

HOPE

AND

COURAGE

ACROSS

AMERICA

By Christina Quick

People often do a double take when they see Assemblies of God evangelist Bob Mortimer pedaling his bike down the freeway.

Mortimer, who lost both legs and his left arm in an accident more than 30 years ago, doesn't mind the surprised glances. He welcomes the opportunity to share his story with anyone who asks.

Powering a handcycle using only his right arm, the avid cyclist just completed a cross-country trip that traversed miles of challenging mountain terrain. His wife, Darla, and their children, Nicole, 20, Grant, 15, and Chanel, 10, accompanied him on the trip. (Chanel remained off the road when the shoulder was narrow or travel was otherwise deemed unsafe for a 10-year-old.)

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“No matter what we go through, no matter what we lose, the only handicap we’ll ever have is the one we put on ourselves.”

— Bob Mortimer



The Mortimer family (from left, Nicole, Grant, Bob, Darla and Chanel) on the road with their RV

The family didn’t set out to prove anything or promote a particular cause. Mortimer, who spoke in churches and other venues along the way, says his only goal was to spread a message of hope and courage through Christ.

“I don’t see myself like other people see me, but I do understand how people could see us and be encouraged,” says Mortimer, who dubbed the coast-to-coast journey Hope and Courage Across America.

In many ways, hope and courage sum up Mortimer’s approach to life. Affable and optimistic, the 54-year-old tackles challenges with humor and steely resolve.

When Mortimer speaks to a crowd, he often takes along a ball cap with the word “Handy” printed across the front.

“This is my handy cap,” he deadpans, breaking the tension with the one-liner.

“It is the only handicap I have. No matter what we go through, no matter what we lose, the only handicap we’ll ever have is the one we put on ourselves. A hand-

icap is something we create when we don’t allow God to fulfill His plan in our lives.”

A motivational speaker and preacher, Mortimer’s message resonates with the diverse audiences he addresses, from school-children and church groups to prisoners and wounded soldiers.

“When I accepted Christ I became a whole man,” he says. “I learned that what makes me whole is not in my shoes. It’s in my heart.”

The long road

Mortimer’s bike ride started May 17 when he left Gig Harbor, Wash., en route to New York City. But his real journey of hope and courage began decades ago.

Raised in an atmosphere of substance abuse, Mortimer started drinking and using drugs at an early age. When he was 16, he tried to wake his father and found him dead from a drug overdose. Even that tragic discovery didn’t deter Mortimer from pursuing his own destructive habits.

In 1976 Mortimer, then 21, and his brother Tom stumbled out of a bar in Olympia, Wash., to begin a 50-mile car ride home. Before they reached their destination, the vehicle swerved off the road, slammed into a utility pole, and slid down an embankment.

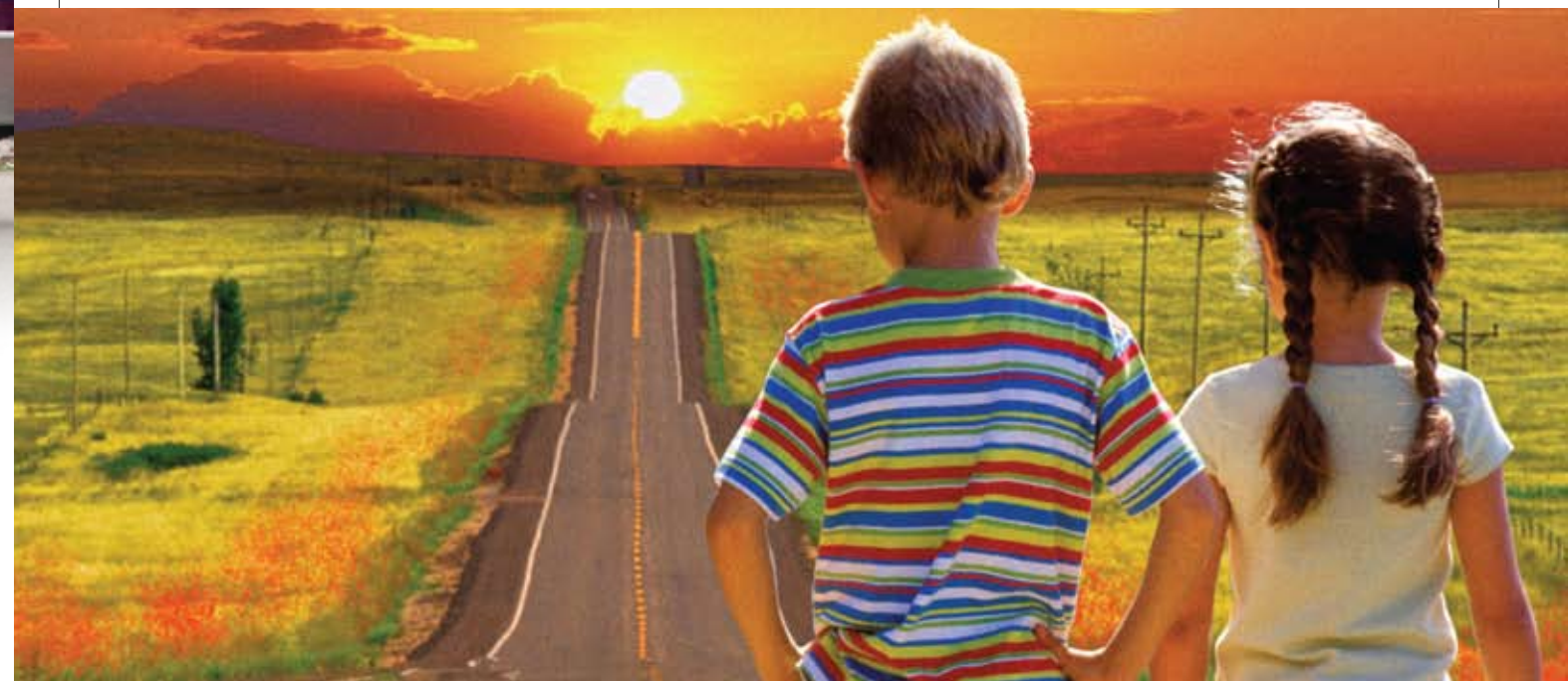
The brothers emerged from the wreck unscathed, walking around the crash site in amazement, laughing at their dumb luck and joking about the memories they’d just made.

