

BY JEFF REICH

The Desires of Our Hearts

I have always had an interest in electronics. When I was 6 years old, my brother and I recorded our voices on my dad's Wollensak reel-to-reel tape recorder. I loved listening to my shortwave radio and enjoyed tearing apart electrical things to understand how they worked. By the time I was 14, I was playing guitar and recording tracks on a small Sony reel-to-reel.

When I was 17, I dropped out of high school and started working at the local TV station as a janitor. In the evenings, while cleaning, I would interact with the engineers at the station. They were always working on cool electrical stuff and messing with the lights and backdrops in the studio. They often asked me for a helping hand! Before long I was trained as a cameraman for the 5 and 10 o'clock evening news.

MY NEWLY-FOUND PASSION

The next step was to learn the ropes as a control-room switcher. This job required me to run commercials and to patch in programs that were broadcast on the local station — KGVO-TV in Missoula, Montana. I loved my job. This was going to be my future. I wanted to be in film production or some kind of technical TV work.

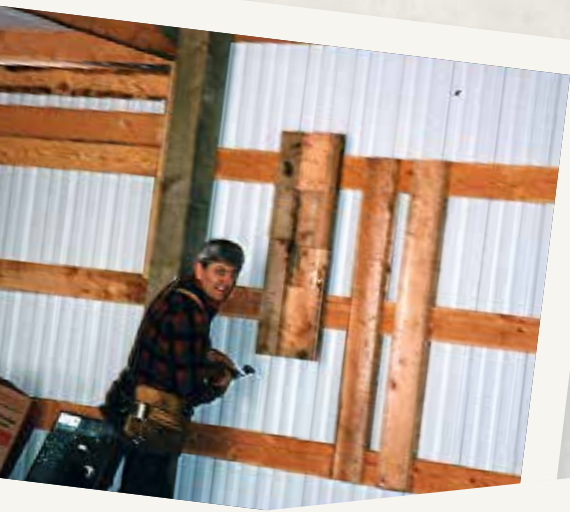
Then things took a radical change of direction in my life. It was around this time that I became an Adventist Christian. I would sit in the control room, thinking to

myself, "I am pumping all this 'garbage' into people's homes through their TV-sets." Mind you, this was the early 1970s! So I quit that job.

FROM TV TO PUBLISHING

The years passed, but my desire and love of technical things remained. My interests moved to finding ways to share Christ and the gospel with people. The printed page has always been a powerful tool for that, so *Laymen Ministries* started out as a publishing ministry. After the collapse of Communism, our publishing work expanded to several countries in Eastern Europe.

In the mid-1990s, I traveled to Romania every couple of months as we were translating and printing hundreds of thousands of books for the newly formed prison ministry we organized there. Some of these trips took me in and out of Lithuania and Poland — we had projects there as well. I often had overnight layovers in Schiphol International Airport in Amsterdam, Holland.



While sitting in the Golden Tulip Hotel near the airport one evening, I turned on the TV. To my amazement, I saw a program on the Travel Channel entitled *Lonely Planet*. The program drew me in, as I love travel and cultures and was, in reality, doing a lot of overseas travel myself. The editing was fast-moving and made the viewer feel as if you were right there in the country. As I watched this program, I thought to myself, "If I ever made mission TV programs, it would be done in this format!" Little did I know what the future held! In late 1996 we did start making those kind of mission programs! It was going to be the beginning of a whole new style of Christian missionary program seen anywhere on TV.

THE NEED OF A PRODUCTION STUDIO

In the spring of 1996, we started a construction site for a studio building. Step by step we kept our readers of the *Laymen Ministries* magazine informed about the direction we knew God was leading us. Donations started to come in as we moved forward in faith.

We needed to level the site, so we started bringing in truckloads of pit run rock through the help of a local county commissioner. Truckload after truckload was dumped as a dozer leveled. After everything was finished, we expected to receive a bill from the commissioner's rock-crushing business, but we never did. When I called to ask him about it, he said, "Jeff, I will get you next time!" So all that rock was free! We praised

God, as we were on a shoe-string budget.

Next we contracted a company to build the main shell of the building. Cost? \$12,500! What a deal! But that was without the cement floor or any interior construction, let alone TV production equipment. Together with a few friends, we installed all the tubing for a radiant floor heating system throughout the building. God provided all the cement for free through a long process of donations that went through three different cement businesses. Long and amazing story there!

