

Up Close and Personal — Part 2

with the Faith Studies Team of Evangelists

Toby Travis, Vice President of Ministry Development

Editor's Note: Last month we featured Faith Studies evangelists Dr. Don Bierle and Hasnah Burdge. This month we continue with our two illusionist evangelists, Toby Travis (below) and Adrian Van Vactor (page 2).

When Toby Travis was in Junior High School, he wanted to be an actor. He put this on a survey at a school career days workshop, but was dismayed when a fellow student copied his answer. Having just completed a book report about magician and escape artist Harry Houdini, he erased his first answer, and carefully hiding the paper from his neighbor, he wrote "magician."

A guidance counselor introduced him to illusionist (and Toby's future mentor) Robert Thrasher. The rest, as they say, is history.

Before coming to Faith Studies, Toby ministered as a youth pastor, and as

a special representative for Youth for Christ; he toured with world renowned illusionist and magician André Kole, and he formed Toby Travis Ministries (TTM), featuring his "Illusion & Beyond" stage show. Growing up in rural "Hungry Hollow," outside Montrose, Pennsylvania, where his world stretched as far as Snake Creek behind his parents' home, Toby has seen the Lord expand his horizons. Since 1988, he has presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to more than 375,000 people around the globe.

(cont'd on page 3)



Faith Studies evangelists and illusionists, Adrian Van Vactor and Toby Travis

Celebrating the Celebration

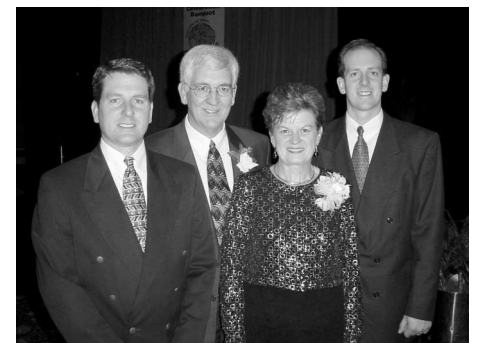
The 2002 Celebration Banquet on April 13 was a complete success. Nearly 400 people turned out to honor Don and Vernee Bierle for their 20 years of leadership. In fact, it was the largest celebration event in the history of the ministry. People were encouraged by what is happening at Faith Studies, and left challenged with ways they could help. The opportunity to invest in the ministry resulted in gifts and pledges totaling more than \$130,000.

The theme of the evening was "Extending the Vision... Through Faith." Dr. Bierle outlined the ministry's intention to step out in faith to fulfill the vision of expanding the ministry, both geographically and culturally. As testimony of God's honoring this vision, the largest single donation to our ministry was announced: a \$500,000 gift. Don shared that this gift came in exactly while he was praying about the future direction for Faith Studies. (For more on this, read Don's letter on page 4.)

Keynote speaker Dr. Lon Allison stirred the audience with a compelling message that the nature of ministry is spiritual battle. Just as Peter Pan

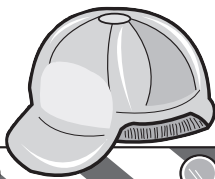
was called to help in the movie *Hook*, we must each be prepared to answer God's call. Drawing a parallel from Revelation 12:11, Dr. Allison paraphrased the film, "Gotta fly! (to the blood of the cross). Gotta crow! (overcoming by the word of our testimony). Gotta fight! (not loving our lives). Because Hook (the accuser Satan) is back."

We offer our profound thanks to all who participated in the banquet, and to those many who invested their time and finances toward the ministry of Faith Studies International.



Sons Steve (far left) and Brad Bierle (far right) made a surprise presentation honoring their parents for their ministry at Faith Studies and in their lives.

God at Work



March 2002

Here's a snapshot of some of what God has been doing in our ministry lately.

FaithSearch

Events:	5
Attendance:	353
Response Forms:	228
Faith Commitments:	142

Supplementary Events:	23
Attendance:	2,575
Response Forms:	321
Faith Commitments:	42

FAITH STUDIES INTERNATIONAL

Faith Studies International is an inter-denominational, not-for-profit organization dedicated to presenting evidences for the Christian faith through the *FaithSearch* seminar and its derivatives—including outreach and training seminars, media resources, and discipleship programs. Faith Studies International is not publicly or denominationally supported.

