



THE CHALLENGE

October 2022

From Patience to Patient

A 30th Anniversary “God Story” from Nicaragua

Our final 30th anniversary “God Story” of 2022 comes from Tim Johnston, whom God used as field leader in Nicaragua to work among one of the last indigenous tribes in Central America, the Rama Cay people. In a culture where stubbornness, in-fighting, and competition are commonplace, Tim tells a story about the great patience of our God whose kindness and forbearance lead each of us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

I struggled through jungle brush and vines as I slowly made my way uphill to the only area where I could catch a spotty cell phone signal. Layer upon layer of jungle growth stubbornly resisted my every movement, but sending an update and pictures back to the headquarters was important. I felt a bug bite my skin through my pant leg. I stopped to check it and saw a small bump that would need tending when I got back to the guest house. Although the way was difficult, it wasn't impassable. I thought, *what a metaphor for God's work among this people group!*

As I hiked, I reminisced about the close to 20 years I've gotten to know the beauty, mystery, and challenges of the tiny island and its people. The blue jungle lagoon, vibrant Caribbean colors, and underdeveloped conditions were charming from a distance. But a closer look revealed horrendous sanitation issues caused by overcrowding and contaminated water sources. These issues, along with the deep spiritual needs of the people, brought FIA here in 2004.

I remembered how we were invited by the elders and tasked with developing a new village on the nearby mainland

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to provide a healthy, safe place where all generations of Rama could remain in the local community. I thought about how much construction and witnessing have taken place since then! Twenty-four hurricane-resistant homes, a boat dock, a walking bridge, a playground, a baseball field, a guest house for visiting teams, and a laundry/shower facility were all constructed to benefit the people and stand as a visible testimony of God's care for them. But just like the slow, painful hike to the hilltop, it was a slow pathway to reach the hearts of the Rama.

Planting Seeds of Faith

I thought about those early years—how at every construction project, the Gospel was shared and the villagers were invited to attend Bible teaching sessions. Despite outreach after outreach from missionary partners, many of the villagers seemed content to stay in their deteriorating homes and continued to hold to traditional superstitions or works-based methods to receive God's favor.

There were times I questioned our impact and thought about reconsidering our involvement. But each time, I was reminded of our Lord who "is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Psalm 145:8). If God was patient with me in my sinful stubbornness, then I could also be patient as He worked in the hearts of the Rama people.



I walked and remembered until I finally reached my destination and caught the signal. The bite on my leg was itching and starting to bother me. I texted back an update along with the day's pictures and turned to stomp my way back. As I walked, I smiled remembering the day a breakthrough came for the Rama people.

The Seeds Take Root

In 2016, after years of building and Bible teaching, four Rama believers came to ask for more formal training to evangelize their own people! It took two more years after that (2018) to see the first believers baptized. I thought of how many people had prayed, given, and visited the Rama and how almost a dozen years passed before they took a genuine interest in the things of God. It seemed like a long, even painful, journey at times.

Thinking of those times, I realized how badly my leg hurt. At the guest house, I cleaned the swollen bite hoping a good night's rest would remedy the now festering wound. Sadly, that wasn't the case. What started as a tiny scratch would grow to be a septic infection running from my ankle to my knee. I would require medical attention and be immobilized for the next five weeks in Nicaragua unable to return home due to the infection.



As I lay day after day with a swollen, painful leg, a Rama man named Ronald was assigned to care for me. He came every day to administer antibiotic shots. It was a test of my patience to have to rely on someone for my most basic needs. I realized the irony that becoming a patient required patience!

The silver lining of being laid up was that I had the opportunity to get to know Ronald. As our relationship grew, he talked to me about how he and his family came to Christ.

"I saw the Bible training sessions that other villagers went to. I watched for about 10 years from a distance to see what was going on. I could see how FIA's construction projects helped our people physically, but I wasn't sure what any of this spiritual teaching was about. So, I just watched and listened a little at a time. Then, one day, I just decided to go to a session. After about a month, I listened to close to 20 sessions and came to understand the heart of God for me. I put my trust and faith in Christ."

