaries on the last evening of the Grace Sathuluri Conference for Women in Hyderabad.

purple sari with gold trim, she needs to get home for her chores.

In the background, she can hear Edgar Sathuluri's sermon from the pavilion. He's talking about his Christian mother and how she became the inspiration for the conference. The Bellevue women are there, listening intently to Sathuluri, the star of the rural religious revival they've funded more than 8,000 miles from Memphis.

For the past five days, Alloju has come

to the Christian conference against her family's wishes and volunteered to do anything she could do to help: wash dishes, mop floors, pick up trash. Her husband and sons know she's here, but they don't know her secret — about how a pastor dipped her body into a pool of water and how she re-emerged.

"Someday I will tell my husband what happened here," she says and returns to her life as one of India's hidden Christians. ■



Uncertain future: Yadamma Alloju disobeyed her family's wishes by being baptized at the Grace Sathuluri Conference for Women. She says if her husband finds out, he will beat her.

Israel

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

Elvis offers common ground in tense land



Hunka, hunka burnin' love: Yosi Rozen and Eran Levron critique each other's performances Aug. 16 during a Death Day break at the Elvis Inn in Neve Ilan, outside Jerusalem.

Story by
**TREVOR
AARONSON**

Photography by
**ALAN
SPEARMAN**

N EVE ILAN, ISRAEL — It's Death Day outside Jerusalem. Eran Levron is wearing his special outfit — a white, rhinestone-studded, high-collared suit that fits taut across his slight paunch. Three dozen people sit at tables in the '50s-themed diner whose walls are covered with 1,720 photos

of Elvis Presley. Most depict the singer during his younger, thinner years.

“I said a big wheel keeps on turnin’,” Levron sings, shaking his hips next to a 7-foot bronze statue of the King of Rock and Roll. “Proud Mary keeps on burnin’, rollin’, rollin’...”

A 29-year-old with olive skin and a strong chin, Levron is one of a dozen Presley impersonators who’ve traveled

from across Israel to Neve ilan, where for 35 years the Elvis Inn has stood as a gasoline-pouring, hamburger-schlepping shrine to Memphis’ most enduring cultural export.

“This happens twice a year — Jan. 8 and Aug. 16,” says 61-year-old restaurateur Uri Yoeli, referring to the day Presley was born in Tupelo, Miss., and the day he died at Graceland 42 years later.



Rip it up: After suiting up, Eran Levron ascends the steps at the Elvis Inn as his mother, Ester, waits for his performance. “Just look at him,” she said. “He is Elvis.” Like in Memphis, Israeli Presley impersonators perform at the inn on the anniversary of The Kings January birth and August death.

As with the excess-filled, kitsch-dominated '70s in which Presley died and has been culturally frozen in time, the Elvis Inn is outlandish, a kind of Elvis World, sans "Hound Dog"-themed roller coaster, 6,000 miles from Memphis. In front of the restaurant, near the gas pumps, is a 15-foot-tall statue of Elvis pointing a finger toward heaven and holding an Israeli flag. About 20 yards away, next to a small convenience store called the Elvis Express, is another 15-foot-tall statue, this one with a guitar slung behind its back. Inside the restaurant, patrons can order an "Elvis Burger," "The King's Wings," or the "All Shook Up Breakfast."

Media coverage of the restaurant/gas station always focuses on the absurd. "Israelis all shook up over Elvis," a 1992 *St. Petersburg Times* headline reads. An article a decade later in *American Jewish Life* magazine carried the title "Blue Suede Jews." In fact, so incongruous is the notion of Elvis Presley in the Holy Land that Israeli journalist and historian Tom Segev referred to the restaurant



Sweet sacrament: For 35 years, the Elvis Inn has stood as a shrine to Memphis' most enduring cultural export. Even the sugar packets, used to sweeten Elvis Presley coffee, bear his image.

in the title of his book about the Americanization of Israel: "Elvis in Jerusalem." On the book's cover is an image of a camel squatting in front of the Presley murals that gild the Elvis Inn.

Yoeli, whose love of Elvis comes a distant second to his business acumen, adores the attention. A slender, bald man who wears khakis and leather loafers without socks, Yoeli will do whatever he can do to play the perfect story subject. After all, he says, more media coverage means additional buses of American and European tourists. Those stories filled with not-as-clever-as-the-writers-think Elvis yuks and Presley puns — Yoeli has

heard them all — are precious to the Israeli restaurateur.

In 31/2 decades, Yoeli has turned his love of Presley into a roadside cash cow that has allowed him to build a mansion on a posh Jerusalem hillside, seed his children's various startup ventures, and invest in companies selling everything from coffee to nanotechnology.

"People who are running the world now, all the big people, are of the Elvis generation," Yoeli says. "When they come here, everyone has a story about Elvis. Elvis is not only a singer; Elvis is memories. Elvis brings you back to the nice days, back to the magic. Elvis is something."

But so are Yoeli and his restaurant. An Israel Defense Forces tank driver in the Six-Day War of 1967, Yoeli has lived a life surrounded by conflict. His business is no different. Located near the border of the West Bank, the Elvis Inn employs both Israelis and Palestinians and serves Jews and Muslims alike. Elvis Presley brings everyone together in peace, Yoeli says in all seriousness.

"Everybody loves —" Yoeli says, stopping himself. "Just about everybody loves Elvis."

He's reminded of a small pyramid-shaped memorial located near the edge of his property. It commemorates a bombing here 27 years ago in which



A land divided:

Within a few minutes' drive of the Elvis Inn, the separation wall divides Israel and Palestine. Israel erected the wall to prevent attacks on its citizens, but the structure is also referred to as an apartheid wall that isolates Palestinians from their land, families and jobs.



Looks familiar:

Impersonators entertain the audience at the Elvis Inn in Neve Ilan. Die-hard Elvis fans Roman Lisovy, Natalia Brusenskiy and Dvir Widenbaum watch the show.

three people were killed and the Elvis statue damaged.

“What are you going to do?” Yoeli says matter-of-factly. “This is life in Israel. This is life at the Elvis Inn.”



For Yoeli, the Elvis Inn’s back story is well rehearsed. Every reporter buzzing through Neve Ilan on the way from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem wants to hear it. Yoeli has told it hundreds of times, to writers scribbling in notebooks and to television crews holding cameras and microphones. The story angle is always the same: Gee whiz — Elvis in Israel?

“It all starts when I’m 16 years old,” Yoeli always explains. His girlfriend

brought him a picture of Elvis Presley dressed in a white suit.

“He is very famous in the United States,” Yoeli’s girlfriend told him.

Yoeli found a copy of Presley’s “One Night” at a record store in Tel Aviv. “Suddenly, I became the expert in Jerusalem on Elvis, only because of one picture and one record,” Yoeli says.

He remained a Presley fan throughout his military conscription and the bloody Six-Day War. After Israel’s borders were redrawn to include former Palestinian lands and an uneasy respite was established, Yoeli saved enough money to go to America in 1972. His stops: Graceland and Salt Lake City,

where Yoeli had his only opportunity to see Presley in concert.

“I just remember I had an open mouth for two hours, but I don’t remember anything,” he says of the concert. “Every now and then, I have flashbacks.”

Returning to Israel, Yoeli married and purchased a small hotel outside Jerusalem called the Mountain Inn

and turned the establishment into a restaurant/gas station. Yoeli’s wife, tired of the various Presley photographs in their home, told her husband to take the memorabilia to work. He placed a picture of Presley behind the cash register and a few others throughout the restaurant. Customers, in turn, began to bring him Presley pictures



Sacred vista: Sites of religious importance to Christians, Muslims and Jews exist nearly on top of one another in Jerusalem’s Old City. The Dome of the Rock (foreground) is the oldest Islamic building in the world. The Western Wall, a remnant of Judaism’s most sacred temple, stands below. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus is believed to be entombed, is nearby.

**Quiet moment:**

The heavily guarded Western Wall, where a Jewish man prays, is a retaining wall that dates from the time of the Jewish second temple. It is sometimes called the Wailing Wall, referring to Jews mourning the destruction of the temple.

or newspaper articles they'd clipped. The collection accumulated, and one day in Tel Aviv, Yoeli overheard a taxi driver taking a call for a passenger near Jerusalem.

"Pick up the passenger in the Elvis place — you know, the one with the picture of Elvis," the taxi service manager told his cabbie.

Yoeli soon changed the name of the Mountain Inn to the Elvis Inn. He covered the restaurant's walls with images of Presley, and eventually put aside a month's revenue to erect a white, 15-foot-tall statue of the singer. And that's as far as the gee whiz stories go.

But Yoeli is a forthright man. Spend

time with him and he'll stray from his normal media conversations, the ones that generate light-hearted stories catered to travelers on tour buses. Instead, Yoeli will talk about his friend Naim, who lived in the neighboring West Bank village of Katana. As with other Palestinians who lived in West Bank towns near Jerusalem, Naim worked in Israel; he was a taxi driver. Every day he would stop at the Elvis Inn, for gas, cigarettes, coffee or conversation.

"We became very friendly," Yoeli remembers. Naim would take Yoeli's oldest son for rides in his cab. He would come to Yoeli's house for dinner. He became a part of the family.

On Aug. 24, 1980, Yoeli didn't see Naim at the Elvis Inn, as he normally did. That morning, Yoeli was expecting a big crowd. At about 9 a.m., right on schedule, a group of American tourists pulled up in buses. "They came from Haifa to tour in Jerusalem," Yoeli remembers.

A few minutes later, as the Americans stepped off the buses, Yoeli heard the blast.

"It was a bomb like I never heard in my life," he says. "I was in the army, and I know what a bomb sounds like. It was unbelievable. All the Elvis Inn was in the air and glass and smoke, terrible, terrible things. I go out and I see people with blood."

The bomb, placed near the gas pumps, had left the station on fire. Yoeli panicked, knowing what was beneath the concrete: a 10,000-gallon pool of



Holy place: The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Syriac Orthodox Christians worship, is believed to stand on the Hill of Calvary, where Jesus was crucified. Five other Orthodox sects share the site with the Syrians.

gasoline that could fuel an earth-shaking explosion. “If it blows up, half of Jerusalem will go,” Yoeli recalls thinking.

He and another man doused the gas pumps with a fire extinguisher, smothering the flames before they could reach the gasoline beneath. The ambulances arrived. Three people were found dead. Forty-five were injured, 10 of them seriously. The white Presley statue was charred.

The next day, as Yoeli and his family began to clean up, Naim arrived.

“What kind of people can do this?” Naim said to Yoeli. “What kind of animal, to kill tourists?”

That day, Israeli investigators arrived. Naim disappeared. He came the next day, for a few minutes, and Yoeli never saw him again.

One month later, an agent for Mossad, Israel’s intelligence agency, paid a visit to the restaurateur. Naim was the bomber, the agent told Yoeli.

Yoeli crosses his legs as he sits on a couch in his opulent Jerusalem home



Too much: A statue outside the Elvis Inn in Neve Ilan, Israel, was once charred in a terrorist bombing.

and remembers what happened to his old friend.

“After two years, Mossad caught him in Amman and” — Yoeli rubs his hands together, as if wiping them clean — “no more Naim.”

A commemorative stone rests on the ground near the road that leads to the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Highway. It marks the day of the bombing: Aug. 24, 1980. Yoeli rebuilt the restaurant, and he had the charred Elvis statue repainted in a glossy gold.

Yoeli wonders if Naim was forced to bomb the Elvis Inn. It’s the only expla-

nation that has ever made sense to the Israeli man.

“Maybe the Jihad came to him and put a gun to his head and said, ‘Listen, we’ll kill you unless you place the bomb,’ “ Yoeli says.

“Who knows? Who knows?”



As Eran Levron steps off the make-shift stage on Death Day at the Elvis Inn, a woman in the audience calls out to him. Levron struts toward her.

“You imitate him great,” she tells him.

Levron grimaces.

“It’s not imitating,” he says.

“But it’s not you,” she replies.

“It’s natural,” Levron answers.

“Natural? It’s imitation.”

“No, it’s natural.”

Levron doesn’t consider himself a Presley impersonator. Levron’s inspiration is rather divine, he says. Born on Jan. 8, 1978, on the first birthday Pres-



‘I would like to believe that I am a reincarnation of Elvis’: Each day Eran Levron, who was born on Elvis’ birthday in 1978, sings along with a video in his room in his mother’s house in Bat Yam.

ley missed following his death, Levron talks about Presley as if he's somehow been infected with the rock star's spirit. As Presley had with his mother Gladys, Levron has an odd relationship with his mother Ester, his most devout fan. He still lives with Ester — most Elvis impersonators in Israel live with their mothers, peculiarly — and for years Ester bolstered a belief in her son that he is the second coming of Presley.

“Look at him,” she says, pointing to Levron. “He is Elvis.”

“I would like to believe that I am a reincarnation of Elvis,” Levron says. “I just don’t want to sound crazy, so I just believe in myself that Elvis’ spirit is in me. ... When I perform, it’s like it’s not me. It’s like I’m possessed.”

As outlandish as Levron’s beliefs are, they fit with those of other Presley fans in Israel, where fandom blends with religion. Even Yoeli, a straight-laced businessman, sees miracles in the name of Elvis Presley.

When he erected the Presley statue out front, he and others noticed a



‘It’s a miracle’: Owner Uri Yoeli recalls the time a wildfire leaped over the Elvis Inn to the next mountain, sparing the structure: “Maybe it’s because we have so many pictures of Elvis.

hawk hover 4 feet above it. After a while, the bird flew off and now returns twice a year, Yoeli says. “He flies over the statue and then he disappears,” the businessman says. “I don’t know how to explain it.

