

"My concern is that the Trustees don't close it down. I am pretty sure that they will try. They will consider it from every angle except one -- the fact that before God I took responsibility for a man and his family. It is a massive responsibility and I know that I was wrong, I should never have done what I did. If you can, please protect my heart on this, OK?"

All day Saturday I was tied up in meetings with the Country coordinators, but I kept giving them breaks so that I could go upstairs and check in with Doctor. By now he was in bed a good deal of the time. In the afternoon we put an armchair out on the porch and Dr. and Mrs. Wierwille and Barbara sat out. Mrs. Wierwille had been concerned that Doctor was not getting enough air or exercise. Doctor decided to "be a good boy" and go down. After a short while he was too chilled so he went back up.

That evening we did a steak fry for the Country coordinators and all ate our steaks in the kitchen of the ELO Suite. Doctor was a cordial host. After we were done eating, the leaders went back down to continue meeting. Before I went to bed I told Barbara that I was going to go all the way to International with Doctor. I had not told him, but I knew in my heart that I would never be happy any other way.

Sunday was busy with leaders' meetings and the other functions of the day, but I kept going up to check on Doctor. Between activities I helped Mrs. Wierwille pack and get ready so that everything would be basically done before the service at 5:00. Doctor slept most of the day getting up finally in the afternoon to get ready. At 4:15 he dedicated our Abigail Nicole. We had gotten to it in an amusing way. He was telling me how much he liked having a satellite dish so he could watch sports. He said he would love to buy one for me and Barbara if we wanted one. We talked about how we could not receive American programs here even with a dish so he asked if there was anything that he could get us as a gift. I told him the greatest gift he could give us would be to dedicate Abigail. He cried and hugged me, and in the end we set the time for 4:15 on Sunday as this would let him get dressed up once for both events.

Barbara's mother arrived from Canada for a preplanned visit to see her new granddaughter just a short while before the dedication was to take place and we were blessed to all be together for the event. We did a small service with our family, Dr. and Mrs. Wierwille, and the two N's, Nicola (Nikki) Quinn and Nicole Kőnz who were in our hearts when we chose the "Nicole" of Abigail Nicole.

Shortly after the dedication everyone else left, and Doctor and I got ready to head over to the service. After checking his notes he handed me his Bible as he had many times through the years, and with tears in his eyes said: "Well, son, this may be the last time. Tomorrow we go home and see if there have been any changes or not. If not then I guess this will be the last. You know, son, there is only one man who could have handled Europe, that's you. In my heart there were only two men who could handle the Presidency, you and Craig. Right now there is only one man who can save the Ministry, that's you. You and Craig are the only ones left that know of. If what I saw the other night in the video is right, he is fading fast. The only hope that is left as far as I can see it is for you to get to Craig somehow and talk to him. I have not been able to."

He stopped in the hall of the Suite and looked at me with his intense manner: "I have not been able to stop this Athlete of the Spirit thing. Let me tell you, it may well end up costing us the Ministry. When you forsake God's Word for the imagery of that Word, you lose the power of God. The same is true of research. You never research for research's sake. Anything ahead of God is sin. So many other men and ministries have gone under on this very point through the years.

"It took me years to convince our people that Christianity was something to be taken seriously. Effectively, we have lost all that. It is just a game again, and that is not at all what I had in my heart when I taught it originally. I don't know how you will ever get through to Craig and the rest on that one, I really don't. It's like we talked about the other night, whatever a man willingly disciplines himself to is what he loves. Once, this Ministry was a Ministry of the accuracy of God's Word and deliverance for His people; that is why He blessed it and protected it."

This was the fifth time since the Fortieth Anniversary celebration that he had expressed his deep concern to me about this topic. The first was during the Anniversary week immediately following a short presentation by John Lynn. The second was on 25 February, 1983, at 4:30 a.m. in MacClesfield, England. The third was during our talk in Caen, France, on the evening of 26 March, 1984 (which I had thought rather incongruous at the time). The fourth was as we watched the videotape, "Sons of God", the night of 9-10 May, 1985. The fifth was the night of his last teaching of God's Word as we stood in the hall of the ELO Suite just prior to going over to the

teaching. He had expressed concerns of where he saw things going if the situation could not be rectified the night that we had watched the video.

"If Craig does not come back to the integrity of the Word then before too long he will begin to blame others around him for lacking spiritual perception and will begin to blame the loss of power in the Ministry on others. I've seen it before and I see it in the Word. He will start to lash out wrongly. It will hurt so many. It will sound genuine, but it will not bring deliverance to those who follow what he says. Spiritually they will be empty words. Once God's Word is compromised in any way it no longer is God's true Word. You have error, and error is error.