We needed a 3-foot-deep trench, 150 feet long, to run the main power to the building. I was overworked and did not have time to do it, and we really did not have the funds to hire it done. Some friends, Fred Christiansen and family, called and told me their vacation plans fell through, but they were in the area and were wondering if there was something for them to do? I asked Fred if he ever ran a power trencher before. He said no, but he was willing to give it a try! Within the next couple of days he had the trench dug!

Then another problem arose. On a Monday, the power company was planning to lay the underground wire in the trench, set the transformer, and connect the power to the building. We needed to have the big breaker panel installed and the pipe laid before the power company would install and connect the power. On the Friday morning before, it still was not done.

Friday, late afternoon, a gentleman named Jonathan showed up who wanted to visit and spend the weekend with us. I shared with him our dilemma, and he smiled. I asked, "What are you smiling about?"

"Jeff," he answered, "I am a licensed electrician, and I have all my

We never dreamed that the move to build a small studio here in Idaho would end up as it is today.

tools in the truck to do this job. We can get this done on Sunday!” God again was showing, by His divine providence, that He was there making this project happen! It was amazing to see things falling into place!

ARE YOU DOING THIS FOR GOD?

We had two contractor friends help frame up and wire the studio. One of these was Jay Bowman, a commercial electrician from California. As I watched him, I noticed he meticulously unrolled all the wire and carefully pulled each perfectly straight inside the walls. Not a twist, bend, or kink anywhere — everything was done perfectly! He even made sure every wire staple was not too tight.

I asked him why he was doing it that way. I mean, after the sheet rock goes up, it is all covered, so no one will see it anyway! And it really doesn't matter if the wire is twisted inside the wall. He looked at me seriously and said, “Are you building this studio for God or not?” His point was well taken.

THE MATCHING MIRACLE

We had the building pretty much finished inside and out. In the process, we had nearly depleted our funding. There was about \$10,000 in the studio account with which we were supposed to finish equipping a totally functional TV studio. That money was a mere tithe of what we needed.

We had a scheduled board meeting the next Wednesday. I took the board members over to the studio for a tour of the empty facility. When we sat back down at the office, one of them said enthusiastically, “I think we should make a motion to move ahead and buy all the equipment and get this studio up and running!” All eyes were on me.

Another board member asked, “How much money do we have in the studio account?”

“Ten thousand,” I said sheepishly. They seemed satisfied that we were ready to buy EVERYTHING. I explained that TV equipment was expensive — that we needed lights, lighting grid, controllers, TV cameras, tripods, CCUs, computers, desks, and a lot of other equipment. “In fact,” I said nervously, “the non-linear editing system alone costs \$40,000.”

Everyone became quiet. Then one board member turned to me and said earnestly, “I think we should pray.” And we did.

The next day I received a call from some dear friends who explained that they had just received a small inheritance and wanted to put some money into the studio project. They asked me how much more we needed. I used to always get a knot in my stomach when people asked that question. “Well, to give you an idea,



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the editing system alone is \$40,000, and we still need a bunch of other equipment as well.”

“We are prepared to donate \$20,000,” my friend said, “but why don’t we make this a matching funds donation? This could be an incentive for someone else to help. We will send a check when you find someone to match that amount.” Now I felt a really big knot in my stomach! I knew this would require asking people to match these funds, and I have never liked asking for money — period.

I sat down and drafted a letter that would go to 3 or 4 people who had helped with sizable donations in the past and explained about the matching funds. The letters went out that same day in the mail.

The next day the office was closed, as it was Friday afternoon. I needed to get some tools from the office, and when I entered the building, I saw the answering machine light was blinking. I listened to the message. The female voice said, “Jeff, I need to talk with you as soon as possible!” I called her back.

That same lady, who lived on the East Coast, answered the phone. I told her who I was. She said that she and her husband had been talking, and they wanted to help with the studio project. “How much more do you need?” she asked. I told her it was quite a bit and that the editing system alone was \$40,000. “But,” I added, with a bit of a nervous chuckle, “We had a guy offer \$20,000 of matching funds toward that system just yesterday!”