In the late ‘80s, a wildfire rushed across the hills outside Jerusalem, near the Elvis Inn. “All the mountains around us were on fire,” Yoeli remembers.

Yoeli feared nature might accomplish what Naim failed to do: detonate the underground gas tanks. But somehow the Elvis Inn was spared. The fire

leaped over the Elvis Inn to the next mountain. “We were like an island of green,” Yoeli says, adding: “Maybe it’s because we have so many pictures of Elvis —”

“The holy man,” Yoeli’s daughter, Yaffit, interjects half-jokingly.

“It’s a miracle,” Yoeli continues. “It’s strange to talk about it, but it happened.”

For most of Israel’s Elvis fans, the King of Rock and Roll’s popularity in the Holy Land isn’t coincidental. Presley was Jewish, they say proudly. After *The Wall Street Journal* in 1998 published an article that revealed Pres-

ley’s heritage — the singer’s maternal great-great-grandmother was reportedly Jewish — Israeli Elvis fans adopted him as a member of the tribe.

“Elvis wanted to be Jewish,” Levron says, as if to explain why the singer’s soul would have picked an Israeli to haunt.

Jenny Dror, who runs a Presley fan club in Israel, laughs off claims of a Jewish Elvis. “The Jews in Israel like to find that every famous guy, every celebrity, has connections to Judaism,” she says.

But not everything is light-hearted here. Beneath the cheery facade of the



One of us:

Israeli fans enthusiastically greeted a report that Elvis’ great-great-grandmother was Jewish. For Eran Levron, seen performing at the Elvis Inn, the King of Rock is a holy figure.

Elvis Inn is a difficult life for one of Yoeli's longest-serving employees.



Jamal Fakya lives on the divide.

As he looks out from a small bluff in the West Bank, the 50-year-old Palestinian points west to a compound of three small cement-block houses where he and 25 of his relatives live. Twelve feet behind the houses, a 20-foot fence topped with electrified barbed wire runs through the middle of Fakya's property,

separating Israel and Palestine. The Israeli government built the barrier to halt the deadly bombings, such as the one that killed three at the Elvis Inn in 1980.

"Before the fence, it was nice to live here," Fakya says. "I understand their reasons for building the wall. I just don't agree with those reasons."

Until four years ago, half of Katana's 11,000 residents commuted to nearby Jerusalem for work. It was a thriving bedroom community of Palestinians who



'Before the fence it was nice to live here': Jamal Fakya walks home through the West Bank town of Katana on the Palestinian side of the separation wall. Before the wall, Fakya walked 20 minutes to his job at the Elvis Inn daily. Now, due to the wall, it takes hours to pass through security checkpoints. He only goes home to see his wife and family once a week.



Separated: Nabel Abdalteef, 14, pedals past the separation wall in Jerusalem. His best friend, a Palestinian, lives on the other side of the wall, and they often use cell phones to call each other from opposite sides. They have not ridden their bikes together since the wall was erected.

took the jobs Israelis didn't want. Now, Katana is destitute, a place where unemployment and crime are widespread and security officials are known to maintain order with munitions. The animosity toward Israel is palpable in Katana. On graffiti-strewn walls throughout the town are images of the Star of David, a bloody knife stabbing its center.

A tall, silver-haired man whose well-built physique belies his age, Fakya is among the lucky ones here. He and a handful of others have permits to work in Israel, and for that reason, Fakya has been able to keep his job as a cook at the Elvis Inn. His salary of about \$900 per month is more than twice what he could hope to earn in the West Bank.

Before Israeli soldiers built the separation wall over sometimes-violent Palestinian protests, Fakya enjoyed a 20-minute walk from his home to the Elvis Inn. He made that walk for decades. Now, owing to the separation wall, Fakya's commute can be as much as two hours by car, longer if the Jerusalem checkpoint is closed and he's forced to travel through Ramallah.

Just as the wall separates Israelis from Palestinians, it separates Fakya from his wife and 12 children. His long, unpredictable commute causes him to spend five nights a week in Israel, going home to the West Bank only when he has at least two days off. He spends his other nights in a room in the basement

of the Elvis Inn, watching Israeli news and TV shows from a single mattress in the corner.

On an August afternoon, Fakya is visiting with his children and grandchildren at his brother's house in the outskirts of Katana. Tensions have become so combustible in the town, Fakya wouldn't take a Commercial Appeal reporter and photographer to his house, near the separation wall, for fear he would be attacked after being seen consorting with Americans.

The separation wall is divisive in

many ways. Liberal politicians in Israel and international organizations such as Amnesty International have publicly opposed the government's construction of the wall, since it economically strangles the Palestinian areas and creates ghettos not unlike the European ones Jews were herded into in the mid-20th century. Nonetheless, the wall has been effective: Bombings have all but stopped throughout Israel. In fact, Jerusalem is finishing the construction of a citywide trolley system — something that would have been unthinkable when bombings weren't



Ever-present force: Israeli soldiers guard the narrow walkways of the Old City. Tourists and pilgrims stop to observe the Stations of the Cross where Jesus is believed to have walked.

Separation wall stopped bombings

Despite international controversy, the separation wall dividing Israel and the Palestinian territories has contributed to a dramatic decrease in bombing incidents in Israel.



Source: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Kim Coleman/The Commercial Appeal

uncommon in crowded public spaces.

Fakya, among a dwindling number of people who live life on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide, believes the separation wall is pushing Jews and Muslims in the Middle East further apart. The growing division isn't sustainable, he says.

"Someday, the wall will come down,"

he says, showing his undying patience.

"Enchallah."

God willing.

At 4 p.m. on Death Day, Eran Levron rushes downstairs, past the dozens of Presley photographs, and into the men's room at the Elvis Inn.

The restaurant is as busy as it ever becomes, with a crowd of about 50

people at tables scattered throughout the Elvis Inn. Behind the lunch counter, Yoeli is taking orders and working the register. Fakya is in the kitchen making hamburgers and falafel. Despite differences, everyone works side by side at the Elvis Inn.

Downstairs, Levron slips off his white suit and carefully folds it into his travel bag. He can't afford wrinkles, not tonight.

Upstairs, his biggest fan — Mom — is waiting. She'll escort Levron to his second Death Day act, a Presley tribute show in Ashdod, on the Mediterranean south of Tel Aviv. Part drama, part musical, the show will chronicle the King of Rock 'n' Roll's life in the United

States. The dialogue will be in Hebrew — the music in Presley's deep, twangy Southern English.

For Levron, Presley's music has the answer to all of life's problems and emotions: love, loss, hope, sadness. The Middle East would be a better place, Levron says, if Presley were in more of it, in more places like the Elvis Inn.

"If Elvis Presley was alive, he could help the crisis of the Arab and the Jew," Levron says. "I think he'd make a song of it, of the whole situation, and perform in a lot of Arab countries and of course in Israel. He'd try to make peace between the Israelis and the Arabs once and for all. I think he would have done it if he was alive today." ■

**Facing Mecca:**

In the evening, men from the neighboring Muslim town of Abu Ghosh often pray behind the Elvis Presley statue for privacy and because they feel the area is special.

Zambia

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

King Cotton's new empire oceans away



Burning issue: As Dunavant Enterprises buys cotton from Zambian farmers, such as these men in Choombwa, the company confronts a hurdle like none it has seen before in its 70 years in operation: keeping the farmers healthy in a land ravaged by HIV/AIDS.

Story by
**TREVOR
AARONSON**

Photography by
**ALAN
SPEARMAN**

CHOOMBWA, ZAMBIA — Alex Shamane is kicking up clouds of dust as he weaves his Yamaha motorbike across miles of pockmarked dirt road. A slender, 35-year-old Zambian, Shamane wears a red helmet and blue coveralls bearing a large logo for Memphis-based Dunavant Enterprises.

Branches from trees on both sides of the road are covered in white. When a Dunavant truck filled with cotton came through two days earlier, the tree branches scraped away pieces of fiber from the overstuffed bags, taking a kind of passage toll.

Shamane whips his motorbike around the holes in the road as a white Toyota truck struggles to follow, jerking and creaking even at slow speeds. Inside the truck are two staffers from the Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Management Program, or CHAMP, one of the lead-

ing nongovernmental organizations in Zambia.

In a marriage of necessity, Dunavant and CHAMP are partners in providing HIV/AIDS testing and counseling to Zambia's rural districts, where the virus is steadily spreading in the absence of healthcare workers.

The motorbike pulls over to the right as Shamane reaches the farm. It's a warm August afternoon. Two small, weathered houses with metal roofs sit on one side of the property, across from pens for donkeys and chickens and a



AIDS graves: With the rate of HIV infection as high as 17 percent in Zambia, grave digging is a busy occupation. Zakochela Phiri works on a burial plot in Leopard Hill Cemetery in Lusaka.

**Lesson on staying alive:**

Laborers who work for Grother Ngandu in Choombwa, Zambia, learn about HIV/AIDS when workers from Zambia's Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Management Program, or CHAMP, partner with Dunavant Enterprises to bring AIDS education and testing to cotton farmers and their workers in rural areas.

collection of rusted-out trucks and cars. In the center, farmer Grother Ngandu and his workers are stuffing cotton tightly into brown sacks.

A sturdy 6-foot-4 man with a deep, bellowing voice, Ngandu takes the much smaller Shamane into his arms and hugs him, as if he might envelope the motorbike rider completely. "Hello!" he says loudly, patting Shamane on the back.

Part of a team of Dunavant employees who help the Memphis company do business with thousands of subsistence farmers throughout rural Zambia, Shamane isn't here to talk to Ngandu about cotton. In fact, Ngandu is one of Shamane's best farmers: The rows of

cotton on his 43-acre farm are planted in straight lines, painstakingly weeded, regularly fertilized. He produces more than 40 tons of cotton per year, making him wealthy by rural Zambian standards. There's little need to tell Ngandu how to grow his crop.

But Shamane has an important question for the 52-year-old father of 17 children.

"When is the last time you were tested for HIV?" Shamane asks Ngandu.

The farmer's eyes grow wide. He's never been tested, he says.

HIV/AIDS is one of the newest, and most troublesome, business problems for Dunavant Enterprises, the world's leading cotton merchandiser. As the

Memphis company invests millions in southern Africa, Dunavant faces diminishing returns as its farmers and staff die from complications of AIDS.

Once strictly a Mississippi Delta cotton seller with an office on Front Street, Dunavant is now a worldwide cotton broker that handles 5 million to 6 million bales of cotton per year and generates \$1.5 billion in annual revenue. In addition to U.S. holdings, Dunavant operates gins in Africa and Australia and has large trading offices

in Switzerland, Hong Kong and Brazil.

In recent years, Dunavant has invested heavily in Africa, home to some of the world's most underexploited cotton grounds.

Zambia, which holds 40 percent of the continent's water, is the crown jewel of Dunavant's African investments. The country produced 80,000 tons of cotton last season, and Dunavant officials estimate that is at best one-sixth of Zambia's potential. Insects and government instability, often the scourge of



Cotton packing: Dunavant farmer Grother Ngandu (left) and his wife, Ellie Ngandu (right), with help from laborers, pack cotton at their farm in Choombwa, Zambia.



The haul:

Dunavant's delivery trucks wait outside the ginnery in Mumbwa, Zambia, on an August afternoon. The country produced 80,000 tons of cotton last season.

the cotton industry in other parts of the world, do not threaten in any substantial way the fiber business here.

Instead, HIV/AIDS is the boll weevil of Zambia's cotton industry.

As the Memphis company spends millions to train and provide seed to thousands of small-scale farmers, HIV/AIDS has become the greatest threat to Dunavant's investments. Every Dunavant farmer who dies of AIDS complications in Zambia means lost revenue and diminished returns.

Realizing this, Dunavant entered the humanitarian business in 2004, partnering with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to distribute HIV/AIDS information and condoms and provide testing in some

of the nation's most remote areas, where only Dunavant's motorbikes have access.

"We are hard-nosed cotton traders — you really have to be astute businessmen to trade cotton around the world — but HIV was no longer something we could ignore," says Richard Laurin, a Dunavant managing director in Switzerland who oversees the company's businesses in Africa and Asia. "Our employees were dying. Our farmers were dying."



Headquartered in South Memphis, Dunavant Enterprises stretches back three generations.

Founded by William "Buck" Dunavant and T.J. White in 1929, the

cotton enterprise sold Mississippi fiber throughout the United States. Expansion came in 1956, when William Dunavant Jr., or “Billy,” took over the company. Billy Dunavant grew the family-owned company’s U.S. and international holdings and in 1972 directed Dunavant as the first company to sell U.S. cotton to China. Dunavant returned to the Communist nation 18 years later, making a one-time cotton sale worth \$225 million.

“We realized globalization was going to be our future,” recalls the 75-year-old Billy Dunavant.

The Dunavant family has grown wealthy from worldwide interests in cotton trading, ginning, transporting and real estate. Dunavant divides his time between a \$1.3 million home in Memphis and an opulent ranch in Montana. In recent years, as he has transferred control of Dunavant Enterprises to his son, Billy Dunavant has become a controversial figure in the U.S. cotton industry and an outspoken critic of farm subsidies. Over protests from American farmers, Dunavant Enterprises entered the farming and ginning business in Africa, Central Asia and Australia, turning against the powerful agricultural industry in the United States.



DUNAVANT ENTERPRISES

■ Founded in 1929 by William “Buck” Dunavant and T.J. White as the T.J. White & Co,

■ In 1961, Buck’s son, Billy Dunavant, took control of the cotton company that was renamed after his family, and gradually expanded Dunavant Enterprises into a global company.

■ Dunavant made the first sale of U.S. cotton to China in 1972 and returned 18 years later to make a one-time cotton sale to China worth \$225 million.