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David Lundstrom

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Up Close and Personal — Part 2

Adrian Van Vactor, National Representative



continue to tour and do ministry, but we really want him to deepen his educational experience."

Since coming to Faith Studies, Adrian has taken every possible opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. He has spoken to nearly 65,000 people around the world, in Europe, Australia, the Middle East and Asia. Plans are underway for tours to Africa and South America as well. Describing Adrian's ability, Toby said, "He is truly a world class magician, and could be working anywhere in the industry. But he chooses not to because of his passion for the lost." His ability and availability continue to give Adrian opportunities to travel. In fact, he just returned from two weeks in East Asia, developing ministry opportunities there even while continuing his studies.

Adrian studies to hone his skills, in both illusion and presentation of the Gospel. He has received major awards in the world of illusion, but has chosen instead to busy himself with the work of an evangelist, rather than being merely an entertainer.

"I think the world of Adrian," said Toby. As more of the world sees Adrian, with his challenging and entertaining presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it is quite likely it will be changed for eternity.



Up until Adrian Van Vactor became a full-time evangelist, he was working as an entertainer on cruise ships. Think "The Love Boat." Think ports of call. Adrian, however, thought, "I need to get my 'act' together" and so he pursued a career in full-time Christian service. "The next thing I knew, I was in my van moving to Minneapolis."

Adrian had met Faith Studies evangelist Toby Travis when the two were touring India in 1997. "I was so impressed with his skill, his level of excellence in his presentation," Toby recalled, "but also his knowledge and passion. I came home from the trip and said to [my wife] Karen, 'There's a guy I'd like to spend some time working with.'"

That desire bore fruit when Adrian became Toby's intern during the fall of 1999, and then joined Faith Studies as an evangelist in January 2000. When Adrian came to Minnesota, he came with a cage full of birds used in his act: several doves and one large, talkative blue and gold macaw named "Angel." One Faith Studies employee said, "The warehouse was for the birds! It was noisy, but Angel sure was fun to have around."

Now the warehouse is quiet, as Adrian has moved back to his home in Arizona—with his birds—to complete his studies. "He's on an educational sabbatical," said Don Bierle. "He will

CLASSIFIEDS

Donate Frequent Flier Miles

With air travel costs escalating, you can help meet our ministry's increasing travel expenses needs by donating your frequent flier miles to Faith Studies International.

**2nd Annual Faith Studies
Best Ball
Golf Tournament**

**Wednesday,
July 24, 2002
Dahlgreen G.C.
12:30 PM Start**

Burger Buffet follows

Call to reserve a tee time for
your foursome: (952) 401-4501

\$50 covers greens fee,
golf cart and buffet.



What People Are Saying

FAITHSEARCH:

It makes me wonder why I don't bring *more* friends! I did bring a friend, and he was very moved. —JB, St. Louis Park, MN

I appreciated your open format. This has helped me to begin answering some questions. Thanks. —CM, Golden Valley, MN

I have been told and believe that God should be three things: all loving, all powerful, and all knowing. This is the God that I want so *badly* to believe. However, the state of the world leaves at least one of these things contradictory. —SK, Minneapolis, MN

As a lifelong skeptic, I needed the cerebral approach to dispel my doubts. —NS, Minnetonka, MN, after making a first time faith commitment

Volunteers Add Value and Vitality

Volunteers have played a vital role in the work and ministry of Faith Studies International from the very beginning. And although they don't labor to receive earthly recognition, we want to take time to communicate our thanks, and to commend them for serving with us. Our many volunteers help us tirelessly and faithfully, week in and week out. Their labor of love enables many critical facets of our work, including preparing our mailings, which literally saves the ministry *many thousands of dollars* each year.



Volunteers have been important partners in ministry since the early days of FaithStudies.

