

Chapter 1

Introduction



Part 1: A Review

We suspect that most readers of this history will be current or prospective Open Air Campaigners (OAC) staff. If you happen to be someone reading this book who is not in one of those categories, we believe you will also benefit from this book, because learning how God has worked through our staff is an example of how He can work through you as well.

Even though the gospel never changes, the places where we proclaim this truth and the audiences we share it with do. Our motto, which will be mentioned numerous times throughout this book, is "Presenting Christ By All Means Everywhere." The principal embodied in this motto is as true today as it was in 1892 when OAC began. Throughout our history, as God has opened new doors to present Christ, our staff have used all means available to do so, wherever that may take place. We have always welcomed God's leading into new fields of ministry, and even though every new location has not produced a full-time resident OAC worker, significant ongoing outreach has taken place nonetheless. Such outreach has included training many others to conduct effective open-air evangelism which God often uses to carry on the ministry even without local OAC staff present.

This book is a continued historical update documenting such doors of opportunity. The first book, by Jim Duffecy, traced the birth and expansion of OAC in 1892 up through 1983. This book will document how the same gospel has been able to not only continue

in existing locations but has expanded into many new fields.



LES WERRY & JIM DUFFECY SHARING THEIR VISION FOR NEW FIELDS

It is a testimony to God's hand of blessing that any ministry could last more than 100 years. It is a privilege to be part of such a ministry, whether as a staff member, volunteer, training participant, prayer supporter, or financial partner. Think of it: OAC has been active for over 134 years, is worldwide in scope, continues to grow, has remained faithful to its founding mission of evangelism,

and is highly relevant to the current culture. That's the time-proven nature of OAC, and not many organizations in the world have such a rich heritage. The hand of God is surely upon this mission. We give Him the glory for using us all these years and desire to keep our eyes on Him in the future.

Compiling this history update has involved the cooperation and involvement of many people worldwide. Taking the information provided by all these people and putting it together for publication has been a joint venture of OAC-USA staff members Russ Hodder and John Cutlip, who have nearly 100 years of full-time experience working in the Open Air Campaigners environment between them. The following is their perspective on this project.

Part 2 - Russ Hodder



I praise and thank God for all involved in making this book a reality. Many thanks to the following: to Rob George (former OACI president) for all his encouragement in this project and for his willingness to encourage the OACI staff to participate by getting their stories to me. To David Wilson, whose clear and readable accounts of his ministry of planting OAC branches around the world did not need a rewrite; I just largely quoted him. To co-worker Frank Baldus for his invaluable editing of my first draft. To John Cutlip, whose considerable editing and formatting skills have made this book a reality. To all the OAC staff worldwide, whose written contributions and active ministries out in the open air made this book possible.

It has been a special blessing for me reading about and then recording the experiences of these men and women of God. I pray their stories will be a blessing to all who read them. I also praise God for the privilege of recording what He has done through the ministry of OAC International!

Part 3 - John Cutlip

The world of Open Air Campaigners was certainly not on my career radar as a newlywed to Sue in 1976; although, looking back, it is interesting that we were married in the open air! A year after our marriage, I applied and was accepted to attend the Moody Bible Institute (MBI). As I set foot on the downtown Chicago campus for the first time in the fall of 1977, little did I realize that events at this place over the next three years would change our lives forever. Part of this change would include being introduced to Open Air Campaigners by fellow MBI students Chris and Barb Schroeder in 1978, and training received in 1980 during a three-week evangelism seminar led by OAC staff, including Jim



**JOHN & SUE OPEN AIR
WEDDING - 1976**

Duffecy, Art Williams, and Ed Lowe. After the application and orientation school process, Sue and I were accepted onto staff and headed to the New York-New Jersey branch of OAC to begin our ministry, which has continued uninterrupted for the past 45 years. However, we did move 50 miles west to Pennsylvania in 1989! Working in the USA national office, it did not take long for us to become intimately acquainted with this mission's past, present, and future heartbeat.

It was a privilege to help Jim Duffecy compile and bring the first book of OAC history, "The Truceless Warfare Advances," to life. It is now a double privilege to help compile and bring to life "Same Gospel — New Fields," which will pick up from where Jim's book left off in 1983 and bring the reader's understanding of this work up to the present day.

Compiling this book has been a monumental project and could not have taken place were it not for the groundwork laid by my friend and fellow OAC co-worker, Russ Hodder. Russ has been on staff since July 1977, serving as the Los Angeles area director for 34 years. His long-term OAC experience, love for history, and ability to be amazingly articulate have all been put to good use in gathering all the foundational materials needed for the content of this book.

Also vital in the birthing process of this history update was the input from OAC national directors and many other key staff worldwide. We are grateful to all who willingly shared details of how God has kept His hand on this ministry for so many years and used each staff person and volunteer, despite our shortcomings and human limitations.

Russ and I found it encouraging to receive history reports of the open-air ministry through the years from former OAC staff and non-OAC staff who appreciate the close ministry affiliation and the working relationship they have experienced with us. Their eager willingness to contribute to this project reminded us of the strong sense of belonging and unity within the OAC family, even when we sometimes disagree.

There certainly was a spiritual battle in the process of bringing this book to the point you see in front of you. The first draft was almost complete when COVID-19 hit; within a year of that event, Sue and I lost our house to a devastating fire. Then, cancer hit both myself and co-worker Mike Bussen. Despite these challenges, we remained resilient and held fast. Even though this project was delayed for a few years, we are grateful that God brought us through with a resolve to finalize this writing to His glory.

I appreciate so much the help of my dear wife, Sue, co-workers Mike Bussen, Renae Bussen, former USA board member Rex Trent, Bailey Kennedy (daughter of Idaho staff Mark and Angela Kennedy), and Malia Welton (daughter-in-law of Chip and Tammy Welton from OAC Canada), who took the time to proofread, sometimes multiple times, and made valuable suggestions during our time of compiling and editing the contents of this book. A special thanks also to Jim and Grace Vine of OAC Australia, who helped fact-check to make sure what we are sharing is accurate and trustworthy.