■ Now run by Billy’s son, William Dunavant III, Dunavant Enterprises is headquartered near Memphis International Airport.

■ Today, Dunavant brokers the sale of 5 million to 6 million bales of cotton per year worldwide, and the company has about \$1.5 billion in annual revenue.

■ The company’s international holdings include gins in Africa and Australia and trading offices throughout the world.

“I’ve always felt that the farm subsidies really did favor American cotton producers at the jeopardy of other cotton producers around the world,” Dunavant says. “The American agriculture lobby is incredibly powerful. That’s the reason they get what they get.”

The Memphis company arrived in Zambia in 1999, four years after the Zambian government privatized its cotton industry. Overnight, Dunavant became the nation’s market leader, with

nine depots, six gins and 46 percent of the nation’s ginning capacity. But access to Zambia came at dear costs to Dunavant, which bought into a cotton industry in shambles. Zambian farmers were defaulting on seed loans at alarming rates. Production in 2000, the first full year Dunavant operated in the country, plummeted to less than half the level of 1998.

In response, Dunavant implemented a “distributor system,” which had



Help arrives: Rebecca Banda is one of Dunavant’s 87 motorbike-riding employees in Zambia who enable the company to do business with small farmers in remote areas.

2005-06 COTTON PRODUCTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, U.S.

Zimbabwe
106,000 tons

Zambia
80,000 tons

Tanzania
44,000 tons

Mozambique
42,000 tons

South Africa
14,000 tons

U.S. production
5,000,000 tons

Source: International Cotton Advisory Committee

proven successful for the company in Uganda. Instead of using an army of staffers to distribute cotton seed and train farmers, Dunavant recruited a network of independent distributors — most cotton farmers themselves — who were responsible for drafting other farmers and loaning them cotton seed. When a drafted farmer sells his cotton to Dunavant — for which he receives market price, minus the value of the seed loan — the distributor receives a commission, from 5 percent to 7.5 percent of the crop value.

According to a study by the Zambian government, the entrepreneurial nature of Dunavant's distributor system contributed to a rebounding of the nation's cotton sector — with produc-

tion tripling from 2000 to 2003 and the loan repayment rate increasing from 65 percent to over 90 percent.

Microfinancing makes the cotton business in Zambia very different from the one in the United States, where large commercial farms use machines to harvest thousands of acres of crop. To grow cotton in Zambia, Dunavant has had to become a microfinancer. The company provides as many as 180,000 subsistence farmers a green, 10-quart bucket with a Dunavant logo on each side. It contains cotton seed, fertilizer, pesticide and a pesticide sprayer — items worth about \$75 total.

The green bucket, which can be found at farms across rural Zambia, is an ever-present symbol of Dunavant in

Africa. With hundreds of thousands of buckets scattered throughout southern Africa, environmental organizations have urged Dunavant to provide buckets with holes in the bottom so farmers will not use the green pail, which once contained pesticides, to carry water. Dunavant officials have so far resisted, claiming a useful bucket is an incentive for Zambian farmers to do business with the company.

Through this microfinancing program — a form of reverse sharecropping where farmers own the land but are indebted to the company through microloans — Dunavant loaned \$1.2 million to Zambian farmers last year. The average Zambian farmer, in turn, can earn anywhere from a few dollars above their \$75 loan repayment to hundreds of dollars, depending on the crop size.



Daddy's babies: Polygamy and promiscuity are common in Zambia, exacerbating the spread of HIV/AIDS in the nation. Here, the children of Dunavant farmer Christopher Fatila — who has sons and daughters from multiple wives to help tend his crops — play in a pile of corn cobs in Mulendema, Zambia.

It's a tough business model. "If you were a credit bureau in America, you would not touch \$75 loans," says Tony Isherwood, a gruff South African with a thick gray beard who runs Dunavant's operations in Zambia.

Dunavant's best year came in 2005, when 91 percent of the farmers paid back loans by selling their cotton to the company. But recent currency pressures have battered Dunavant's business in Zambia. While the U.S. dollar has fallen in value due to soaring trade deficits, the Zambian kwacha has risen dramatically as a result of the increasing world price of copper, the country's largest export. Consequently, with the dollar buying fewer kwachas in 2006, Dunavant paid farmers about 30 percent less for cotton than it paid in previous years.

In retaliation, more farmers started to sell their cotton to Dunavant's competitors, which offered the same price but allowed the farmers to avoid repaying their \$75 seed loan.

Dunavant then altered its business



Bale by bale: Frederick Chipepo, 21, marks bales of cotton at Dunavant's ginnery in Mumbwa, Zambia.

model slightly. Instead of simply working to increase loan repayment levels, Dunavant launched an expensive program to train its most loyal Zambian farmers to increase their cotton yields.

But the long-term success of the yield-boosting program is contingent on one factor: that the farmers Dunavant educates do not die prematurely from complications of AIDS.



Grother Ngandu is nervous as Dunavant's Alex Shamane escorts him to one of the farmhouses. Inside, a nurse pricks his finger and dabs the blood on a testing strip. The farmer rubs sweaty

palms together as he waits for the results. A few minutes later, he learns: HIV-negative.

Ngandu runs out the house, laughing with joy. He dashes across the yard and grabs his wife by the arm, pulling her into the house as she hesitates to follow her excited husband. Her test is negative as well.

“I was worried,” Ngandu admits.

Recently he’d shared his bed with other women — promiscuity among men is culturally accepted in Zambia — and feared he might have brought the virus home to his wife. “I am very happy about what I’ve learned today,” he says.

As Ngandu’s 12 workers are tested as part of the Dunavant program, 11 leave the house with smiles. “Negative,” several tell their boss. But one of the la-



Clearing the field: Dunavant farmer Patrick Phiri, 46, and Clementine Phiri, 42, holding grandson Patrick on her back, clean up their small field in Katete, near Zambia’s border with Mozambique, after harvesting their cotton for the season. Dunavant trains farmers in this technique of field maintenance and other strategies to improve their yields.

**Taking action:**

Jane Mumba, wearing No. 9, participates in a beauty contest in Lusaka to raise funds for AIDS orphans.

borers, a handsome man with a shaved scalp, walks silently past Ngandu. His test was positive.

One in twelve — that's widely agreed to be a plausible estimate of the impact of HIV/AIDS in rural Zambia. But to understand how severely the pandemic has ravaged this country, it's important first to get past the official numbers. Of the 11.5 million people in Zambia, more than 1 million are believed to be infected with the virus that causes AIDS. Some studies peg the rate of adult infection as high as one in six. In urban areas such as the capital city of Lusaka, where promiscuity and

the sex trade have allowed for the rapid spread of the virus, the infection rate is as high as 54 percent, according to the World Health Organization.

But those numbers are useless in determining the true effects of HIV/AIDS in Zambia, according to Zambian and international health officials.

Owing to the continued stigmatization of the virus in Zambia — most families still associate HIV/AIDS with sin and shame — doctors are willing to ascribe death to pneumonia, for example, when the illness merely takes advantage of an immune system weakened by AIDS. As a result, an unknown

number of deaths are not tallied in official AIDS statistics.

For Dunavant's Zambia operation, effects of the virus were impossible to ignore. Funerals of employees at the office in Lusaka became monthly events. Many farmers were too sick to plant and harvest their crops. HIV/AIDS was simply bad for business.

In 2004, Dunavant partnered with CHAMP and USAID. The rough agree-

ment: USAID would fund a wide-reaching HIV education and testing program in rural Zambia to be administered by Dunavant and CHAMP. Dunavant would provide the logistical network — delivering HIV information and condoms with its buckets of cotton seed and escorting nurses to remote farming villages for testing — while CHAMP would provide the medical professionals.

Through the Dunavant program



Left behind: More than 750,000 children have been orphaned by AIDS in Zambia, including these children at Mother Teresa's Orphanage in Lusaka. Dunavant provides playground equipment and donates cotton seed cooking oil to the orphanage.

**Break time:**

Nchimunya Chibesa (left), 8, and some of Grother Ngandu's 17 children dance as Dino Chibesa, 13, drums a bucket at Ngandu's farm in Choombwa, Zambia, after a lunch of cornmeal and a morning of picking cotton.

and many others, the U.S. government will have invested \$500 million in AIDS outreach in Zambia by 2008. In fact, the United States continues to contribute more to international AIDS programs than all of the rest of the world's countries combined. USAID already has begun to implement public-private partnerships like the one with Dunavant in other African nations.

At the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, Ambassador Carmen M. Martinez says the USAID partnership with Dunavant and CHAMP is an innovative way to invest in Zambia. Without Dunavant's network of 87 motorbike-riding employees, aid groups would be unable to reach as

many as 1.2 million people in rural farming villages, or about 10 percent of the nation's population, she says.

"People hear the word business and they think, 'Oh, if it's business, then it can't be doing anything good,'" Martinez says. "They think there's something inherently wrong with making a profit or doing business. It doesn't have to be that way. I think Dunavant is a prime example of how you can do good while also making a profit."



It's early in the morning when Tony Isherwood's chartered twin-propeller plane lands on a dirt strip in Katete, a rural district of about 6,000 people

near the lush mountains that cut between Zambia and Mozambique.

The Dunavant executive is here for the test run of the Mobile HIV Service Unit, a program developed by CHAMP and Dunavant and funded as part of the USAID grant. The program is relatively simple: In remote areas with Dunavant farmers, CHAMP sets up tents to offer voluntary HIV testing and counseling and provides free antiretroviral

drugs, a cocktail of prescriptions that suppresses HIV and can make infection manageable.

The wind is gusting toward Mozambique as CHAMP representatives talk to about two dozen people sitting on the grass outside the Kafumbwe Rural Health Center. Aneli Phiri, a 43-year-old wearing a bandanna wrapped around her hair, raises her hand. She wants to address the crowd. She stands



Working the land: James Ngandu (center), 11, picks cotton with his family in his father Grother Ngandu's field in Choombwa, Zambia. Dunavant loans Ngandu cotton seed, educates him about how to maintain high yields, and purchases his raw cotton.

up and faces the onlookers, their eyes slightly glazed over. But Phiri gets their attention.

“I have AIDS!” she yells in Nsenga, a local language. “Do I look sick? Do I look weak?” She points to a fit young man sitting on the grass. “I am stronger than he is,” she says as the crowd laughs incredulously. “Do you want to know why? It’s because I take the drugs they give me. They make me healthy.”

The story Phiri imparts to the crowd isn’t unlike the one many Zambian women tell. Her husband fell ill in 2000 and died, leaving her with a small cotton farm in Katete. But her health was fading, too, and in 2005, she tested positive for HIV. She had been faithful; her husband had not and shared with her the virus that helped end his life. After nearly a year of taking antiretroviral drugs, Phiri has regained her strength and farms in Dunavant’s yield program.

HIV/AIDS testing was rarely, if ever, offered in Katete before the CHAMP-Dunavant partnership. For that reason,



Death nears: Evelyne Mtambo, 35, lives in Lusaka’s Kalingalinga neighborhood with her four children. She is dying from complications of AIDS.

the 15 people who volunteer to be tested after Phiri’s speech are all doing so for the first time. They line up first to be counseled on what they should do if they test positive for HIV and then head across to a small room in the health center for the pinprick.

Priscilla Bweupe, a soft-spoken nurse who works for CHAMP, is providing the counseling as a young Dunavant farmer walks in, scared. He thinks he has AIDS. “I am often sick,” he tells Bweupe. She calms him down, explaining the virus is manageable with treatment, and he walks over to be tested.

His test is positive. In all, eight of

the 15 people tested were positive — an infection rate staggering even for Zambia. The high rate was likely due to the fact that this was the first time HIV testing was widely available in Katete, drawing in those who were experiencing symptoms of the virus. As testing becomes available more often in this area filled with Dunavant farmers, the percentage of those who test positive for infection likely will decrease.

“It shows us the service is new,” says Sharon Mulenga, CHAMP’s project manager. “After six months, we’ll maybe have one positive a day in Katete.”



A wildfire is ablaze behind Grother Ngandu’s cotton field, close enough to be beautiful but far enough to be safe. The trees are crackling in the flames as the farmer’s dozen workers pick cotton in the afternoon heat. They sing songs. They laugh. Although one of them tested positive for HIV, the hand-picking continues unabated.

Musenga Brighton, whose farm is nearby, has come to help Ngandu finish harvesting his crop. A fellow Dunavant farmer, Brighton says he appreciates the Memphis company’s outreach efforts — “AIDS is a problem in this village,” he says — but he is frustrated by

the company’s declining prices. As with many rural Zambians, Brighton doesn’t care to understand how world currency markets have weakened Dunavant’s buying power in Zambia and lowered cotton prices. He just wants to be paid what he was paid the year before.

Brighton violently grabs a cotton plant and yanks off a large, soft bloom. He holds the cotton aloft in his strong hand. “Do they know how hard this work is?” he says. “We toil in these fields day after day. Does America know? Does Dunavant know?”

He exhales, frustrated.

“If Dunavant doesn’t improve its prices,” he says, “it’s going to lose farmers this season.”

But Dunavant officials know a declining U.S. dollar isn’t the only problem that will cause it to lose Zambian farmers. The other is a virus that deteriorates the immune system.

“We’re between a rock and many, many hard places,” Isherwood says. “We need health and we need wealth in this country, and we need them both at the same time.” ■

Cultural beliefs impede outreach ►►



Old medicine: Sansakuwa says he has a prevention and a cure for AIDS. Many Zambians rely on healers like Sansakuwa, who learned traditional medicine from his father and consults a spirit who lives inside a gourd. Healthcare officials say practices such as his are helping to fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Cultural beliefs impede outreach

AUGUSTINE AND MAGIE MULENGA crowd into a dark room in Kalingalinga, a poor neighborhood in Lusaka. They're here to see Ken Sansakuwa, a traditional healer. Magie believes evil spirits are destroying her body from the inside.