“That is what I wanted to know! That’s great!” the lady responded enthusiastically. “We will send a check right away!”

I was in shock. “You’re joking, right?” I asked.

“Jeff, I would not joke about something like this!” she replied.

“Well, this is amazing because we just had a board meeting on Wednesday, and we had a special prayer that God would provide the money needed to get this studio up and running.”

“Wednesday?” The lady seemed serious. “What time on Wednesday?”

“I know exactly when we had prayer,” I shared, “as I looked at my watch right when we finished. It was 3 pm.” There was dead silence on the phone.

“This is the hand of God,” she finally said. “Let me tell you something. My husband has been burnt more than once giving donations to the church and to other ministries. He said he was not going to donate any more.

“Last Wednesday I was in the kitchen doing some cleaning while my husband was sitting reading the paper in the living room. He laid the paper down and said, ‘Give those people at *Laymen Ministries* a call and see if they need some help with the studio equipment,’” she explained. “Right then I looked up at the clock and it was exactly 6pm! So God directly inspired my husband just when you folks had your special prayer.” She lived on the East Coast, and we on the West, so there was a 3-hour time difference.

I immediately got on the phone and called the couple who offered the matching funds. I asked them to put the phone on speaker and to sit down. I explained how God had matched their offer in less than 24 hours with absolutely no solicitations on our part!

“We will get a check in the mail to you on Monday,” they replied in amazement.

COWS FOR THE STUDIO?

“I want to donate some stock,” the man on the phone said to me. I was raised in Montana, so when I think “stock,” I think cows! “No, I mean stocks — like stocks and bonds,” the man explained.

“What do I do with those?” I questioned, “Do I need to go to New York?” Ok, ok, that was back 22 years ago when I was not all that savvy about stock investments — but I know more now!

After the miraculous matching funds took place, I had hopped on an airplane on a short mission trip to Romania. When I arrived back in my office, there was a letter on my desk addressed to me. It was from a person who wanted me to contact him about the matching funds. Oh! I had forgotten that I had sent out those matching fund letters back when the offer was on the table. I called the gentleman.

“I wanted to talk with you about these matching funds,” he started to explain. I politely interrupted him and said, “God took care of that within 24 hours of the offer by divine intervention!” I told him the whole story.

“Amazing! Wow, that is quite a story! But you still need help with other equipment, right?” he asked. I told him we did. He said he wanted to donate some stock — then came my question of ignorance! He explained that he invested in some stock that did really well. He ended up giving us a sizable amount of it, which we sold, and we were able to get the studio up and running a few weeks after that special prayer at our board meeting!

THE DESIRES OF OUR HEARTS

There is not enough room to tell you everything that happened in the



In our LM Productions studio today, filmmaker Michael McCaffrey continues to work on editing *The Days of Noah* project.

process of opening our own studio in this allotted space. But since we started production, many TV programs have been produced and aired around the world. We did (and do) make mission TV programs in a similar format to the BBC's *Lonely Planet* series. We have shot video to make mission programs in some of the most remote places on the planet. We have filmed programs in foreign languages, produced a whole series on marriage and relationships, and have many interviews with missionaries and people of interest. 40 *Cross Talk* programs were produced which were a #1 program when *Hope Channel* first began broadcasting. Currently, we continue to work on a large documentary entitled *The Days of Noah*.

This documentary is the largest project ever undertaken by *Laymen Ministries Productions*. It grew from a simple single-subject program to a documentary that shows not only the physical and scientific evidence for the biblical Flood, but follows on to include the bigger picture of

the sanctuary, biblical prophecy, the three angels' messages, and more. With 3 DVDs and a workbook, this will be a complete teaching tool that can be used in home study groups, for evangelism in churches, and much more.

This small studio spawned the idea of a studio in India, which God helped us to build, and we now have TV programs in various languages being broadcast world-wide on several cable and satellite networks. We never dreamed that the move to build a small studio here in Idaho would end up as it is today.

Shortly after we finished the studio, I was sitting in our control room editing a film, and I stopped and flashed back to the 1970s, sitting in that control room at KGVO-TV. I forsook that job because the programming was not healthy. Now, many years later, I was sitting in our own control room, producing programming that was a blessing to others. God really will give us the desires of our hearts if we give our hearts and our desires to Him! ♦