It was then that I understood the patience of God that had frustrated me for so many years. God had been at work. I might not have perceived it, but little by little the Spirit was drawing Ronald to Himself and the Word of God was growing roots into his soul. Through God's patience, and in His perfect timing, lives were being changed by Christ.

A Little Patience, A Lot of Fruit

As impatient as I was during my sickness, I reflected on all God had done among the Rama for the last 20 years. There are now 54 people sitting under the chronological teaching of the Bible each week! There are more than 75 believers among the Rama! And a handful of Rama men teach their people in their own heart language! The words of 2 Peter 3:9 flooded my heart, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Months later after I returned home, my leg was back to normal. But my heart was changed. On one of the last days of my visit, Ronald came to see me, but this time he brought two dozen more villagers. I was told that they wanted to pray for me. Surrounding me on the porch, some prayed out loud, and a few shy older ladies whispered in my ear that they were asking for God's healing. What a humble and beautiful moment. After so many years of patiently ministering to the Rama, they were now ministering to me. ■

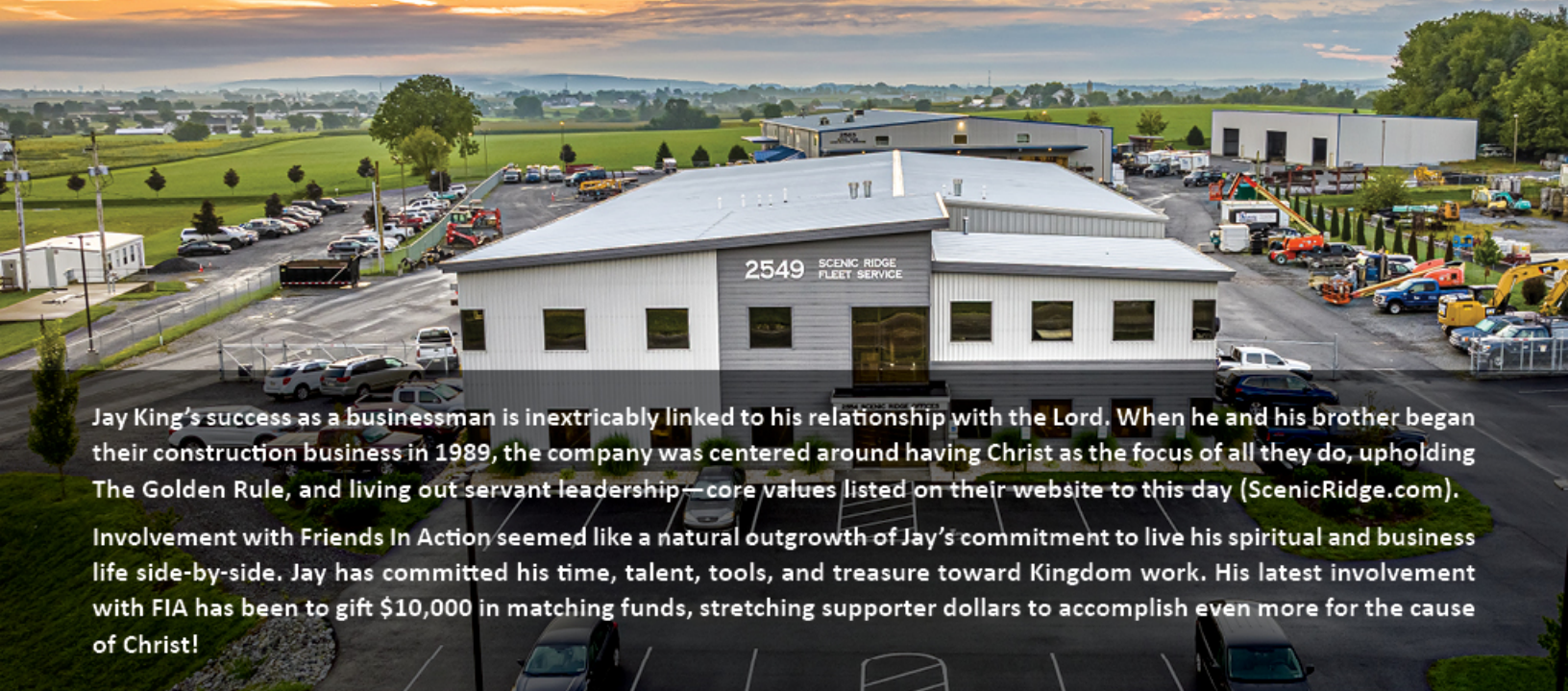


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"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."

—Ecclesiastes 7:8

A Testimony of Time, Talent, Tools, & Treasure: Jay King, President of Scenic Ridge Construction



Jay King's success as a businessman is inextricably linked to his relationship with the Lord. When he and his brother began their construction business in 1989, the company was centered around having Christ as the focus of all they do, upholding The Golden Rule, and living out servant leadership—core values listed on their website to this day (ScenicRidge.com). Involvement with Friends In Action seemed like a natural outgrowth of Jay's commitment to live his spiritual and business life side-by-side. Jay has committed his time, talent, tools, and treasure toward Kingdom work. His latest involvement with FIA has been to gift \$10,000 in matching funds, stretching supporter dollars to accomplish even more for the cause of Christ!