"He is the only doctor who removes bad things from her body," says the 67-year-old Augustine. The couple says Magie was cursed by a neighbor jealous of their prosperity.

In Zambia, cultural beliefs are as much at fault for the propagation of HIV as sexual promiscuity.

Handing Magie a turtle shell with a mirror inside, Sansakuwa tells her to rub the mirror over the parts of her body where she feels pain. As she does that, Sansakuwa and his assistant sprinkle herbs into a small pool of water. Then they place a tennis ball, cut into halves and removed of its yellow hair, in the water.

Sansakuwa makes small cuts on Magie's back with a blade, one series of cuts near her shoulder, the other near her hip. He then takes one of the tennis ball halves and places it over the first set of cuts; it makes a sucking noise as

he sticks it to her back. He then puts the other half over the second series of cuts.

Thomas Zimba, a former Zambian Air Force officer who now manages an after-school center for AIDS orphans in Kalingalinga, watches skeptically as Sansakuwa begins to talk to spirits in Nyanja, a language spoken near Lusaka. A high-pitched squeaking noise comes from beneath the table where the healer sits.

"Whatever is remaining in her body today is going to be removed completely," Zimba says, translating for Sansakuwa.

The healer places a plastic sheet next to the woman. He pulls off the first makeshift suction cup and turns it over

**Cursed:**

Mulenga is treated by Sansakuwa, who placed suction cups on her back to pull out so-called evil spirits from her body. She complained of pain all over her body and was convinced she had been cursed by a neighbor.

on the plastic sheet. Blood pours out. He then yanks off the second suction cup and flips it over. Blood and a half-inch crab claw spill onto the plastic sheet.

Augustine becomes ecstatic. “They want her to die,” he says. “That’s why they put these bad things in her body. Without the doctor, she was going to die.”

Augustine and Magie paid 50,000 kwacha, a few days’ pay for poor Zambians, for a miracle of traditional medicine.

Many Zambians, including in the cities, rely on traditional healers, and these men and women of ancient medicine claim to remove more than crabs and evil spirits. Sansakuwa, for example, says he can remove AIDS. Holding a water bottle filled with herbs, Sansakuwa says he regularly treats AIDS patients. He boils the herbs and has the patient breathe in the steam. “They sweat out the AIDS,” Sansakuwa says. He also has a prophylactic treatment — herbs he rubs on a person’s genitals to prevent transmission of the virus. He would share with the world his AIDS cure, Sansakuwa



Busting myth: Some in Zambia still believe having sex with a virgin can cure AIDS, a myth that has contributed to incidents of child rape. In response, the Zambian government has put up billboards such as this one in Lusaka.

says, if only the Zambian government would allow him.

“That’s what they all say — that the government does not recognize their rights to treat AIDS,” Zimba says as he walks down a dusty street in Kalingalin-ga. “By saying they can treat AIDS, the healers are only helping to spread it.”

Faith in traditional healers isn’t the only cultural impediment to curbing the transmission of HIV. Many in Zambia, for instance, still believe a virgin can rid them of AIDS. As a result, child rape is not uncommon throughout the country.

In response, the government has erected billboards depicting a little girl crouched in a corner. “Sex with me doesn’t cure AIDS!” the billboards read. ■

South Africa

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

*How one Southern city sends
ripples around the globe*

COGIC tries to patch wounds of apartheid



Signs of violence: Under his shirt, gang member Mogamat Zaid Field sports a scar from a surgery to pluck bullets from his abdomen as well as a tattoo of the late Tupac Shakur.

Story by
**TREVOR
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Photography by
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CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA — Joseph is somewhere outside, in the cold August drizzle that is falling on the rusty roofs of Manenberg.

He's never around on Sunday mornings. The methamphetamine keeps him awake, his eyes wide and mind swirling, from Friday night until Sunday



Crowded house: Dillon Waterloo, Shanice Waterloo, Anneline Barkhuis, Beatrice Barkhuis and Bevin Barkhuis wake up at 4:30 a.m. on Sundays to get ready for church. As many as seven people sleep in Barkhuis' single bedroom. The small apartment is all she can afford.

afternoon. He never experiences these early mornings, when the alarm sounds at 4:30 a.m. and his entire family, sleeping shoulder to shoulder in one room of their small two-room apartment, begins the groggy stir from bed.

In one corner of the bedroom, Joseph's 58-year-old mother, Beatrice Barkhuis, sleeps with her oldest grandchild, 14-year-old Dillon, Joseph's son. On the floor lie Joseph's three other children, 10-year-old Shanice, 9-year-old Jazier and 8-year-old Aqeelah. Next to them, in an old wooden bunk bed, are 21-year-old Bevin and 28-year-old Anneline Barkhuis, Joseph's brother and sister.

"You're first," Anneline says as she

points to Aqeelah, who pops up and drags a plastic tub into the kitchen. Anneline, close behind, pours water into the electric kettle to make sure the water in the tub won't be as cold as the winter air outside. Over the next two hours, everyone will use the tub as they prepare themselves for the big day: Sunday service at Silverstream Tabernacle, a house of worship in Manenberg that is part of the Memphis-based Church of God in Christ.

Beatrice walks into the kitchen as Aqeelah dips her small frame into the bathwater. Pulling back a window curtain, Beatrice stares into the backyard, toward the outside toilet. She's only recently begun to look; for years she

couldn't, not since Bevin walked to the toilet one morning and found the neighbor's daughter face down in the mud. She had been raped and murdered.

Joseph is now somewhere in that darkness. "I've got a child who is on drugs," Beatrice says. "One person on drugs causing so much unpleasantness, so much hurt, so much — to the point where sometimes I wish my son would just leave us, just go off. Don't come home unless you can live with us; I'd rather you stay away. And then there are

times that you feel that you have to give love. You have to be compassionate."

She pauses.

"You have to."

For four years, Joseph has satiated his addiction to crystal meth, known as tik in South Africa, by stealing whatever he can from the family: money, clothes, jewelry, CDs and DVDs, electronics. He rarely sees his four children, two each from two women, and has left their care to his mother, who pays the bills by cleaning the houses of affluent white



Bucket bath: Aqeelah Adams bathes in her grandmother's kitchen. Her drug-addicted father, Joseph Boois, has four children, two each from two women.

people living on the nicer side of Table Mountain.

But Joseph wants to be a good son and a good father, Beatrice says. He's a victim of Manenberg, the environment she brought him into and from which none of them has escaped. "He grew up in Manenberg. He knows Manenberg from top to bottom," Beatrice says. "And because he was involved earlier in gangsterism, nobody forgets."

Built by South Africa's apartheid government to house those forcibly displaced from central Cape Town, Manenberg has for so long been economically severed from the rest of the affluent Western Cape that gangs, violence, crime and drugs have thrived unchecked. For many in Cape Town, including most taxi drivers, the area nicknamed "Murderberg" is a no-go part of the city.

Given COGIC's birth in the segregated South and its growth during the civil rights movement, there is no place more suited for the Memphis church than Manenberg, says Pastor James Valentine of Silverstream Tabernacle. Valentine was drawn to COGIC after discovering the church's history as a black-led congregation during a sectarian era in the United States.



Worried: Beatrice Barkhuis cares for her oldest son's children as he struggles with an addiction to crystal meth.



Trouble: Crystal meth, known as tik in South Africa, has become a crippling epidemic in Manenberg.



Addicted: Joseph Boois supports his drug habit by stealing whatever he can from his family.

Manenberg represents the final struggle against apartheid, a struggle not unlike the ones fought in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods in the South, the pastor says. Manenberg's constant desperation, he says, makes it an ideal place to fulfill COGIC's outreach mission, and what his church tries to offer is hope in an outwardly hopeless place.

"Two men stood behind prison bars," Valentine says, as if to explain

his work. "One looked down and he saw mud. The other looked up and he saw stars."



The birthplace of the Church of God in Christ was not unlike Manenberg. In 1907, after attending a religious revival in Los Angeles, Bishop Charles Mason founded COGIC in the racially divided South. A Pentecostal denomination, COGIC ascribes to classic Christian doctrine, viewing the Bible as the word



Playground smoke: Children take turns smoking a hookah after a soccer game. Nearby, Proudly Manenberg, a group trying to improve the neighborhood's reputation, holds a rally.

of God. COGIC considers God joyous and powerful, able to inspire through the Holy Spirit a person to speak in tongues. In the early 20th century, as COGIC grew, the church settled its headquarters in Memphis.

As a black man in the South, Mason was a controversial religious leader, even within his own church. In 1913, six years after Mason founded COGIC, a group of white bishops and pastors, many of whom Mason had ordained, questioned whether he, or any black man, should lead the church given U.S. segregation laws at the time. Due to the disagreement and racial tension, those who didn't want to be led by Mason split from COGIC and formed the Assemblies of God.

The division didn't impede COGIC's growth, however. From 10 churches in 1907, COGIC has become a global religious organization with more than 6 million members in 59 countries. It is the largest African-American church in the United States and among the fastest-growing Christian denominations in the world.

Owing to its history as a black-led church, COGIC's influence spread quickly through Africa, where in 1929 COGIC ordained its first church in



IN BRIEF: COGIC

■ Founded in 1907 by Charles Mason following the religious man's inspiration during a revival in Los Angeles. Though from Arkansas, Mason headquartered the church in Memphis.

■ In 1913, a group of white COGIC bishops and pastor's questioned whether a black man could lead the church given segregation laws at the time. Owing to the disagreement, COGIC's white members split from Mason and formed the Assemblies of God.

■ Despite the split, COGIC grew quickly and now has 6 million members in 59 countries.

■ Bishop Charles E. Blake of Los Angeles is the presiding bishop of COGIC, having taken over following the death of G.E. Patterson of Memphis in March.



Finding a home: Pastor James Valentine joined the Church of God in Christ because he could not accept that his previous church, the Assemblies of God, once believed a black man could not be its leader.

Liberia, a nation colonized by freed African-American slaves. COGIC arrived in South Africa in 1952 and now has 132 churches in the country.

Among the areas where COGIC can be found is Manenberg, a hastily constructed neighborhood in Cape Town where Pastor James Valentine founded Silverstream Tabernacle.

A dapper man, Valentine is never without a coat and his leather top hat. As a boy in racially segregated Oudtshoorn and then as a man in apartheid Cape Town, Valentine always heard he was nobody. That's partly why he dresses the way he does today; he dresses like somebody.

"You were always made to believe you were nothing," the 73-year-old Valentine recalls.

Valentine had long felt a spiritual

calling but wasn't sure how to use it. In his mid-20s, he met two white American missionaries from the Assemblies of God, the world's largest Pentecostal denomination, and became active in churches in Cape Town. He became an associate pastor in the Assemblies of God and, in the early '90s, chose to open a new church in Manenberg, holding those first services in a schoolhouse as they raised money to build a new church.

But in the mid-'90s, Valentine was given a book about the history of COGIC. "I was shocked," Valentine says.

The South African was until then unaware of his church's early tie to COGIC. Having lived through apartheid, Valentine couldn't accept he was a pastor in a church that at one time believed a black man could not be its leader.

“I felt I could no longer associate with an organization of that name if that’s what they did,” he recalls.

Considering withdrawing from the Assemblies of God, Valentine in 2000 traveled to Memphis to attend COGIC’s annual convocation. There, he talked to other COGIC pastors and learned about the church’s outreach in other cities, including Memphis.

Four months later, Valentine joined

COGIC, and the Memphis church agreed to contribute financially to Silverstream Tabernacle’s church construction and outreach in Manenberg.

“We are extension of Memphis, of Mason’s tabernacle,” Valentine explains.

But the early days of the church weren’t easy.

“While we were building the church, there were regular gang fights around



Street-corner party: Manenberg neighbors cluster on the street to drink, smoke and dance as a car stereo plays at dusk. In the 1950s and '60s, dozens of government-built communities were designated for those dispossessed from urban centers. Most are still unable to escape apartheid’s economic isolation.

here,” Valentine says. “Guys would walk with shotguns as we were working. But it was like Nehemiah and Ezra and the people who built the walls of Jerusalem during those critical periods in the history of Israel. During troubled times, they had to do it. And during troubled times, the gospel must be preached because it’s a gospel of peace.”

A pink, cement-block church surrounded by barbed-wire topped fences, Silverstream Tabernacle quickly took root in Manenberg. With services in English instead of Afrikaans — “the language of the oppressor,” as Valentine puts it — Silverstream became the first church in Manenberg to offer funeral services free to nonchurchgoers as well as gang members. Next to the church, a community center — built with funds from COGIC’s Memphis headquarters — offers counseling for drug addiction and HIV/AIDS as well as for gang members looking for a way to withdraw from crime.

“We know there are hidden diamonds in the muck, and we have to retrieve them and polish them up and show to the world something great can come out of Manenberg,” Valentine says.

But polishing diamonds in Manen-



Sanctuary under siege: Silverstream Tabernacle Church of God in Christ operates behind a razor-wire fence in Manenberg, one of South Africa’s roughest neighborhoods.

berg can often seem an intractable task. A few days before a Sunday service in August, for example, two men bicycled down Ruimte Road, where Silverstream is located. One of the men pedaled the bike, while the other stood on the back tire’s pegs. As they passed a well-known tik house, the man standing on the

back of the bicycle opened fire — a Manenberg-style driveby — killing one and injuring three.



The residents of Manenberg owe many of their problems to South Africa's former government.