They never noticed the downed power lines dangling over the dark road until Mortimer’s left arm made contact with one. In an instant, Mortimer’s legs buckled as 12,500 volts of electricity surged through his body. When his knees hit the ground, the charge arced out of them with a force that literally shredded his flesh.

His limbs scorched and mangled, Mortimer fell facedown across the live wires, badly burning his torso before the electrical circuit finally broke.

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Introducing The Assemblies of God Trust



OUR CHOICE . THEIR FUTURE .

Your invitation to be a Charter Member of the Assemblies of God Trust

The Assemblies of God has a tremendous history. We've come a long way in our 94 years as a Fellowship.

But we stand at a pivotal moment in our history.

We can choose to rest on our laurels or we can take some major steps together so we can be positioned to take even greater steps for the Kingdom as we enter our second century. If we don't make these positive choices, however, our Fellowship stands to follow the path of other church movements that are barely maintaining their numbers or are suffering decline.

We have a choice, and the future of the next generations of the Assemblies of God is at stake.

It is:

Our Choice. Their Future.

We feel that by planting thousands of new, vibrant churches; encouraging our students to attend Assemblies of God institutions of higher education; helping our graduates afford to enter ministry; and creating new, innovative training materials, we can empower future Pentecostal generations.

To fulfill the lofty goals of the Assemblies of God Trust, we need help — your help.

We also need thousands of individuals like you to join and become Charter Members of the Assemblies of God Trust. The basic individual membership is \$16. We chose \$16 a month to acknowledge the timeless 16 Fundamental Truths of our Fellowship and to make it affordable for everyone to be a Charter Member. We need individuals who will set their own membership at higher levels, if they can and feel led to do so.

We'd love to have entire families join and become Charter Families. All families are welcome — families that have been involved in the Assemblies of God since 1914 and families that became a part of the Fellowship last week or at any time in between.

We need every church in the Assemblies of God to make a monthly commitment of \$50 or more and become a Charter

Church. Hopefully, many will commit more.

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We have a huge task. But we serve a huge God and we have a very giving Fellowship.

When you stop and think about it, this is the first time you as an individual have ever been asked to give to the Assemblies of God, our church. You have been asked numerous times to give to the ministries of our church, but never directly to the infrastructure of our church.

Please complete the envelope provided in the center of this edition of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* and mail it today.

When you join the Assemblies of God Trust, we would like to send you a special gift, *Core Values*, the new book by General Superintendent George Wood which details the five core values of his administration. This book will give you a special insight to the leader God has given our Fellowship.

We'd also like to send you a membership card and a certificate, indicating your Charter Membership in the Assemblies of God Trust.

You have a choice. You can join or not join.

It is our choice. But it is their future!