Jay started as a welder fitter in a small shop. He and his brother worked together in the shop for six years and then decided to create a division within the business focusing on commercial steel and concrete work (a deviation from the agricultural, wood, and concrete projects that had been the company's focus). Once the shop changed hands to a new owner, the Kings were encouraged to start their own business. In 1989, after renting a garage and office space, Scenic Ridge was birthed and the brothers were underway with clients shared from their previous place of employment.

After a couple of years, Jay began to question his long-term commitment to the business.

"My brother had gotten married, and I felt like I was there to help him build the business, but I just wasn't settled within myself that this is what I was supposed to be doing," shared Jay.

It was during this time of questioning that Jay decided to go on a mission trip to Peten Jungle, Guatemala with his church. He worked in very isolated conditions, accessible only by river and small planes, to make repairs to a base camp outpost that had been destroyed by contra guerrillas.

"It was a very spiritual time for me. I had no contact with the business and extremely limited communication with even my family. I journaled, prayed, and worked. It was then that I heard a clear calling from the Lord."

Although Jay had considered giving his life to travel and missions, he instead felt God had revealed his purpose was to help build the local business while supporting mission work in whatever way he could. After spending the next 15 years growing Scenic Ridge, Jay worked toward a business certificate and began traveling to Kona, **"Being involved with FIA is a great way to model to our employees how to use tools and trade to build the Kingdom."**

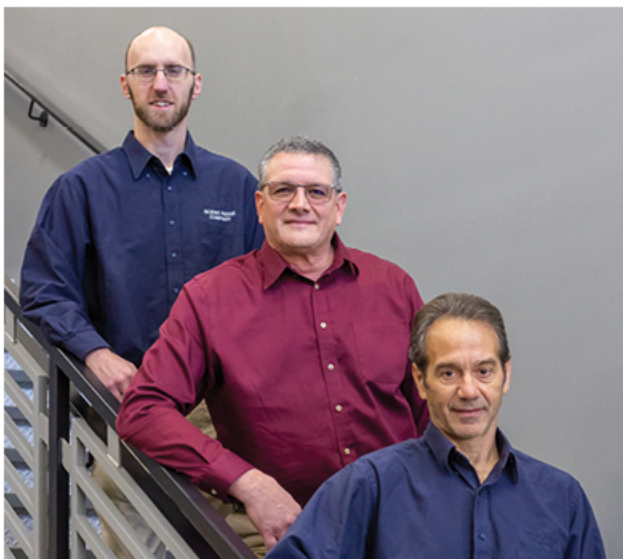
Hawaii to construct housing and training facilities for missionaries-in-training, as well as building with Homes for Hope in Mexico.