A section of the Cape Flats, Manenberg was a tool in South Africa's apartheid policy. In the 1950s and '60s, dozens of government-built communi-

ties such as Manenberg were designated for those dispossessed from the nation's urban centers. Each community was assigned to one of four races defined by the government: white, black, colored and Indian.

"Colored" was the most complicated and controversial, particularly in Cape Town, where generations of South Africans, European settlers and explorers, and slaves imported from India and



Thug life: Children play in front of a mural of Snoop Dogg on a project wall in the territory of the Hard Livings gang in Manenberg. COGIC offers an alternative to the future of gangs, drugs and violence kids face in a neighborhood engineered under apartheid for non-whites.

**Street heat:**

During cold winter nights, residents sit by open fires on street corners throughout the neighborhood. Most homes are small, drafty and lack heating systems.

parts of Africa gave birth to a significant population of mixed ancestry that became known as the “Cape Colored.”

Owing to ambiguous physical characteristics of mixed-race South Africans, the apartheid government had trouble classifying them neatly into one of the four groups. As a result, the government devised what became known as the “pencil test.” For people whose race was in question, a government official would stick a pencil in the hair. If the pencil immediately fell through the strands, the person would be classified as white. If the pencil did not fall, the person would be categorized as either black or colored depending on

additional subjective factors. The pencil test divided families, since brothers and sisters could be, and were, grouped into different races and assigned to live in different parts of the city.

Manenberg became a dumping ground for Cape Town’s displaced colored community. In 1966, after a large swath of central Cape Town known as District 6 was declared a “whites-only area,” more than 60,000 people were bureaucratically herded into the Cape Flats.

Many tried to re-create the lives they once had.

Ebrahim Hoosen, a slender, bald man with a perfectly trimmed mustache, owned a thriving barbershop

in Wynberg, a suburb of Cape Town. In 1972, the government arrived with moving papers for him and his family. As with other Muslims of Middle Eastern or South Asian descent, Hoosen and his family were arbitrarily grouped in the colored category. Their assignment: Manenberg.

“We came here, and we rebuilt,” Hoosen says as he smears shaving cream on a customer’s face.

Since arriving in the Cape Flats, Hoosen has operated Salon Avalon in a

small strip mall on Manenberg Avenue. In the ‘70s, when people were still optimistic about a new life in a different part of Cape Town, Hoosen’s barbershop operated next to stores selling groceries and sundries.

Today, Hoosen’s is the only business left in Manenberg.

He and most others here blame the gangs, such as the Americans and Hard Livings, whose culture is heavily influenced by American hip-hop of the 1990s.

In what has become infamous



Out of business: Most people in the area blame gangs for the fact that few businesses remain open in Manenberg.

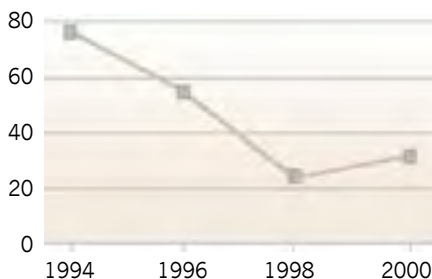
in South Africa, gang violence in Manenberg climaxed on Aug. 4, 1996. People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD), a Cape Town Muslim organization whose members preached peace but carried guns, led a motorcade to the house of Rashaad Staggie, who with his twin brother Rashid led the Hard Livings. Founded in Manenberg and headquartered in two apartment buildings bearing murals of American hip-hop artists Snoop Dogg and the late Tupac Shakur, the Hard Livings then controlled — and still control — parts of South Africa's drug trade from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Though they would later say they intended only to warn Staggie, PAGAD members dragged him out of his home, beat him, and then set him on fire before finally piercing his burning frame with bullets.

The demonstration and murder, parts of which were aired on South African television, sealed in the national consciousness Manenberg as a neighborhood of ill repute.

In distressed areas similar to Manenberg, COGIC churches have a history of flourishing. Poor countries such as Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, support more than 100 churches each.

Murder in 'Murderberg'

Manenberg's nickname isn't unearned. But owing to community outreach efforts, including COGIC's, the number of murders per year is declining.



Source: South African Police Service

Kim Coleman/The Commercial Appeal

As Mogamat Zaid Field packs the neck of a broken beer bottle with marijuana, the 36-year-old admits to being among the hopeless in Manenberg whom COGIC's Silverstream Tabernacle is trying to reach. "Once a gangster always a gangster," he says. He's a member of the Americans; he's killed people, robbed others, he says. Under his shirt is a large tattoo of Tupac Shakur showing a gang sign with one hand as he cradles a handgun in the other. The tattoo is marred by a footlong scar from the top of his stomach to his abdomen, where doctors opened him up to remove bullets.

Standing in a graffiti-covered alley with a view of Table Mountain, Field crushes a white Mandrax pill — a highly addictive sedative commonly used recreationally in South Africa — and sprinkles it atop the marijuana. He puts the makeshift pipe to his mouth as 40-year-old Walid Abrahams leans over and flicks on his lighter.

“I don’t want to go rob. I don’t want to go steal. I don’t want to go kill for

money,” Abrahams says. “But sometimes you need some cash to survive. I’m unemployed.”

“It’s all about survival in life,” Field adds.



The Barkhuis family has endured cycles of poverty and addiction in Manenberg. When she was a teenager, Beatrice moved to Cape Town with her mother, who was a maid. Designated as



A hopeful new direction: Dillon Waterloo (right), Beatrice Barkus’ grandson, prays during an evening youth service at Silerstream Tabernacle. The church offers services and classes throughout the week to give people an opportunity to staff off Manenberg’s dangerous streets.

**Hard work:**

Beatrice Barkhuis cleans the church. She earns her living cleaning the homes of Cape Town's affluent.

colored, Beatrice and her mother had few places where they could live and even fewer places they could afford.

Manenberg was their only option.

“We were living among shebeens,” Beatrice says, referring to the unlicensed backyard bars that serve home-made alcohol and are still common in the Cape Flats.

Beatrice met her husband in Manenberg, and they raised three kids in a small apartment. Her husband worked odd jobs, but his drinking would often get in the way. Beatrice supported the family by working as a maid, just as her mother had. In the early ‘80s, her hus-

band abandoned her and the children. Missing his small weekly contribution, Beatrice was forced to move the family into a two-bedroom apartment in a dilapidated six-unit building.

“It’s too small,” she says. “But it was all I could afford then, and it’s all I can afford now. We’re trapped here.”

Using buses and taxis, Beatrice travels around the city for jobs, since none can be found in Manenberg. She’s had one client, a couple of Dutch descent, for more than 30 years. At the height of apartheid, the couple wouldn’t allow her to drink from their cups; she had to bring her own. Today, they still don’t

allow her to drink from their glasses — 15 years after Nelson Mandela won the Nobel Peace Prize.

As she did with her husband's alcoholism, Beatrice lives with her son's addiction. She considers herself an abused woman, battered emotionally and verbally. Joseph manipulates her, says he'll change, and then steals anything valuable she has. Joseph's younger brother, Bevin, will often try to stop him

from stealing items in the house. Once, Beatrice came home to find Joseph holding a knife to Bevin's throat.

"Sometimes my son comes by the door, like he observes me and I observe him," Beatrice says. "And sometimes there's that split second when I immediately feel all worked up. ... And then there are times I can be myself, motherly. But because he's causing me so many unnecessary problems and



Street symphony: Marching bands are one of the few positive group activities available for children in Manenberg. The bands march through town and commonly play the song "Madiba Beat," whose title refers to a nickname for former South African president Nelson Mandela. The bands offer pride, teamwork and a chance to compete regionally and nationally.

burdens and situations, it's not easy."

Beatrice says she's prayed and prayed, and has been buoyed by some recent hope. Earlier this year, Joseph was arrested for burglarizing houses. Owing to previous offenses, he faced three years in prison. But the judge was lenient and allowed him to be released — something Joseph saw as a chance for redemption. He went to church, spending considerable time with Pastor Valentine. He stayed away from crystal meth for several weeks. He was Beatrice's son again. It was God's work, the mother says.

But eventually Joseph fell back in with the mother of his two youngest children — and back to using tik.

"I believe God is still is going to do a miracle for my son," Beatrice says. "I'm trusting God, because He showed me a couple of months ago what He can do (for Joseph). And I'm still hoping the Lord is going to turn my son around. I'm not going to allow the devil to further take him down."



Barkhuis and her children and grandchildren have been coming to Silverstream Tabernacle since the first COGIC brick was laid. For them, it's a refuge from the hard life in Manenberg.

"When you're at church, you can relax. You can let go," Beatrice says. "You enjoy yourself in the presence of the Lord. It makes you forget what you left behind."

During an afternoon following one of those Sunday services, Pastor Valentine stops by Beatrice's house. Although the police are looking for Joseph — he's wanted for questioning about several recent burglaries — Valentine knows there's a good chance he'll find him. Joseph has a routine: He'll stay up on crystal meth from Friday to Sunday, and then sleep until Wednesday. During the day, he'll lie outside or in the outhouse. At night, he'll sleep on the kitchen floor.

Wearing a soccer jersey and a woolen cap on his head, Joseph is in the kitchen daubing jelly on two pieces of white bread as Pastor Valentine enters the house.

"Hello, Joseph," Valentine says.

Joseph turns and grins slightly, showing his missing and decayed teeth, a side effect of meth abuse.

Valentine wraps his right arm around Joseph. He meekly allows it but doesn't hug the pastor back.

"So when are you coming to church, Joseph?"

He fidgets. “Well.” He turns to his jelly sandwich. “I—”

“C’mon, Joseph, will I see you at church next week?”

Uncomfortable, Joseph nods.

“Yes.”

“Good,” Valentine says, patting him on the back. “Good.”

Later that night, Joseph is acting differently. He’s sitting on his mother’s bed, talking to his children — something he hasn’t done in a long time.

“What I see now, they need me,” Joseph says of his children. “It’s time for me to do it all over again, to have my children be with me and not my mother. ... Now I see what she goes through because of my actions. These children are my responsibility, not her responsibility. That’s what now gives me the courage to go (to church), because if she can make it, why can’t I make it? I can’t go backward (in time), but for them, I can try to make it better.”

He adds: “This place (Manenberg) is not getting better. I don’t know where to go or what to think. But I’m going to take God into my life. That’s what I’m going to do.”

Joseph leans back on the bed as he flips through a cell phone catalog. His four children surround him.



Reaching out, again: Pastor James Valentine embraces Joseph Boois as the meth addict promises to come to church next Sunday. He breaks his promise.

Beatrice looks on, having asked for a miracle.

Epilogue: Joseph didn’t go to church. Two weeks later, he pulled a knife on Bevin and chased him through Manenberg. Bevin filed a police report, and Joseph has gone on the run. Beatrice continues to raise his children.

While attending COGIC’s centennial convocation in Memphis in early November, Pastor Valentine was sanguine. “There are worse cases than Joseph,” he said. “I still have hope for him.” ■

Brazil

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

Partnership offers hope for healing



Come out and play: Leticia Da Silva Alves, 5, dreams of a day when she can play with the children on Happiness Street. But her mobility and communication skills are poor because of a plum-size tumor on her brain stem that pinches the spinal cord, making it difficult for the brain to communicate with the body.

Story by
**TREVOR
AARONSON**

Photography by
**ALAN
SPEARMAN**

BEZERROS, BRAZIL — The laughter is coming from Happiness Street. Inside her grandmother's 400-square-foot, concrete-block home, 5-year-old Leticia stares into the street through an open window. She watches four children from this rural farming village dash along the road, chasing

each other in fits of giggles.

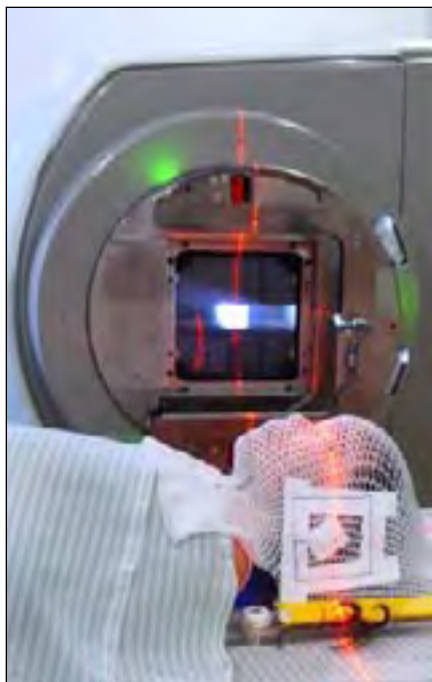
One of the girls notices Letícia. She walks up to the house and stares at the sick girl inside. Letícia would like to go out and play with her; she'd like to talk to the other kids on Rue da Felicidade. But she can't. Instead, Letícia gazes back at the blue-eyed Brazilian, silent and still, until finally the little girl runs back to be with her friends.

"She can't play because of the cancer," says Letícia's mother, 20-year-old Luciene Da Silva Alves. "She can't talk because of the cancer."

Letícia has a plum-size tumor on her brain stem. As it grows, it pinches the spinal cord, making it difficult for the brain to communicate with the body. She has trouble walking and has lost use of her left hand; its fingers are curled inward, as motionless as a doll's.

Most days, Letícia retreats to the television. On a Sunday afternoon, she and her mother are watching an episode of "Smallville" dubbed in Portuguese. Letícia smears lipstick across her face. Her favorite color is dark red; she likes to be pretty.

Halfway across her bottom lip, Letícia stops. She sees Lana Lang, a character with long brown hair in the TV show. Letícia's hair is shoulder-length; it's a



Treating her tumor: Letícia travels from her village in Bezerros to Recife to receive radiotherapy treatments intended to shrink her tumor.

thin wave of locks that falls down to hide the shaved scalp just above her ear, where physicians target the radiation. Letícia looks up at her mother as she runs her right hand through the strands.