We estimate that we receive, on average, approximately 1,000 hours of donated time from our volunteers *each year*. And that doesn't include countless hours of prayer, or their personal involvement in our events. That is nearly the equivalent of having an additional staff person working *half time*. It boils down to over 80 hours per month, or two additional work weeks, enabling us to carry on our ministry without additional overhead. These dear ones are truly God's provision in our lives and work.

If that were all, we would truly be blessed. But beyond the actual work our volunteers accomplish for the ministry of the Gospel, we are further blessed by their fellowship. There have been many touching and edifying moments of conversation, prayer, support, encouragement and rejoicing around the tables as we work together with them.

Nearly all this work and ministry takes place behind the scenes, invisible to the world. Yet we trust our Father in heaven

to honor our volunteers' participation in our ministry. And if we may borrow from the apostle Paul's commendation of the Corinthian church for their participation in a special offering, we offer our volunteers this blessing:

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

—2 Corinthians 9:12-14

Thank you, volunteers.

If you would like to invest your time as to support the ministry of the Gospel at Faith Studies International, we would love to have you. Please call our office at (952) 401-4501.

Up Close and Personal — Part 2

Toby Travis, Vice President of Ministry Development

(cont'd from page 1)

"What a thrill!" exclaimed Toby, "I am always humbled that God could take a country hick kid like me from the hills of rural Pennsylvania and allow me to be a part of the building of His kingdom in so many different parts of the world."

His connection with Faith Studies International started long before he joined our staff, however. While serving at Minnetonka Community Church (MCC) in the mid-80s, he became a friend of Dr. Bierle. MCC was instrumental in the early days of Faith Studies, then called H.I.S. Ministries. "Over the years," Toby recalled, "we kept tabs on each other and our growing ministries." In the mid-90s, Toby and Don met to consider how they might possibly serve together, but the timing "wasn't quite right."

TTM was a successful outreach ministry, attracting large audiences to hear the Gospel. Yet Toby felt the need for more. He hungered to offer a more in-depth discussion of the evidences for the Christian faith than was possible in his 60-90 minute stage show. And he felt the need for a strategy to more-effectively mobilize local churches for such outreach, and for preparing them to disciple people making faith commitments at his presentations. Faith Studies International provided the answers, with its in-depth presentation of evidence in *FaithSearch*, the *Friend to Friend* strategy for churches, and *The Owner's Manual* discipleship study (now called *Growing Faith*).

Then in 1998, "Don called and asked if I would consider being a representative for Faith Studies," remembered Toby.

"One thing led to another, and in March, 1999, our ministries merged."

Toby continues to present "Illusion & Beyond," as well as *FaithSearch* and other events, to proclaim the good news. As Vice President, he oversees the international activity of Faith Studies. "There is an almost insatiable desire within me to share with as many people as possible the love of Christ," he said. "And now, as the years have passed, and the Lord has allowed me to travel the world, I'm motivated even more as I have personally witnessed the devastation of individuals, communities, cultures and entire countries who are without hope."

Toby married a girl from back home, just up the road from Hungry Hollow. He and Karen have two daughters, Karissa and Katie, and occasionally they all assist in the "Illusion" shows. "It is a great joy for all of us, and a thrill to be able to serve together," said Toby. "For Karen and I, it is really a dream come true to be in ministry with our children."



Toby Travis

A message from the president

FaithSearch is at the heart of our vision



As we conclude our most successful ever celebration banquet, the central issue for Faith Studies' future is seeking the Lord's face to be certain of His vision for our ministry. To know God's vision for us is to make it our passion—and then to act on it with resolve.

Nineteenth century Scottish novelist and poet, Robert Louis Stevenson, at age twelve watched

after dark a man lighting lanterns in the street. When his mother asked what he was doing, he replied: **"I am watching a man cut holes in the darkness."**

For the last 25 years I have observed our *FaithSearch* message doing that in a spiritual sense. I am certain that the *FaithSearch* message was the vision God originally gave this ministry to proclaim in the Twin Cities. I am convicted anew, by God's Spirit within me, that *FaithSearch*, through His church, should continue to be the primary means for us to "cut holes in the darkness" of our culture and of people's lives.