"I have fought this thing all my life. I know what I am talking about. I have seen it in the Church, the mission fields and in other ministries. Paul faced the exact same thing. Outwardly they salsam you and slobber all over you, but without a solid Biblical footing you flounder. He'll be grabbing at straws. I sure wish I could do something for those who will be around him when it happens, if he doesn't get back to the truth of the Word. The further you drift the worse it gets. Look how far Saul went when he stopped lovingly listening to Samuel.

"Sure Craig was up against a lot. Right before the inauguration Donnie really pulled in all the strings. Craig was up against a stacked deck; I know that. But, he chose to discipline himself for the Athlete of the Spirit thing and not for the Presidency. Today, the seat of the President is basically vacant. Craig took a portion, the authority, without the responsibility.

"I sure don't know why Donnie isn't blessed and thankful; we bought him his doctorate. If Craig had wanted to be a good President he could have; he chose to discipline himself to other things. I know that if he had applied himself honestly he could have gotten to the bottom of things. You did, and you were not in the middle and didn't have the responsibility. I did, and I was forced out. I just know that he could have, too. Why he didn't -- I just don't know why. Son, he basically didn't stick to what I taught. He gave. I sure don't know why."

He continued as we walked down the hall: "Chris, if things ever do get back on the Word I don't know if any of those men will be big enough to straighten things back out again. I just don't know. I wish I did. All the work of a lifetime.... To be lost so soon.... At least I wrote a lot of it down so maybe others will rise up in the future.

"I want you to remember, I may have made mistakes, but to the best of my ability I never have handled the Word dishonestly or deceitfully. You know that; you lived with me. It just hurts my heart. Paul had the same problem in his day too.

"Being here with you has been a blessing. I think you are the first man that I have really been able to talk with like this in a long time, maybe since Uncle Harry died. Last time we were with you was a wonderful vacation for me, this time we haven't had much time for that, have we?" As we left the Suite we curtailed discussions of the Ministry and we chatted, making small talk.

We got into the car and drove over so that he could teach God's Word for the last time in his life. His remark before going out to teach was so typical, "Well, this is the finals this time, isn't it?"

That night after the fellowship Doctor had all the Country coordinators over to watch a movie in the Suite. He sat in his pajamas and robe and visited and then showed them the movie True Grit with John Wayne. He was so blessed to get to sit with all of them and just relax after it was all over.

After the film had been on for a while he went in the office to pack his briefcases. He had done most of the work already, but needed to do the last little bits. After he had done that he said good-night to everyone and went off to bed. When he was settled I told him that I had made all the necessary arrangements and would be going all the way to International Headquarters with him and that the decision was made and that was final. We both laughed and cried and I went away to go pack and get ready to go.

In the morning, after seeing the Country coordinators off, I finished getting myself ready and then went up to see about Dr. and Mrs. Wierwille. They were all ready and set to go. The Corps wanted to give the Wierwilles gifts so we had planned to go downstairs early enough so that there would be time to graciously receive the gifts, say goodbye and leave in plenty of time for the airport. We had decided to leave extra early so that we could go at a slower speed and so that if there were any problems at all we would not be pushed for time.

The evening before, Dr. Wierwille and I had discussed his giving each person at the campus a gift. Previously I had made for Doctor a unique pin that he could give away. He always liked to have distinctive gifts to give to people, so I had designed and had produced for him a small pin with the logo of The Way on it. When I first presented these to him we talked over his utilization of the pins. He had instructed me how he wanted them only ever produced for him and that he would be the only one to have them to give away. He said that that way any

time someone saw one they would know it had been a personal gift from Dr. Wierwille. He wanted to make available the pins to those at the campus and in talking through how to do it he choked up, tears in his voice. "If things are no different when we get back home, then these will be the last ones ever given away." In the morning, to save Doctor having to work too hard, we had the pins all laid out on a table and he invited each person to take one and wear it proudly.

Leaving was hard. Doctor and Barbara both had tears in their eyes and lumps in their throats. We could not stay around too long because Doctor was not strong enough to stay standing for very long. We left and traveled at our own pace to the airport, arriving well ahead of schedule.

After I checked in all the bags and took care of all the details, Doctor and I waited in the car until it was close to time while Mrs. Wierwille went into the Skyshop. Doctor and I walked into the terminal, but Doctor was not strong enough to walk all the distance. He ended up sitting while I went and got him a wheelchair to ride in. I also made arrangements with the airline to have another wheelchair at the other end so that he would not need to walk in Boston.