L. Alton Garrison

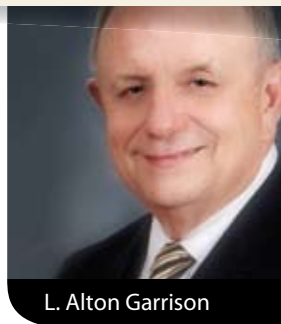
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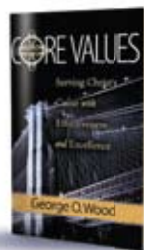
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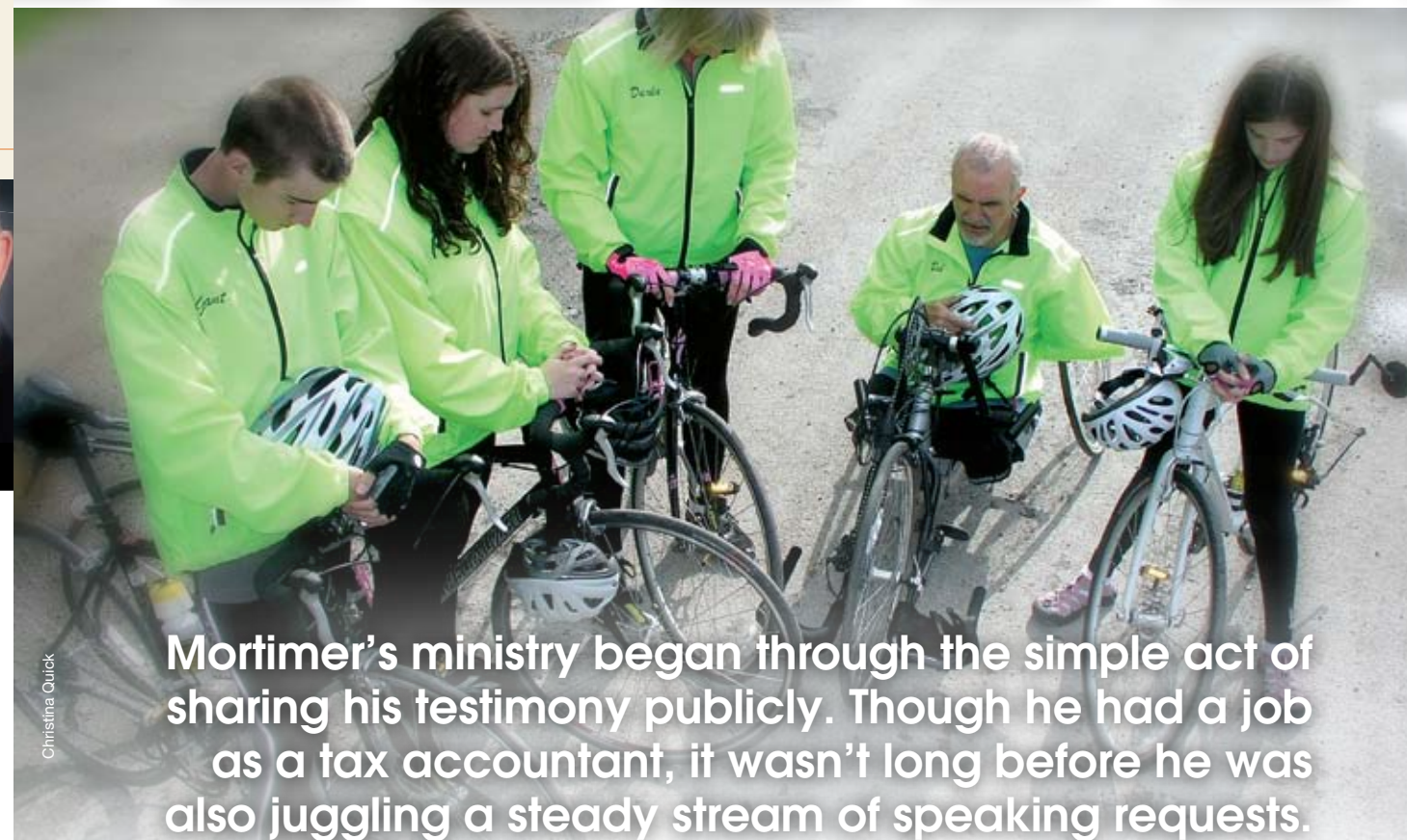


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Christina Quick

Mortimer's ministry began through the simple act of sharing his testimony publicly. Though he had a job as a tax accountant, it wasn't long before he was also juggling a steady stream of speaking requests.

Tom stared in horror at his brother's motionless body, certain he was dead. Then he heard a weak moan.