"She wants to have long hair," Alves says dolefully, and then turns back to the television.

Letícia's cancer is among the deadliest and most difficult to treat. Even in the most advanced hospitals in the United States and Europe, the survival rate is at best 15 to 20 percent. Until recently here in Pernambuco, a poor state more than 1,000 miles north of the opulence of Rio de Janeiro, no treatment was available.

That changed in 2002, when Memphis-based St. Jude Children's Research Hospital expanded its partnership with a cancer clinic in Recife, Pernambuco's

capital. Through grants and regular teleconferencing, St. Jude helped to offer the first brain cancer treatment in Pernambuco. Since then, 77 children with brain cancer have been treated in northeastern Brazil. Of those, just 13 have died — a good percentage for a difficult disease, in a difficult part of the body, in a difficult part of the world. Letícia is among those 77 children who now have treatment available, and while her chances for survival are slim, at least now she has what she would



Cancer's side-effect: In one of her frequent temper tantrums caused by her tumor, Letícia cries in defiance to a request from her grandmother to get dressed.

not have had five years ago: hope.

“No child should die for lack of health care or attention or other measures,” says Raul Ribeiro, a Brazilian-born pediatric oncologist at St. Jude who oversees the Memphis research hospital’s international partnerships. “I know we’re still far away from that, but here at St. Jude, it’s our legacy to go after what’s most difficult, what’s most challenging.”



Thirty years ago, few Brazilian doctors had ever heard of a research hospital named after the patron saint of lost causes and located in the middle of the United States.

It was 1977, and Ribeiro was just out of medical school. His primary interest was leukemia, a cancer of the blood that was then considered a death sentence for children. At the time, less than 10 percent of children diagnosed with leukemia survived. But Ribeiro was still intrigued by the possibility of a cure, and after reviewing several U.S. medical journals, he found studies from St. Jude



Pampered patient: Letícia readies her favorite tube of lipstick for her mother, Luciene Da Silva Alves, 20, inside her aunt’s home in Bezerros. Letícia’s family allows the 5-year-old to do some things normally reserved for older girls, such as wearing makeup. They know her time is short.

that indicated kids with leukemia were getting better with treatment.

He showed the studies to a mentor in Brazil. “This is probably just temporary, and Memphis, where is Memphis?” his mentor replied.

New York and Salt Lake City were then considered the centers of cancer research in the United States. But Ribeiro wanted to see firsthand what was happening at St. Jude, which was then a fledgling 15-year-old research hospital with a quirky history. As the story goes, comedian and actor Danny Thomas

prayed before a statue of St. Jude in Detroit when his career was struggling in 1937. "Show me my way in life and I will build you a shrine," Thomas reportedly prayed.

In the following years, Thomas' entertainment career blossomed, moving him from nightclubs in Chicago to being the star of the TV sitcom "Make Room for Daddy," later renamed "The Danny Thomas Show." As he grew wealthy, Thomas kept the promise of

his prayer. In 1957, he invested his own money and enlisted the help of fellow Arab-Americans to form the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities, or ALSAC, whose purpose was to raise funds for a children's hospital in Memphis. St. Jude accepted its first patients in 1962, focusing much of its research and care on the treatment of pediatric leukemia, widely considered a lost cause at the time.

"When the first person came here

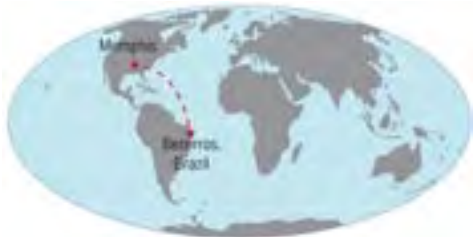


Family prayer gathering: Pastor Marcelo Silva, 31, prays over Letícia during a Sunday family gathering in Bezerros. In the background (at left) are grandmother Marcia Do Carmo Da Silva, 51, and grandfather José Adriano Ferreira Da Silva, 38.

and said, 'I think we can cure leukemia,' that person was ostracized by the medical community," Ribeiro recalls. Few doctors at the time believed childhood leukemia could be cured, and even fewer were willing to subject children to painful treatments with such remote chances for survival. Even so, St. Jude went ahead with leukemia research and treatment, recruiting doctors from around the world, including Ribeiro. In the following decades, St. Jude developed treatment protocols that have made acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a cancer of the white blood cells and one of the most common cancers in children, a curable disease.

"Here it is, 40 years later, and we now have a cure rate of 85 percent," Ribeiro says.

St. Jude established an international reputation for cancer research. The sick children of the world's wealthy began to come to Memphis for treatment. Doctors from around the world would intern at the research hospital to gain experience they could bring back to their countries. Among the early visiting physicians was Francisco Pedrosa, a pediatric oncologist who grew up in rural Pernambuco. He trained and practiced in Memphis for six months in



IN BRIEF: ST. JUDE

- Founded in 1962 by Danny Thomas and the American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities.

- St. Jude is the only private hospital in the United States dedicated specifically to pediatric cancer.

- The hospital's major treatment areas include brain tumors, leukemia/lymphoma and sickle-cell disease.

- Research at St. Jude was in large part responsible for the dramatic increase in survival rates for acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a common childhood cancer.

- St. Jude's annual budget exceeds \$400 million, and the hospital has \$1.5 billion in assets.

1982 and returned to Brazil to start a pediatric oncology practice in Recife, a city of 1.5 million people.

Pedrosa's Brazil isn't the alluring one shown on television and in travel magazines. Pernambuco, which extends from the Atlantic Ocean deep into Brazil's lush interior, has an

agriculture-based economy and is one of South America's best sugarcane-producing regions. Despite being a resource-rich nation, Brazil is among the world's countries where wealth is the most unevenly distributed. Poverty is a problem throughout the nation. Sprawling shantytowns known as favelas can be found from Sao Paolo to Recife to Manaus, in the Amazon. Northeastern Brazil, which includes Pernambuco, is the poorest region of

the country. In fact, according to World Bank estimates, northeastern Brazil is the poorest area of Latin America.

As a result, Recife, the largest city in the region, has become home to thousands of Brazilians who fled the impoverished rural areas only to find impoverished urban ones. For children, Recife can be particularly tough. At busy intersections, children younger than 10 line up to wash car windows for change. Underage prostitution,



Charred: Bezerras is in rural northeastern Brazil, one of the poorest parts of Latin America. Letícia's home is at the base of this landscape of sugarcane and burying garbage.

**Leukemia patient:**

Jameson Cassimiro, 5, of Parzares, is being treated in the ICU for acute myeloid leukemia. He is now in remission.

fueled by European sex tourists, has become such a problem that hotels in Recife provide signs in Portuguese and English warning guests of jail sentences associated with child exploitation.



The destitution isn't just a social problem in Pernambuco; it's a medical one. Wearing blue jeans and a button-down white shirt, Pedrosa is flipping through charts at his medical clinic near central Recife. He shows one contrasting pediatric leukemia survival rates in Memphis and Recife from 15 years ago. In Memphis, 80 percent of the children lived, while in Recife, 30 percent survived the disease.

"We had the same drugs and the

same treatment protocols," Pedrosa says. "Yet only 30 percent of our patients survived. Why? Poverty. Many of our patients either were diagnosed at more advanced stages due to inadequate access to medical care in the rural areas or were forced to abandon treatment because their family could no longer afford to take them to Recife."

Frustrated by the low survival rates, Pedrosa called Ribeiro in Memphis and asked his fellow Brazilian if St. Jude could help in increasing survival rates in Pernambuco. The hospital agreed to fund a short research trip to Recife for two doctors, and St. Jude's international partnership program was born in 1991 with a budget of \$3,200, enough to

cover two round-trip plane tickets. St. Jude's analysis of Pernambuco's cancer cases indicated as many as two-thirds of children with cancer in the state were misdiagnosed or did not receive treatment.

Three years after that initial visit, in 1994, St. Jude established informal partnerships with Pedrosa's clinic and another in El Salvador. St. Jude's doc-

tors agreed to provide second opinions and consultations in exchange for access to patient data and charts that they could use in their research. The international partnership program became official in 1997, and now St. Jude partners with cancer hospitals and clinics in Asia, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

St. Jude's relationship with Pedrosa's



Health risk: Graziela Oliveira Da Silva, 1, has a rapidly growing softball-size tumor on her back. Rural health agents, trained as part of the St. Jude partnership program, referred the girl to doctors in Recife. Tests showed the tumor was benign, but it still could pose a health risk if not removed soon.

clinic in Brazil has been among the most unusual as well as the most fruitful for the hospital. Through the clinic, St. Jude is learning that the circumstances it faces when dealing with cancer in Memphis are nothing like what the majority of the world's doctors encounter.

Most pediatric cancer is not a result of environment, and for that reason, the childhood cancer rate around the world is the same: Of 1 million children under 15, 140 will have cancer. But 80 percent of the world's children live in lower-income countries such as Brazil; unlike the other 20 percent, these children are not guaranteed access to trained health-care professionals and quality diets.

In what has become a model program, St. Jude and Pedrosa created a two-part solution to counter the effects of poverty on cancer treatment in Brazil.

St. Jude discovered that patients, left without a place to stay in Recife, were abandoning treatment because



Home away from home: Inside a residential facility partially funded by St. Jude, children play with staff after the evening meal. The building houses as many as 120 families with children receiving cancer treatment. Having housing and free meals helps ensure the full length of treatment for families who have to travel from rural areas.

their family could not afford to keep them in the state capital for extended periods of time. For one part of the solution, St. Jude and Pedrosa partnered with the Brazilian government to build a residential facility — similar to a Ronald McDonald House — that houses as many as 120 families whose children are receiving cancer treatment in Recife. Referred to by its acronym NACC, the facility's name translates to the Support Center for Children with Cancer.

For the other part, St. Jude and

Pedrosa trained government-paid rural health agents in Pernambuco to be able to identify early symptoms of childhood cancer. Although their job is to educate rural Brazilians about healthy diets and sanitary living, the health agents serve as frontline scouts looking for cancer in areas where the disease has gone largely untreated. Since the program was established in 2004, the agents have referred 100 children to doctors in Recife. Fourteen were found to have cancer.

As Pedrosa and St. Jude had hoped, the residential facility and the rural health agents have contributed to increases in cancer survival rates in Pernambuco. The survival rate for acute lymphoblastic leukemia, for example, is now 70 percent in Recife. “That’s now among the best in the world,” Pedrosa says.

Social components needed to make cancer treatment successful in rural Brazil — such as the residential facil-



Chemotherapy: José receives chemotherapy treatment once a week in Recife for leukemia. When a health agent found José on her rounds, he was losing weight, feverish and had pain in his legs. Her referral allowed for an early diagnosis.



Daily life: On Happiness Street, mules carry goods, bossa nova music pours out of homes and residents gather vegetables for the evening meal.

ity and rural health agents — have become an important area of research for St. Jude. Since 2004, St. Jude has published seven studies in medical journals analyzing its successes and setbacks in Brazil.

In fact, the St. Jude program in Pernambuco has become a model for implementing social components to cancer treatment regimens in other lower-income nations.



The day begins early on Happiness Street.

At 3:45 a.m., Letícia's grandfather, José Da Silva, lowers a wheelchair to the cobblestone road outside his home. He picks up his 5-year-old grand-

daughter and places her squat body in the chair. Wearing a skirt, long-sleeve T-shirt and wooden earrings painted green and yellow, the colors of Brazil, Letícia clutches her favorite tube of lipstick.

She and her mother head down the road, past the sugarcane fields, and stop at the daycare center around the corner. Here, a bus will pick up the city's sick and take them to Recife for treatment.

Letícia sits quietly in the wheelchair, her thickly painted red lips glimmering under the streetlamp as her eyes droop closed. Alves stares toward the sugarcane. She lights a cigarette, breathes in deep and exhales the smoke in a strong

stream as she places her right hand on her belly, which is swollen over her jeans from six months of pregnancy. Alves became a mother young, at 15, and already, at 20, with a third child on the way, she has grown tired of responsibility.

“This is where I first learned Letícia was sick,” she says, pointing to the steps of the daycare center. In June, Letícia, unable to steady her legs and control her feet, plunged down the stairs. Around the same time, she lost control of her left hand.

Rural health agents had seen Letícia two times before she fell, but following a third visit after the girl lost use of her

hand, an agent referred Letícia to Pedrosa’s clinic in Recife. Since then, she and her mother have been commuting back and forth to the state capital, staying in NACC while Letícia receives treatment.

“Without support from NACC, Letícia would have abandoned treatment,” Pedrosa says. “Abandonment of treatment is higher in cases of serious tumors than in other pathologies.”

To be sure, Letícia is in terrible shape. The tumor below her brain has caused the muscles in her stomach to atrophy, giving her a large belly that makes her feel continuously hungry. Owing to the tumor as well as side ef-



Getting good care: Maria Claudia Severo, 5 months, is recovering in Recife from an operation to remove a tumor. She is likely to survive.

fects from the treatment, she regularly experiences emotional disturbances. She'll throw clothes — anything she can get her hand on — in rage-filled temper tantrums that can be sparked by the smallest disappointment, such as not being allowed to wear a certain dress on a certain day.

The cancer has not only changed Letícia but also Alves. The girl's tumor tempered Alves' fun-loving lifestyle. "Luciene was crazy," recalls Roselene, Alves' 28-year-old sister. "She didn't want work; she wouldn't work. She only wanted to have fun. But Letícia's cancer changed that; she's trying to take responsibility."