We went through passport control and then we waited. Doctor and I got to go on to the plane separately because of the wheelchair. Mrs. Wierwille went up the normal way but we were loaded into a truck with a lift bed and driven to the plane. The truck had one of the scissor lifts that lifts the body of the truck up to the level of the plane. As we were going up, I was trying to keep track of all the belongings and details, and Doctor said something that I could not understand. I asked him to repeat himself and he said, "Like the Rock". I had to think and think to see what he was talking about, but he was talking about going up in the scissor lift to open the Rock of Ages. His wit was as sharp as ever, even though he was weak.

The flight was very good and the help on the plane most cordial. They arranged for a whole row for Doctor to lie down in in addition to his reserved seat next to Mrs. Wierwille and took excellent care of him all the way. On our landing at Logan Airport in Boston, we were met by a wheelchair attendant who helped Dr. Wierwille off the plane. We were sped through customs by the airline personnel and met on the other side by Ralph Dubofsky, Steve Perez and others of our believers as well as Bill Warga and Peter and Christie Esmond who had come with Doctor's motor coach. The concern on the faces of the believers was evident, but they were all cordial and polite.

We drove through the night heading for Marion, Ohio, where Dr. Winegarner lives. Doctor was fairly comfortable and even ate hamburger, fries and milk shake when we stopped at a rest stop. We arrived at Dr. Winegarner's home during the morning of 14 May, 1985. Dr. Winegarner was not there yet when we arrived so we waited. Dr. Wierwille was very concerned with what he would wear and where he would meet with the Board of Trustees when they came down to see him, which was the result of a phone call made on the way. I know how exhausted I was from the change of time zones and the travel and pressure. I cannot imagine what he must have felt like. He moved slowly and was obviously not in good form, but I know that he drove himself to keep going; it was evident. He wanted to know where he should meet after Dr. Winegarner had seen him. He put a great deal of effort into everything being right for that meeting. I do not think that anyone else knew why he drove himself so hard, and it was a very concerted effort on his part, but I marveled at his dedication and desire. Knowing how he must have felt, I am sure that for him it was a maximum effort. His actions were interpreted by others to perhaps mean that he was feeling better, but those assumptions were not borne out by the following hours and days.

Dr. Winegarner examined him and said that he had deteriorated 400 per cent in his condition over the short period of time since he last examined him, and that it was almost impossible for a man to go that fast. (I had this second-hand so the figure may be slightly inaccurate.)

Dr. Wierwille met with the Board of Trustees that morning in his Custom Coach parked at Dr. Winegarner's. He also talked with Dr. Winegarner. I do not know what happened in those meetings; I was not present. I do know that after they were over I went back to check in with Dr. Wierwille and he requested to go to Headquarters. Personally, I felt a heaviness and a sorrow. I knew how Doctor had hoped against hope. I can only assume that what he longed to hear he did not. He did not even look at me when he asked to go to Headquarters; he just looked at the desk top.

We got back to Headquarters that afternoon and parked in the usual place. Doctor was resting in the coach and did not wake up. He was weak and tired, but when he awoke he was still self-mobile and mentally alert. With the time changes and the travel I am a little unsure of the exact time that he woke up, but after arriving we had

put on the sports channel from his satellite dish and left the television on in the coach. There was a basketball game on at some point in the later afternoon or early evening during which he woke up. He sat up in bed and watched the game for a short while. At the commercial break shortly after he woke up he asked me when we would be back at Headquarters. In fact this was not as strange as it may sound. Shortly after we had left Dr. Winegarner's house both he and I went in the back of the coach. He lay down to rest, and because I was also tired from the travel and the jet lag, I had laid down on Mrs. Wierwille's bed which was adjacent to his. When he woke up I was again on the bed, this time awaiting his awakening. I told him that we were back and parked next to his Clubhouse. He talked quietly for a few moments while the commercials ran, then as the game came back on he gave me the remote control for the television and rolled over.

The balance of Doctor's life was the hardest time of my life mentally, emotionally and physically, but it lives in my heart and mind as a beacon of commitment to God. I do not know if anyone else except Doctor himself would have believed that he could drain his life from himself so quickly. I know that I had never anticipated when he shared his heart with me just how hard he would have to work to attain his goal. The only time I saw him troubled, his peace of mind disturbed, was when intravenous feedings were administered. They were given for less than a day; Dr. Winegarner, recognizing that they would have no long-term benefit and seeing Dr. Wierwille's discomfort, had them stopped.

