

Chapter 21

M/V Anastasis

We spent eight years at Victoria Alliance Church - good years in which we made many good friends and saw the Lord's hand at work in several lives. I became active in the pastors' ministerium and, a year later, was appointed secretary of that group. Each month we would meet for lunch and mutual encouragement.

It was in the spring of 1985 that I received a telephone call from San Pedro, California. The caller asked me if I had heard of the ship, the M/V Anastasis. I said I had not, so he proceeded to tell me of this ocean going liner which had been purchased by Youth With A Mission. Their dream was to travel to needy parts of the world carrying medical and construction workers and evangelistic teams. It was necessary to do considerable work on the vessel before it would pass the safety requirements of the USA coastguards, so they were going to bring it into the dry docks at Victoria.

"Our chief engineer, John Brignall, will be in Victoria on Tuesday," the caller said. "Could you assist us by arranging for someone to pick him up at the airport and to drive him to the graving docks?"

I said that I would be happy to do that myself so, on Tuesday of the following week, I began my long friendship with John Brignall and the Anastasis.

When the ship finally arrived in Victoria in September of 1985, I was the first one on board. John quickly introduced me to his family, several friends and finally, Don Stephens, the founder and President of Mercy Ships. Don was very gracious in welcoming me on board and then began to tell me his dreams for the time the Anastasis would be in Victoria, a time he anticipated to be three or four months.

"We will need office space with telephones" he said, "and a gymnasium where our drama teams can rehearse."

"You have them" I said, "our church is open to you."

When he asked if there was a directory of the local pastors' telephone numbers, I told him of my position as secretary of the ministerium, having in my office, all that he required. Naturally he was delighted!

The churches welcomed Don and his crew warmly, our friendship grew and I became known as their 'man of peace' (Luke 10:6). All of the crew were involved in local churches, not skipping around looking for a favorite, but remaining committed to one assembly. Our own church was greatly blessed by having the Brignall family and about ten others in regular attendance. As the time stretched from an anticipated few months into a full fourteen months, the crew began to feel that Victoria was their home - and we all felt that way also.

In November 1986, a newly licensed, Lloyds registered Anastasis sailed out of Victoria to begin its ministry. It was a bitterly cold day but our hearts were warm as we sang our farewells. Anne and I had been invited to sail with the ship to its first port of call. This was a courtesy visit to Olympia, the capitol city of the neighbouring state of Washington, USA. A week later it was our turn to give hugs and kisses to the many friends we had made, as they 'set sail' southwards to Mexico and the needy of that nation.

Little did we think that the M/V Anastasis was to become a major part of the future that the Lord was preparing for us.

Before that could happen, however, there were a couple more stepping stones that He had to place before us. Without these, we would not have been able to follow His leading when He later called us.

When we arrived in Canada in 1975 it was as 'landed immigrants' with almost the same rights as any citizen of the country. We could vote but we could not stand for parliamentary office. We enjoyed being in this fine country and were proud to be called 'Canadians'. (Welsh Canadians!!)

However, one of the problems with being a landed immigrant is that you can only be out of the country at any one time, for a maximum of six months. Should you be away for longer than that, it is necessary to reapply for immigrant status - and that is not a foregone certainty. When I had first entered Canada, I had a secure job to go to and a sponsor at Toronto French School. The time would come when I had no income and no security to offer the immigrancy office. At such a time, it might have been very difficult to re-enter Canada even though I owned a home in Victoria and our daughters were living there.

Of course, I was not thinking of this in 1989 when our youngest daughter Lynette, was planning her wedding to Phillip, an Aussie, and intending to leave Canada to live 'down under'. She wanted to become a Canadian citizen before her wedding so that, should she ever want to return to Canada, she could do so. Anne and I gave little serious thought to it, but decided that it would be good for us to do the same thing. We foresaw no time when we might need to use our citizenship, nor did we see any reason not to become such. We have changed our thinking since and are aware how that, even in this, the Lord was preparing us. Thus it was, that in June 1989 Anne and I were received as citizens of Canada.

The second stepping stone was concerning our home. In 1986 we owned a nice home in the suburbs of Victoria but it had two major drawbacks. As a pastor I often received people in our home for counselling purposes, requiring some measure of confidence. This was difficult as our home was 'open plan' with few doors dividing the living area. Secondly, there were three lawns needing regular maintainance and I am not one who enjoys gardening. When my doctor diagnosed that I had a slight prolapse of the heart, we knew it was time to move to another home, more suitable to our lifestyle. We advertised our home for sale and were amazed when we had an buyer within one week. The lady would pay what we wanted in cash, on one condition - that we vacate the house by the end of the month, just three weeks later. In fact, that meant only ten days for us as we were to leave to go on holiday at that time, having planned a visit to my sister in Australia and, thence, to Kuala Lumpur to visit some students who had been part of our congregation in Kitchener.

We agreed terms and began packing. Our furniture was placed in the homes of church members while all the smaller boxes were stored in offices in the church. We anticipated moving into rented accomodation when we returned, giving us time to find another home. That was not to be, however, as Lynette had seen 'the perfect home' on her journeys to and from work. We were not surprised to find it out of our price range with \$50 000 more equity than the house we had sold, but were very surprised when our realtor explained that it would be possible to obtain a mortgage with similar payments to those we were already paying. Further, the house had a basement apartment, rent from which would offset some of the mortgage. Then the vendor lowered her price and we were hooked.

The new mortgage was an 'equity access' mortgage, meaning that we could pay off the principal at any time without penalty. Also, we could draw out from it whenever we might need extra cash - even when I was not earning any income!

We left for holiday, giving our youngest daughter, Lynette 'power of attorney' for the purchasing of the house, while we soaked up the sun on the beaches of Malasia. Returning five weeks later on the last ferry boat from Vancouver, we were overcome to find that our church friends had moved all our furniture into the new house, even making the beds and putting the cutlery in the drawers!

That house has become a great blessing to us since its purchase. When we were away after 1991 - story yet to come - we let it out to university students who, not only kept it in good condition but also paid off all our mortgage - something I had never expected when we first purchased the home. Now it has become the sole means of income for us as we host students from the colleges of Victoria, and has more than doubled its equity in the past eight years.

We are convinced that the Lord led us, both in obtaining our citizenship and in purchasing this house. Without either, we could never have done what has been done - and we give Him thanks.