To this day, Mortimer can't remember anything about the 12 hours before or after the accident. Tom and others have helped him piece together the series of events that forever altered his life.

Mortimer does remember the excruciating skin grafts, the 12 surgeries and the agonizing task of signing paperwork three times for three amputations. First his left arm was surgically removed above the elbow. Two weeks later he lost his right leg. Several months passed before his left leg was also taken.

Each loss was a blow that plunged Mortimer deeper into despair. When he was finally released from the hospital six months after the accident, he returned to booze to numb his emotional pain.

"When I looked in the mirror, I

saw stumps where I used to have limbs and scars where I used to have skin," Mortimer says. "I thought nobody could accept me, love me or even want to sit next to me."

A reason to hope

Four years passed before Mortimer met Darla, a friendly, attractive woman who smiled past his wheelchair and invited him to church.

"I was head over wheels in love the minute I saw her," he quips, smiling at the memory.

He asked Darla for a date, and she said yes.

For his part, Mortimer agreed to attend a service at the Assembly of God in Auburn, Wash., thinking it might further his relationship with Darla. He never dreamed it would also lead to a life-changing relationship with God.

The message Mortimer encountered at church touched him

deeply. The truth of God's love and forgiveness flooded him with hope. When the pastor offered to pray with anyone who wanted to receive Christ as Savior, Mortimer rolled his wheelchair to the altar.

"I sat there, and God just spoke to my heart," Mortimer says. "I realized if He wanted my life, He should have it."

Determined to give God his best, Mortimer stopped using drugs and alcohol. Within six months, he and Darla were married.

"For me the missing limbs have never been an issue," Darla says. "In many ways, God has used it as a blessing. If he had legs our ministry wouldn't be what it is today."

Mortimer's ministry began through the simple act of sharing his testimony publicly. Though he had a job as a tax accountant, it wasn't long before he was also juggling a steady stream of speaking requests.



The bike route from Gig Harbor, Wash., to New York

churches we've visited."

The Mortimers chronicled the details of their journey on a blog, hcjourney.org/journeyblog. As the posts reveal, the trip wasn't always easy. The family faced everything from a heavy snowstorm near Montana's Glacier National Park to blistering sun across the Great Plains. They coped with lost and broken gear, flat tires, illness and fatigue. But they pressed on through it all, advancing an average of about 40 miles a day.

"I do not have the option of getting off my bike and walking," Mortimer says. "I have to either totally quit or keep going."

There were a few times when the family called it quits temporarily. One such instance occurred two weeks into the journey as they tried to cross Snoqualmie Pass in Washington's Cascade Mountains. As they advanced up the mountainside, a severe storm pelted them with rain and hail, forcing them to abandon their course and duck into a restaurant.

As they sat down to lunch, a woman seated nearby jumped up and frantically asked if anyone could help her choking baby. Nicole, a nursing student at Northwest University, instinctively ran to the mother's side and performed the pediatric Heimlich maneuver, saving the child.

The incident encouraged the Mortimers. They viewed it as a

sign that God was guiding them and using even their setbacks to impact lives.

"We've had scheduled ministry stops along the way, but we've had even more unscheduled

ministry opportunities," Nicole says. "We've met people in waiting rooms and body shops. We even sang 'Happy Birthday' to a cashier at a grocery store."

Nicole says it seems strange when people remark that her family inspires them.

"To me we're just an average, typical family," she says. "But I also know that together we're making a difference, so it makes me want to get out there and do even more."

Team effort

Mortimer is physically fit and independent. He even drives with the aid of a prosthetic arm and some custom alterations to his pickup truck.

Mortimer has biked with his family for the past several years. In 2004, he and Darla cycled across their home state of Washington.

Their latest venture required several years of planning and a great deal of support from others. Everything the family used for the trip, from an RV and truck to gas and bike equipment, was donated.

Friends, relatives and volunteers provided hands-on help along the way. Mortimer's sister, Jeanne, joined them for much of the journey, filling various support roles.

Many supporters posted notes on the blog to let the team know they were praying for them. Others stopped alongside the

road to pray with them or cheer them on.

One stranger, who had passed the family in her car, e-mailed to tell them what an encouragement it was to see them conquering an enormous mountain.

The scene was a fitting metaphor for Mortimer's life, and for the lives of all who push past obstacles to fulfill their destinies in Christ.

"You just go out and do something," Mortimer says, nodding toward the distant horizon. "You don't know what people are getting out of it." **tpe**

CHRISTINA QUICK is staff writer for *Today's Pentecostal Evangel* and blogs at Refrigerator Art (cquick.ag-blogger.org).

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

1-800-4PRAYER

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