In 2013, a past board member of FIA shared with Jay that Friends In Action was doing similar construction work in six remote locations around the globe and was about to break ground on a new headquarters building in Middletown, Pennsylvania. Jay rallied his Scenic Ridge employees for multiple volunteer days to help design, fund, and coordinate much of the HQ construction.

“Jesus was a very common, practical person. He didn’t tell people what to do. He modeled it. Being involved with FIA is a great way to model to our employees how to use tools and trade to build the Kingdom,” commented Jay.

God has blessed Scenic Ridge’s commitment to Christ-centered business practices alongside supportive mission efforts. The company has grown from the two brothers to over 125 employees. Advances in technology have expanded the business to include cutting-edge automated steel fabrication processes. Completing over 400 projects each year, Scenic Ridge has tripled in size and can accommodate any scope of renovation, repair, or commercial construction project. With each new blessing, Jay always remains focused on his commitment to giving to spread the Gospel.

“Being involved with missions—volunteering and giving—is a calling. It’s not something we do because we have to. It’s because we want to. It’s at the heart of servant leadership. I would tell those considering investing in Friends In Action to do it wholeheartedly. People who develop habits of giving back will find the satisfaction and spiritual freedom I have.” ■



GIVING OPPORTUNITY:

Scenic Ridge is offering \$10,000 in matching funds available toward a special one-day of giving!

**Mark your calendars for
Friday, November 18, 2022
to be part of FIA’s 24-hour fundraiser!**

Any dollar amounts given to FIA’s “Where Needed Most Fund,” or other designated projects, will be **DOUBLED** as well as accrue **NO TRANSACTION FEES** during this one-day-only event.

Learn more about this exciting giving opportunity in the enclosed letter.





PUTTING GOD'S STORY On Display

Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, once said, "No company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it." This is certainly true of Friends In Action's staff, who not only embody the mission of "Moving Earth to Share Heaven," but also willingly say "yes" to whatever it takes to see Jesus made known. FIA is rich with the stories of these faithful team members who, by God's grace, have labored- 10, 20, even all 30 years of the organization's history- to produce a legacy that reflects HIS Story. Today, we recognize a few of these outstanding members who have served at the heart of FIA ministries.



A Change in Stride

LINDA & DICK THOMAS

Linda and Dick Thomas first joined the organization when it was still called "Friends of New Tribes Missions" during its founding year in 1992. The Thomases traveled the US hosting awareness dinners to showcase FIA's goals and garner involvement from others.

Dick and Linda would eventually move into coordination and leadership roles, with Linda managing a nation-wide hospitality ministry for missionaries traveling the US, and Dick purchasing and expediting supplies, equipment, and materials to missionaries living around the country and around the world. This couple has faithfully served the Lord in this ministry for 30 years, and it is with joy that we honor their service.

This year, they officially transition to part-time ministry status, remotely supporting the work of the shipping ministry which has relocated from Missouri to the mission headquarters in Pennsylvania.

Thankful for their years of wisdom and stories of God's faithfulness, we rejoice that we will continue to enjoy their presence and support on the FIA team!





Bidding Adieu

MIKE & SUE WARD

Mike and Sue Ward first joined FIA in 1999 in response to a call to action through New Tribes Mission (now called Ethnos360). The Executive Director (Tim Johnston) recruited this couple from the hills of Idaho to move to Missouri to develop and lead a shipping ministry for the organization.

Over the next 23 years, Mike blessed hundreds of missionaries and organizations around the world each year by connecting the “stuff” needed for ministry work with the place it needed to be. Sue took on the financial administration side of supporting the mission and the shipping department. With the support of other FIA members and volunteers over the years, the Lord enabled the Wards’ ministry to assist over 140 partnering organizations and over 1,000 missionaries! This past year, the shipping ministry shipped its 500th load! From pallets and crates to 20’ and 40’ containers, this team figured out how to ship it all. In addition to their leadership with the Shipping Department, the Wards also visited the field to encourage other FIA missionaries.