But it's difficult. Alves doesn't have Letícia's father to help. The couple separated about two years ago, and just weeks before Letícia began to show symptoms of her tumor, her father was gunned down in Bezerros. "He tried to cheat two drug dealers," says Da Silva, Letícia's grandfather.

As with other Brazilians in the impoverished parts of Pernambuco, Alves and her daughter are victims of environment. Jobs are scarce here, and education is poor. None of her family can read.

The transportation finally arrives at 4:15 a.m. Alves awakens Letícia as she



Traumatic tantrum: In a temper tantrum sparked by her tumor and steroid treatment, Letícia bangs her head against the wall at a residential facility funded in part by St. Jude.

carries her aboard the bus.

Three hours later, Alves can taste the saltwater air in Recife. She steps off the bus in a crowded medical district. Letícia is in her arms. They walk about six blocks to a radiological clinic. There, a nurse lifts Letícia's thin wave of hair, exposing her scalp, and places a mask over her face. She then puts the girl's head next to the machine.

The radiation burrows into her tiny skull.

It's 1 p.m. on a sunny September afternoon, and Alves and Leticia file into Ivanna Botelho's examination room. A slender, pretty Recife native with long black hair and an easygoing demeanor, Botelho studied pediatric brain cancer in Spain for four months in 2001 on a St. Jude grant and has since become the primary force behind Pedrosa's growing pediatric brain cancer unit in Pernambuco.

Every Wednesday, Botelho participates in teleconferences with St. Jude's staff in which they discuss complicated cases and new techniques. As the only brain cancer specialist on staff in Recife, she doesn't have anyone locally who can provide a second opinion. Instead, she relies on a staff of doctors more than 4,500 miles away, in Downtown Memphis, to assist with cases. Her patient files can be accessed online, and she and St. Jude's specialists can discuss treatment options.

As Leticia lies on the examination table, Botelho presses the little girl's bloated stomach. It doesn't feel right. The doctor had hoped some of the bloating would subside. Plus, the radiotherapy has not been as effective in reducing the tumor as the doctors had hoped, X-rays show.

"We thought the tumor would shrink more after the radiation," Botelho tells Alves.

The mother nods, disappointed. Alves takes Leticia by the hand and escorts her out of the clinic.

"Her chances for survival are very slim," Botelho says as Alves leaves. "She will probably live another six months. But had she not received treatment, she would be dead already."

Even at the beginning of Leticia's treatment, doctors in Recife and Memphis believed her chances for survival were low. Which raises an obvious question: If she's unlikely to survive, why put her through such painful treatment?

"Forty years ago, that was the question everyone asked when we were treating children with leukemia," answers St. Jude's Raul Ribeiro.

Outside the clinic, Alves and her daughter wait for the bus that will take them back to Happiness Street, and in another week, Alves will return to Recife to place her 5-year-old next to a machine that will pump radiation into her growing brain. ■

Survival of José is a testament to St. Jude ►►

Survival of José is a testament to St. Jude

CARUARU, BRAZIL — JUANEIDE SANTOS is returning to the boy whose life she saved.

As she walks toward the small white house, a man on horseback 30 yards away is yelling in Portuguese, wrestling together cows into a single herd.

Santos is among a dozen government-paid health agents whose job is to educate rural Brazilians about healthy diets and sanitary living in the remote areas around Caruaru.



Memphis effect: Thanks to St. Jude's international partnership in Brazil, cancer survival rates have increased dramatically. The survival rate for leukemia patients like José (above) has increased from 30 percent to 70 percent in 13 years. Brain cancer treatment, for patients like Leticia, was unavailable before the Memphis hospital's financial and scientific support.

In January, as part of her normal routine, Santos arrived at this small house near the cattle farm. Here, she first met Maria Rosilene Da Silva and her son, 6-year-old José Edson Da Paz.

José was ill and in pain.

“He started to say he had pains in his legs, and then one day, he couldn’t walk,” remembers Da Silva, a seamstress. “I didn’t know what was wrong.”

But Santos did. “I thought it was possible he had some kind of a cancer,” she says. As part of a program developed in conjunction with Memphis-based St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Santos and her colleagues were trained to identify early symptoms of cancer in children and refer those kids for diagnosis in Recife, the seaside state capital.

Santos sent José, a shy, handsome boy with a mop of brown hair, to see Francisco Pedrosa, an oncologist in Recife who helped spearhead St. Jude’s international partnership program. The diagnosis: acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a common cancer in children that St. Jude built a reputation for curing.

José is now in the middle of his treatment and is likely to survive, a testament to the success of St. Jude’s rural health program in Brazil. Had Santos

not referred José to Recife, his cancer likely would have been diagnosed at a much later stage, putting his life in danger.

For years, late diagnosis was among the most persistent problems in treating cancer in northeastern Brazil, where few have access to healthcare professionals. As a result, children with leukemia, a curable disease for most in the United States and Europe, had dim chances for survival in Pernambuco.

“Before St. Jude’s help, our rate of survival was 30 percent,” Pedrosa says.

Now, owing to programs such as the one that educates rural health agents to identify early symptoms, José and other children with leukemia in Pernambuco have a 70 percent survival rate when receiving treatment.

José has hopes for a normal life. After Santos leaves, he and his mother walk around the corner to his school. It’s Sept. 5, a couple of days before Brazil’s Independence Day. José enters the classroom and takes two crayons, green and yellow, and a piece of paper with an outline of South America.

He sits at a table and begins to fill in a large swath of the continent in the contrasting colors of his nation. ■

China

MEMPHIS & THE WORLD

How one Southern city sends ripples around the globe

FedEx helps awaken economic giant



New wealth, old poverty: FedEx Kinko's has 14 stores in China that have profited from the country's economic boom — a surge that has left many poor Chinese behind. Lu Qi Chun, smoking a cigarette, came to this FedEx Kinko's in Shanghai to send business cards overnight.

Story by
**TREVOR
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SPEARMAN**

SHANGHAI, CHINA — Jiang Qian is the Chinese face of FedEx. The well-built 35-year-old keeps his hair cropped close on the sides, thicker on top, and offers a pair of dimples with each broad smile. When Memphis-based FedEx, known for its over-the-top marketing and branding cam-

paigns in the United States, needed a poster boy for its expanding service in China, the air-express giant didn't call a talent agency in Shanghai or Beijing.

Instead, FedEx searched its own ranks of more than 6,000 Chinese employees and selected Jiang, a veteran driver and courier in one of Shanghai's hectic business districts. He's everywhere — TV, billboards and magazines.

But in no-nonsense Shanghai, Jiang's pretty-boy reputation has been tough to live down. As he delivers packages, Jiang is often stopped by customers and passersby.

He's that guy — the FedEx guy.

"They all think they know me because of the advertisements," he says. It's annoying, sure, but Jiang is the consummate FedEx man. "The company asked me to be in the commercials. How would I say no?"

Every weekday, Jiang drives FedEx truck 980655, a small white and purple Toyota about one-fourth the size of a U.S. FedEx truck. Most of his customers are in the posh offices of manufactur-



Day job: When he isn't appearing in FedEx ads, Jiang Qian (center) is just another one of the FedEx guys.

ers shipping goods to the United States — watches, hats, bedding, silk, electronics — where they will be marked up substantially and sold to credit-wielding American consumers.

A former truck driver who once delivered products from China's manufacturing facilities to a seaport near Shanghai, Jiang has staked his livelihood on China's emergence as America's Wal-Mart. Owing to cheap labor and thousands of factories, 52 percent of China's gross domestic product comes from the manufacturing sector, particularly consumer goods and electronics.

In fact, in just one example of China's role in worldwide consumerism, FedEx has been among the U.S. companies that have benefited most from the sale of more than 119 million Chinese-built iPods, though owing to secrecy agreements, FedEx officials will neither confirm nor deny the company's profitable relationship with Apple.

To be sure, FedEx is among the biggest players betting on China's industrial and technological expansion. The Memphis company first entered the

country in 1984 and has since dumped hundreds of millions of dollars in China as the world's slumbering economic dragon awakens with a startle.

For FedEx founder and CEO Frederick W. Smith, China is simply his latest battlefield. In less than three decades, Smith has built FedEx from a small courier company with a dozen aircraft to a transportation titan with services and infrastructure in 220 countries and territories. Now, with the unveiling in June of next-day time-definite service



iCapitalism: More than 119 million iPods have been made in China and sold around the world. The distributor: FedEx. Here, in central Shanghai, a computer fashion show promotes iPods.

**Changing China:**

Jiang Jing'an, 73, rides his unicycle in the early morning along the Huangpu River. Behind him is the vast skyline of Shanghai's Pudong District, which two decades ago was farmland.

to more than 30 Chinese cities, Smith has positioned FedEx to exploit China's unprecedented economic surge.

In the last decade, 300 million people — the entire size of the U.S. population — have moved from the China's rural interior to its tar-and-concrete east coast.

The nation is quickly emerging as a market that will one day rival the United States, whose air-cargo sector generates \$31.3 billion in annual revenue. By 2025, domestic China will be among the world's top-five air-express markets, according to a study by airline manufacturer Boeing.

In a July 2005 speech in China, FedEx's Smith, who did not respond to repeated invitations to be interviewed

for this article, compared the country's burgeoning market to a kind of new Silk Road.

"I can also see striking similarities between the FedEx network and the Silk Road of 2,000 years ago," he said. "Those ancient traders used a network of routes to transport silk, gold, silver and spices between China, Europe, India and the Middle East. Today, we're transporting exotic flowers, medicines, high-fashion apparel and computer chips."

But as FedEx stakes claims in China, the Memphis company joins a host of U.S. companies investing heavily in the nation despite its poor record on human rights and restrictions on speech, all of which are overseen by an author-

itarian regime that has used privatization to enrich those with political ties to Beijing.



FedEx is a corporate swashbuckler, a daring company that takes big risks and wins most of the time. That's the well-worn public image, the one discussed in the half-dozen company histories authored by former FedEx executives

and employees. For the most part, that depiction of FedEx is fair and accurate.

Founded by Smith, a former Marine, as Federal Express in 1971, the company started with a fleet of 10 Dassault Falcon 20s. The planes were stripped of their passenger seats and hollowed out to meet federal weight restrictions governing cargo flights. Needing a central location in the United States



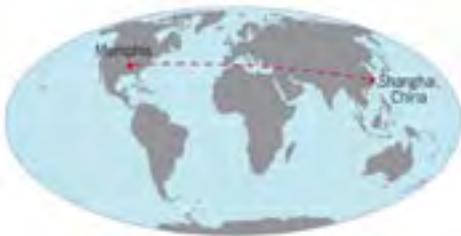
24-hour construction: Shanghai and other Chinese cities are redeveloping so quickly that the world price of building materials has skyrocketed as a result. Here, He Da Gui smokes a cigarette outside the building site of the Shanghai World Financial Center, a Japanese-funded office tower that will span 101 floors -- the tallest structure on the Chinese mainland.

to integrate its hub-and-spoke system, FedEx initially approached the airport in Little Rock to be its hub. Airport officials there denied the request, and Federal Express moved to Memphis International Airport and began express delivery service to 25 U.S. cities in 1973.

Those were heady days for the fledgling company. The market for overnight delivery service of small packages in the United States was in its infancy — and for that matter still speculative — and Smith and his team knew Beltway politicians could easily choose to regulate the company out of business.

Roger Frock, a former FedEx executive who chronicled the company's rise in his book "Changing How the World Does Business," recalls those early days as anxiety-riddled. Smith had recruited a team of people who gave up stable paychecks in bigger cities to experiment with an unproven business plan in Memphis. Many involved in the project wondered if they'd made a disastrous personal mistake. As they laid out FedEx's early plans in 1973, Frock remembers Smith held tightly to his military brazenness.

"This looks promising, but if things don't go according to plan, we can always arm the 10 Falcons and take



IN BRIEF: FEDEX

■ Founded in 1971 by Frederick W. Smith as Federal Express, FedEx now has \$35.8 billion in annual revenue and locations throughout the world.

■ Although originally based in Arkansas, FedEx moved to Memphis International Airport after Little Rock officials denied the company's request to be based there.

■ In 1994, Federal Express took on the abbreviated name FedEx as its official moniker.

■ FedEx acquired Kinko's in 1999 for \$2.4 billion in cash and began using the chain of copyshops as retail fronts for the air-express service.

■ After entering China's international export market in 1984, FedEx started domestic service in China in 1999 and eight years later bought out its joint-venture partner for \$400 million.

over a small island somewhere in the world,” Smith told his colleagues.

Instead, as a result of lucrative government contracts and the deregulation of the air-cargo industry, Smith and his crew took over not an island but small patches of earth around the world.

Today, FedEx has \$35.8 billion in annual revenue. If it were an independent nation, the Memphis express giant would have the world’s 62nd largest gross national product, tied with Croatia and ahead of Ecuador.

While FedEx has trailed such competitors as Atlanta-based UPS and Europe’s DHL and TNT in some corners of the world, the Memphis company established an early lead in China. In 1984, FedEx became the first air-cargo company to make regular outbound shipments from China, and three years later the company initiated inbound service as well.



Thirty years after the Cultural Revolution ended and privatization began to roll through the world’s most populous



Sex appeal: Like FedEx, Apple is aggressively marketing inside China’s quickly growing economy. The two companies are partners in China’s explosive growth.

nation, the Communist Party of China is overseeing what has become an overnight industrial revolution. Nowhere is that more evident than in Shanghai, the nation's historic business capital. In 10 years, Shanghai has gone from a city of midsize towers lining the Huangpu River to a sprawling metropolis whose elevated freeways wend around 4,000 skyscrapers, twice as many as there are in New York City. By 2010, when

Shanghai will host the World Expo, the city will be home to 6,000 skyscrapers, Communist Party officials anticipate.