We are now called to extend that vision. We have wonderful resources—capable evangelists, effective publications, and a professional support staff. With these in place, Faith Studies International, along with its church and parachurch partners, has the potential — *and the responsibility* — to launch an extraordinarily effective proclamation of Jesus.

Extending the Vision

"Extending the Vision" is our passion and resolve to fulfill

God's vision and call for Faith Studies, by renewing our zeal for reaching the diversity of people in America, while extending His redemption to people in new geographic regions, languages and cultures. Let me explain the "Extending the Vision" logo:

- The foundation of the vision is the CROSS
- Its goal is REDEEMING PEOPLE by the power of that cross
- Its extent is GLOBAL
- Its proclamation is primarily through *FaithSearch*

We will expand the ministry we already have, and ask the Lord for the additional provision of Hispanic and African-American evangelists who can extend the *FaithSearch* message to two of the fastest growing groups in this country.

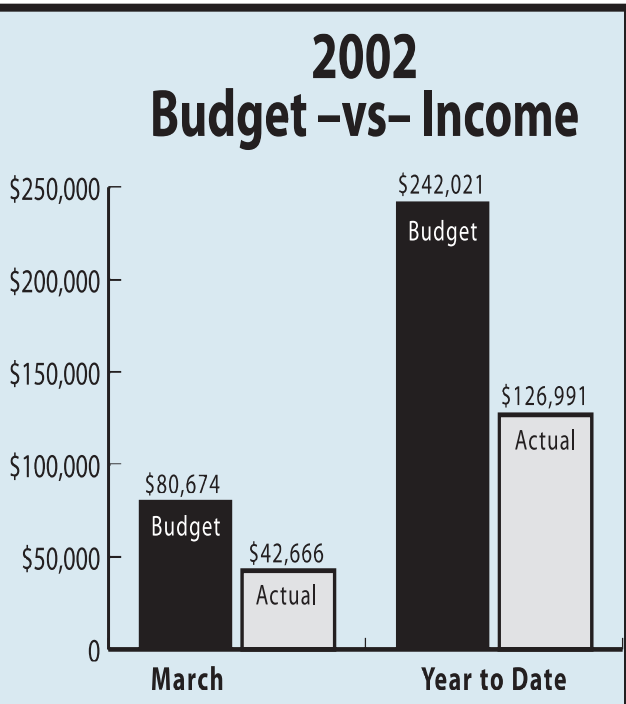
We will extend the *FaithSearch* message to new geographic regions, languages and cultures. We currently have opportunity for training and outreach in India, Russia, China, Romania, South America and Canada. *Surprised by Faith* has been translated into Russian and Chinese, and the *Owner's Manual* into Romanian.

We want to be proactive to "Extend the Vision" that God has given us. A ship in the harbor is safe, but that is not what ships were built for! To enable us to sail the seas of worldwide ministry, Faith Studies needs the combined breath of thousands who will fill our sails through vigilant prayer, a commitment of time, and intentional and determined financial giving.

Is this wishful fantasy—or can it happen? I'll discuss that in the next issue.



Dr. Don Bierle
President

Praise

1. **Celebration Banquet.** Most successful ever! Incredible presence of God.
2. Praise for Pat O'Hare joining our staff in our Church Partner Services group! She will help to contact and follow up with churches about scheduling events.
3. In the first quarter 2002, 52 future events were added to the schedule!



Prayer

1. Continue to pray for **positive financial responses** from our supporters. We are still running a monthly deficit against budget.
2. Pray that we could do with national denominations what we are doing with Christian Women's Clubs, using the *Friend to Friend* training.
3. Pray about **BLI** funding to introduce *FaithSearch* to pastors in India. Pray for a reduction in airfare to India. Pray that people would donate frequent flier miles.
4. Pray for scheduled events. For the host church and the lost they are inviting, for coordinating teams, for the anointing of the Lord on presenters, for the conviction of the Holy Spirit, for the nurturing of new believers.
6. Protection of our staff and their families as they work and travel.