He weakened quickly, but I was amazed at how hard he had to work. There were times when we had thought him past being lucid when he quite amazed me.

Almost no one was allowed to visit him and we took care of him around the clock. There was one man, however, who had been with Doctor years ago but had not really stood with him in recent years, more than as a token supporter, who managed to tug at heartstrings and got to see Doctor when many of those who had been faithful were denied the privilege. He came into the coach and took Dr. Wierwille's hand, patting it and saying: "Vic, can you hear me? It's _____." This occurred quite some time after we had thought Doctor past being lucid. He looked up, not at the man but at me, and said: "Get him out, son. I can't handle this." I did what he asked me to, but it really struck me. He was still that aware and perceptive of his surroundings and in control of his own mind.

A similar incident happened even later on, on his daughter Sara's birthday, which I did not witness as I was resting but which was seen by those present who were caring for Doctor at the time. She was feeling low because of her dad's condition, especially so with it being her birthday. At one point she came aboard and sat with him. Even though no one said anything about what day it was, Doctor, during one of his brief waking periods brought on by a need to roll over in the bed, looked up at her and spoke with her. It was a brief conversation, but a father-daughter one that was filled with tenderness by all reports.

There were two points when I felt that he might change his mind and decide to go on living. The first was watching the basketball game the first afternoon/evening back at Headquarters. When he spoke with me during the commercial break he asked me: "Did any of them want to talk to me? Did they talk with you about it?" I knew what he was referring to, and told him that the answer was no. His comment was: "Well, it looks like a good basketball game, but I guess they will go on after I am dead and gone. You might as well watch it."⁶ And with that he rolled over and went back to sleep.

The second came a few days later on. I am not sure of the exact day, but I think that it was either Wednesday evening or Thursday evening. Craig had taken time out from his Athlete of the Spirit rehearsals and come to say hello. Don and Howard were also there visiting, and when Doctor heard that all three were aboard the coach together he wanted to get out of bed and sit at the desk. The visit did not last long; Craig fainted after only a few minutes aboard the coach, and we had to carry him to the divan in the front. Almost as soon as we had gotten Craig taken care of, Doctor motioned for me to come see him. He asked me, "Did they come to talk or just visit?" I replied, "No one has asked to talk to you, sir." Shortly after that he requested to go back to bed. As he was settling himself in the bed he said: "That's the end. I can't turn it back now. There isn't much you can do for me now. Thanks for everything." He had tears running down his cheeks. At that point I realized more than ever how much he would have loved to go on living.

Once it became evident to me that he was going to die, that it was final, I felt that I was no longer needed. I wanted to go back home. I did not know how to help him any more, how to provide anything that others could not. But was persuaded to stay. I am glad that I was, glad to be near him right up to the end. However, knowing

what he was doing and why he was doing it coupled with my love for him was emotionally exhausting. The twenty-four-hour-a-day care was physically exhausting.

The final incident of my personal communication with Dr. Wierwille, and one which showed his deep love for the Ministry as well as his perception, came late at night on Sunday night/Monday morning. He rolled over and looked at me and asked simply, "Time?" I told him, "Sunday night very late, almost Monday morning." His only response was a very weak, "Thank." I may be presumptuous, but I personally am convinced that he did not want his death to interfere with any Ministry activities. I could not then, nor can I now, think of any other reason that he would ask the question that he did. Within twenty-four hours of the time that he asked me the time that night, he was dead.

As far as Dr. Wierwille himself was concerned he wanted to die rather than compromise. I saw how hard it was for him to die. He did what he had talked about doing -- he turned to the wall and went to sleep. I am fully convinced that he believed to stop the functions of his body. As he lay there after having taken his last breath I was so proud of him that words cannot express it. He died for what he had lived by and for, God's Word.

He was a tough, uncompromising man. He was difficult to live with because of his intensity and his commitment. He demanded of others what he demanded of himself, total commitment. In life there had been many questions that his life had raised for me, but at the time leading up to his death I gained insight into his heart and into the heart of our Father, God, that I had never thought possible. Because he clarified so many things for me in our hours of talking prior to his death and because of his example of non-compromise, I feel that in many ways his death and the period that led up to it taught me more than his life had, in that it synthesized so many things for me. I know in the depth of my soul that the privilege afforded me was not because of my worthiness, and I thank the Heavenly Father for His great grace.