The reformation of China's economy created rewarding investment opportunities for U.S. corporations. But early international investment in China came with a catch: The Communist Party required international companies to partner with Chinese-owned businesses.

"If you want to do business in China, you have to be patient," explains Darcie Goodwin, a FedEx spokesman who handles the Asia-Pacific region and divides her time between Memphis



Bedeveled: In a country where free markets were once illegal, a Shanghai man sells glowing devil horns on Nanjing Road, one of China's premier shopping districts.

and Shanghai. "You really, really have to follow the rules. ... We were lucky as a company, because we started here in '84, and we've had time to have the patience that nobody else did."

Being among China's early adopters, however, meant FedEx was forced to accept partner companies assigned by the Chinese government in a corrupt system criticized by the World Trade Organization, the multinational group whose mission is to liberalize global trade.

Despite FedEx's early partnerships with government-assigned companies, Goodwin maintains the process that

selected FedEx's joint-venture partners was not corrupt in any way.

"That's just the way it is," she says of China.

Due to China's privatization-by-fiat, businessmen and industrialists are amassing huge personal fortunes in short periods of time as the nation's crony capitalism matures.

Among the newly wealthy is Wang

Shusheng, a former police officer. His personal fortune is valued at more than \$560 million, and he owes that not only to China's lurch toward capitalism but also FedEx.

Wang founded a small transportation company for \$8,000 in 1992 as the Communist Party of China began to allow free enterprise in specific industries and areas of the nation.



Old and new: In a setup similar to the hub-and-spoke system pioneered by FedEx, these men gather at a central watermelon distribution point in Shanghai. They work through the night loading trucks that deliver the fruit to stores and restaurants throughout the rapidly changing city.



Pork barrel: Walking past a Maserati dealership in Shanghai, a woman sells pig-shaped balloons. In China, 2007 was the Year of the Pig — a symbol of fertility and prosperity in Chinese culture. Many couples hoped to give birth to a child during the Year of the Pig.

FedEx, anxious to tap into the fast-growing market of 1.3 billion people, wanted to expand its China operation in 1999. Although the Memphis company had been moving packages in and out of China since 1984, FedEx wished to begin transporting goods within the populous Asian nation. For that venture, FedEx needed a Chinese partner and the company found one in Wang's DTW Group.

But the partnership ultimately was short-lived. In March, following China's decision to comply with the World Trade Organization and repeal the requirement for international companies to have joint-venture partners, FedEx bought Wang Shusheng's 50 percent stake in the domestic China operation for \$400 million.

For FedEx, the buyout was an investment in China's potential economy, not its current one, since the FedEx-DTW partnership operated in the red. It lost about \$8 million in 2004 alone, according to an analysis by a consulting firm in China. At the time, FedEx founder Smith described his company's takeover as a "strategic investment in the long-term growth of China."

FedEx's investment was also a boon for Wang. The \$400 million buyout catapulted the former police officer to the list of China's 200 wealthiest people.

And it came just months before FedEx opened a 100,000-square-foot domestic hub at the airport in Hangzhou, a few hours' drive from Shanghai. The new facility, built to be the nerve center

for FedEx's nascent domestic service to more than 200 cities in China, can currently sort 9,000 boxes per hour, more than enough for China's current market but miniscule compared the capacity of 160,000 in FedEx's Memphis "super hub."

In fact, the new Hangzhou hub reflects FedEx's soaring hopes for China's domestic market. The company built nine sorting gates in Hangzhou;

currently, it uses only two. Each day, in a system similar to the one in Memphis but on a much smaller scale, two planes, one from Guangzhou and another from Beijing, land at midnight. Their packages are then sorted. Some stay in Hangzhou for delivery to Shanghai and surrounding areas; others are put back on the two planes, which take off at 2 a.m. for Guangzhou and Beijing.



Great wall of boxes: FedEx employees sort packages at the company's facility at Shanghai's airport. By 2025, according to a study by airline manufacturer Boeing, domestic China will be among the world's leading cargo markets.



Ancient arts: In the early morning, men and women gather to practice tai chi in Hangzhou, where FedEx has based a hub for its expanding domestic service in China.

Unlike in Memphis, FedEx has divided domestic and international sorting in two hubs in China — domestic in Hangzhou and international in Guangzhou, where the company is building a \$150 million hub that will be the largest in Asia. As in the United States, FedEx has auxiliary operations in other cities, such as Shanghai and Beijing.

But in a vast difference from the United States, the planes in China's sky aren't the familiar Boeing 737s painted purple and orange and found covering the tarmac at Memphis International Airport. That's because FedEx's partnerships with Chinese-owned companies haven't ended completely. While the Chinese government allows FedEx aircraft to fly

in and out of China from Shanghai, the Communist Party forbids foreign-owned airlines from flying domestic routes.

Pilots for Okay Airways, the first privately owned airline in China, are the ones flying FedEx packages from Guangzhou and Beijing to the new hub in Hangzhou.

"These are the robber-baron days of China," says Rupert Hoogewerf, a British expatriate who publishes the Hurun Report, a Shanghai-based magazine that chronicles the growing wealth of China's new capitalists. "It's a wonderful irony that the Communist Party is the one leading this great capitalist surge, and it makes you reassess what the definition of communism is."

The Huangpu District in Shanghai is the bureaucratic birthplace of Chinese capitalism. The first area in which the Communist Party agreed to allow free enterprise, this district near the banks of the Huangpu River is now among the swankiest in China.

Large banks and international trading groups have their Asian headquarters in gleaming office towers here. At the bottom floor of one tower, a white-gloved salesman hawks Italian sports cars from behind blemish-free glass.

Around the corner, across the busy street, is FedEx's premier retail space in China — a large FedEx Kinko's at the base of twin office towers. As in the United States, Kinko's, which FedEx acquired for \$2.4 billion cash in 1999, is the front end — the human face — of FedEx's express delivery service.

But FedEx Kinko's doesn't offer its Chinese customers the same freedoms American ones have received. As Kinko's expanded across the United States in the '80s and early '90s, the affordable



Manpower: Owing to its massive population, manual labor is not automated in China in order to maintain jobs for the nation of 1.3 billion people.

corner printshops allowed for the creation of independent magazines. Many of those publications included edgy political content. In fact, before Internet use became widespread, Kinko's published thousands of independent publications of varying quality and content throughout the United States.

That isn't the case in China, where government censorship of individuals and media has matured and adapted even as advances in technology have made communications easier.

FedEx Kinko's and a host of other U.S. companies that have prospered on business models promoting free speech — including Yahoo, Google and Microsoft — have operated under the thumb of the Communist Party of China in exchange for a foothold in the nation's economy, which has grown an impressive 8 percent per annum in recent years.

FedEx Kinko's not only censors documents it prints in China but will report to the government customers



Controlled press: Unlike in the U.S., FedEx Kinko's customers are censored to conform with the Communist Party of China's grip on information.

who attempt to publish material the Chinese government has deemed inappropriate, such as political content and criticism of the current regime.

"We are operating in China," says Perci Cui, managing director of FedEx Kinko's in China, while sitting in a lavish hotel conference room in Shanghai. "We follow the laws of China."



Jiang Qian, the FedEx driver who doubled as the Memphis company's Chinese advertising model, is slowly losing his media appeal.

New FedEx billboards are going up around Shanghai. A new television

commercial just began airing throughout the country.

Instead of Jiang, the new campaign features players from China's national badminton team. They are stars throughout Asia and particularly in China, which for years has fielded the world's most dominant badminton players.

"I'm a regular guy," Jiang says. "They are athletes. They are famous. How can I compete?"

China too is changing. A few blocks from the FedEx Kinko's in the Huangpu District, Feng Yang Tian holds vodka in a glass made of ice and wears a blue, fur-lined parka despite Shanghai's balmy 94 degrees.

"This is the new Shanghai," Feng says. "It's a very exciting time."

A journalist for Shanghai Wednesday, a weekly paper covering the city's arts and leisure, Feng is at the opening



Company culture: Just as he would in Memphis, FedEx driver and part-time pitchman Jiang Qian, 35, stretches at his depot in Shanghai before braving the congested traffic to deliver packages.

of one of the Pearl of the Orient's newest and most absurd watering holes, Absolut Icebar. Kept at all times at 23 degrees, the bar, tables and chairs are made from ice blocks shipped to Shanghai from northern Sweden.

As electronica pumps through the speakers and an Absolut video advertisement lights up one of the walls of ice, Feng lifts his ice-glass, smiles and takes a swig of Scandinavian vodka.

"Fun," he says in his rough English. "Right?"

Not for some.

Owing to the billions of American dollars flowing into China, Shanghai and other large cities are undergoing phases of construction so massive and so unprecedented that work is done around the clock and the world price of steel, copper, concrete and other building materials has skyrocketed. The government has razed hundreds of city blocks filled with overcrowded apartment buildings to make way for internationally funded office towers



China on ice: Catering to Shanghai's newly rich, the Absolut Icebar keeps the temperature at 23 degrees despite the sweltering Shanghai heat outside.

and luxury properties, the same ones feeding business into China's FedEx Kinko's stores.

Residents who resist their displacement face stiff penalties. According to Hong Kong-based Human Rights in China, the Chinese government is holding dozens of housing-rights activists in work camps as part of a program known as "Reeducation Through Labor."

In the Huangpu District, old low-slung neighborhoods with overcrowded buildings still fill in some of the gaps between the new skyscrapers. Many of

these neighborhoods likely will not be here by 2010, when government officials expect to reach their goal of 6,000 skyscrapers.

Wang Jia Zui Jiao Street cuts a path across one of these old neighborhoods. On the street, local businessmen sell tailored suits next to bootlegged DVDs and live fish squirming in buckets. Most operate their businesses just feet from cramped concrete-block homes.

Each day around 6 a.m., the neighborhood awakens with a clatter. An elderly man carries latrine buckets on a bamboo stick propped across his shoulders. He takes them to one of the alleys and washes them out, just as men here have done for centuries. A young woman sells state-owned newspapers wrapped in her arms and strapped to her back, calling out the papers' names as she walks up and down the city block. Chickens squawk in tight cages as a man pulls out one to be slaughtered.

Farther down Wang Jia Zui Jiao Street, Gao Lanxia and her husband Cao Chang Wang spin a round, fire-hot stone cooking surface. Gao ladles a mixture of egg and cream on the top. It sizzles. In less than a minute, the egg mixture becomes a crispy, spicy

omelet, which the 40-year-old Gao slips in a plastic bag and sells for two yuan apiece. In an average day, they'll make 300 omelets, earning about \$40 — a good living for Shanghai's poor.

But Gao and her husband, who have a 17-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son, aren't sure how long they'll be able to stay here.

"This neighborhood will be torn down one day," Gao says.

Already, the residential areas surrounding Wang Jia Zui Jiao Street have been razed to make way for skyscrapers and apartment buildings. FedEx and DHL couriers can sometimes be seen cutting through the area on their trek between office towers.

Although the government has not informed residents here of impending displacement, most expect to be forced from their homes soon as Shanghai continues its internationally funded facelift. Their neighborhood simply isn't part of new, pro-business China.

"I don't know where we'll go," Gao says. "I don't think anyone here knows." ■

Activists find little tolerance of cause ►►



Vanishing: Street-alley vegetable markets like these were once common throughout Shanghai. They are slowly disappearing as China forcibly gentrifies old neighborhoods to remake its business capital into an ultramodern metropolis. Zhang Guang Ming, 35, enjoys a beer and his customers at the morning market on Yan Dang Road.

Activists find little tolerance of cause

SHANGHAI IS A MESS AT 4 P.M. Buses, cars, scooters, bicycles and pedestrians strangle the city block by block, creating widespread gridlock and rowdy symphonies of car horns and bicycle bells.

In July, my interpreter Maio Wei and I were stuck in a taxi, in the middle of it all. By 4:15 p.m., we knew we would be late for our 4:30 p.m. meeting across town with Fu Yuxia, an emboldened activist for housing rights issues in China.

Owing to Shanghai's booming real estate market, the Chinese government has bulldozed dozens of neighborhoods to make space for new development. In most cases, the government sufficiently compensates the displaced. But in some cases, residents refuse to move from their decades-old homes or do not believe the Chinese government is providing enough money for them to find housing in Shanghai of equal or better standard.

As China projects a pro-business image to the world, the Chinese government has been cracking down on housing activists who have been protesting their forcible displacement to make land available for internationally funded redevelopment projects.

Fu accepted my request for an interview and agreed to give me a tour of some of the neighborhoods where residents are trying to stop the government's forcible gentrification.

"We're going to be late," Maio told Fu in Mandarin through her pink Motorola Razr.

Not a problem, Fu replied.

Fifteen minutes later, Maio's cell phone rang. She answered, and after a few moments lowered the phone to her lap.

"This is her daughter," Maio said, turning to me. "The police are there. She says we should not go. The government is listening to her phone."

I looked down at my cell phone screen: 4:31 p.m. The police were on time for our interview.

"Good thing we're late," I said.

"Will I be in trouble?" Maio asked. "The government has my cell phone number now."

"It'll be OK," I told her, unsure if I was lying. ■

CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

■ The death penalty is applicable to those who commit economic crimes, such as tax fraud, and drug offenses.

■ Hundreds of thousands of Chinese are believed to be held in work camps as part of a program called "Reeducation Through Labor." They are sentenced to the camps for one to three years without trial or judicial review.

■ Forced evictions are common, particularly in Shanghai and Beijing, which are preparing for, respectively, the World Expo and Olympic Games.

■ Broadly defined laws protecting "state secrets" and preventing "subversion" are used to prosecute and imprison journalists.