At the end of this year, Mike and Sue will step back from their involvement with FIA and retire from the ministry. We know that although their involvement may look different, their hearts remain committed to lifting before the Lord those He has called to the frontlines. We love these faithful prayer warriors and are grateful for the lessons learned and journey shared.



In Memory

GARY FERCH

It is with fond memories that we remember Gary Ferch and the ongoing legacy of his life of faith.

After almost 20 years of helping to make Christ known by serving the national church in Northern Bolivia, this past year the Lord called Gary to his eternal reward after several years of battling cancer.

Though the struggle in the flesh sapped his strength, his zeal and passion for the Lord never waned and neither did his commitment to support our FIA partners in Bolivia. From his start with FIA in 2002, to the development of a radio ministry reaching hundreds of thousands of national and indigenous people, to supporting a riverboat outreach ministry traveling the Amazon River, Gary and his wife Donna stepped outside their comfort zone through whatever door the Lord opened to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

Over the years, Gary has shared many stories of what God has done –and the amazing God-moments and stories of breakthrough will never be forgotten!

Our brother Gary is with His Lord, and we are ever grateful for Donna continuing to serve with us as we support those going to the last, the least and the lost to make Christ known in Bolivia and beyond. ■





FIA Trip Updates



Missouri and Wisconsin, USA

Two teams of tradespeople traveled stateside to Ethnos360's missionary training facilities as a stepping stone toward global involvement. The team completed two full bathroom remodels, installed new living room flooring, and completed electrical work and HVAC repairs on multiple housing units to benefit those studying to be the next generation of frontline Gospel workers!



Bolivia

FIA leaders met with national ministry partners in the Amazon River Basin regions of Bolivia in August. God is doing exciting things through 24/7 Christian radio broadcasts, the Indigenous Training Center, and medical mission outreaches! Thank you for praying and giving to see these efforts continue!

2023 TRIP OPPORTUNITIES FIAintl.org/get-involved/trips



West Africa

Well-Drilling Teams | 1 wk., Feb. & Mar. 4-5 ppl.
Fabrication/Construction | 1 week, May 2023
Welding and completion of steel-frame hangar and solar installation project. 3-4 ppl.



Nicaragua

Construction | 1st 2 wks. of Feb., Mar., & May
Community development & construction projects (welding, plumbing, electrical, carpentry, interior & exterior finish work, water supply). 6-8 ppl.
Bible Teaching Trip | 1 wk., June. 6-8 ppl.



Vanuatu

Water Project Trip | 2 wks., July–Sept.
Base camp and site access development, launching phase 1 development work (excavations and road works, base camp construction); 6-8 ppl.
FIA Base Repair Trip | 2 wks., July–Sept.
Infrastructure repair for damage done during 2020 Cyclone Harold (steel frame & wood frame construction, plumbing, electrical, interior and exterior finish work); 6-8 ppl.



Papua New Guinea

Mechanical Trip | 2 wks.
Heavy engine vehicle repair and base operations maintenance.



Mexico

Water Well Drilling Trip | 2 wks., Mar–April
Partnering in Northern Mexico to support the water supply ministry of a mission hospital serving in the Sierra Madres mountains; 2-3 ppl.

Mechanical Maintenance | 2 wks., Mar./April
Providing mechanical services to support the mission hospital vehicle and equipment maintenance programs, as well as offering mechanical services to the various mission workers serving in the region; 2-3 ppl.



USA Teams

Missouri Teams 1, 2, & 3 |
Feb. 11–19, Feb. 25–Mar. 5, or Nov. 11–19
Interior remodel of residential dwellings at Ethnos360 mission training center in Camdenton, MO (general laborers, interior finishing, plumbing, electrical).

Wisconsin Team 1 | **June 9–25**
Construction and site development project, supporting infrastructure development at Ethnos360 training school in Waukesha, WI (general laborers, framing/exterior finishing work, drywallers, plumbers).



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