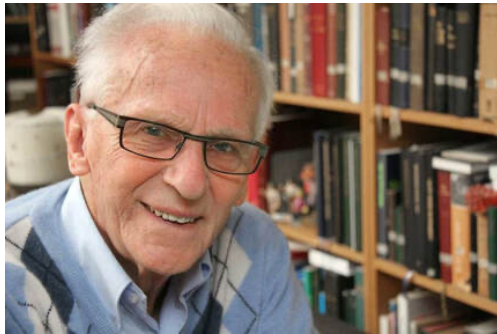




REMEMBERING GOD'S SMUGGLER – BROTHER ANDREW



His Most Important and Exciting Journey

Andrew van der Bijl, known throughout the world as Brother Andrew, God's Smuggler, passed into eternity on Tuesday, 27 September 2022, at age 94. This will certainly be his most important and exciting journey. Brother Andrew was a Dutch Christian missionary who dedicated his life to smuggling Bibles to persecuted Christians, behind the Iron Curtain, in communist Eastern Europe. After the fall of the Berlin

Wall, he refocused his energies on serving persecuted Christians in the Muslim Middle East. As Andrew declared: I.S.L.A.M. should stand for "I Sincerely Love All Muslims." He visited Hamas and PLO leaders, including Yasser Arafat, giving them Bibles. Andrew travelled to 125 countries in his extraordinary life. His wife, Corry van der Bijl, died in 2018. They had five children together.

Hospital Christian Fellowship

The first time I met Brother Andrew, was in June 1979, at the headquarters of Hospital Christian Fellowship (HCF), in Kempton Park, in the Transvaal. Brother Andrew mentioned that while communist governments may close down churches, it is a lot harder for them to close down hospitals. That is why he supported the work of Francis Grim, evangelising and training doctors and nurses to be ongoing daily witnesses to patients and other medical personnel. "More people pass through the hospitals of the world than through its churches." Brother Andrew reminded us that God has placed us "at the foot of Africa to take the Gospel of Christ throughout Africa." The continent of Africa was "the special missionary responsibility of the church in South Africa. You have the manpower and the materials to fulfil the Great Commission throughout Africa!"



Project Pearl

During his message at HCF devotions, Brother Andrew mentioned the spectacular growth of the unregistered church movement in communist China. There was a desperate need for Bibles in China and the communist government of China only allowed a very small number of an old translation to be sold to members of registered, government controlled Three Self churches. Those wanting to purchase a Bible in China needed to apply and register very much like you would if seeking a firearm licence from the state. Of course, unregistered (illegal) underground church members could not meet the requirements of the state and would not go through this process as it would endanger their life and liberty. There was no alternative, millions of Bibles would have to be smuggled into Red China. Open Doors was preparing for its biggest Bible smuggling operation ever – a million Bibles to be smuggled into Red China!



Advice from Brother Andrew

After devotions, Francis Grim introduced me to God's Smuggler: "This young man is about to be called up for his National Service with the South African Army." Brother Andrew fixed his piercing blue eyes on me and with great intensity admonished me: "young man, when God says Duck, Duck! Do not ask when? or why? Just Duck. Or a bullet will go where your head was!" Through the coming months and years, I often had cause to remember this admonition from Brother Andrew. We met on a number of occasions and exchanged correspondence throughout the years. Brother Andrew served as a soldier for the Netherlands military and fought in the Dutch East Indies, in what later became Indonesia. He was wounded in that brutal conflict and came to Christ through reading a Bible during his rehabilitation.

Austrian Guest House

Lenora regularly met Brother Andrew as she was growing up in Austria. He was a frequent guest in the Bathman home, which was something of a missionary guesthouse for missionaries travelling behind the Iron Curtain or returning from missions to Eastern Europe. Bill Bathman noted that Brother Andrew was just six months younger than him. Bill Bathman and Brother Andrew undertook numerous missions together behind the Iron Curtain. When I travelled with Bill Bathman throughout Eastern Europe, he would often recount answers to prayer and testimonies which had occurred at the different towns, villages, churches and at checkpoints and roadblocks. It was inspiring missionary apprenticeship to travel with Bill Bathman.

On the Road in Yugoslavia

During a mission to Yugoslavia, Bill Bathman pointed to a bend in the road where he had almost crashed the vehicle he was driving, in shock, when, in 1966, Brother Andrew told him that he was working on publishing his testimony and the title of the book would be: God's Smuggler! Immediately Bill Bathman realised the complications this could cause to their ongoing work with the persecuted church behind



the Iron Curtain. On the positive side, Brother Andrew's book alerted the world to the plight of persecuted Christians in Eastern Europe suffering under communism. It inspired many initiatives for ministry to the neglected fields in communist countries. However, on the negative side it could alert the communist officials, border guards and secret police to seriously complicate and endanger those continuing to minister in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union, it was revealed that God's Smuggler was Required Reading for the KGB!



Ministering with God's Smuggler

When I asked Bill Bathman how he first met Brother Andrew, he recalled: "It was 1957, and I was conducting services across Europe. That night I was in Bensheim, Germany, when I saw two cars with Netherlands licence plates - one was a VW Beetle and the other a 1957 Chevy. They were enroute to Hungary and Poland." Then Bill remarked that sometime later, when they met to co-ordinate training programmes and Missions behind the Iron

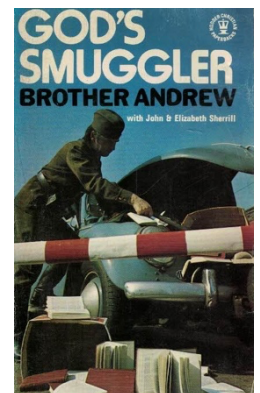
Curtain, Brother Andrew had commented on his text and sermon that night in Bensheim: **"But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'."** 2 Peter 2:22. Brother Andrew said that he could never forget such an unusual text and Evangelistic sermon!

Welcoming Soviet Invaders in Wenceslas Square, Prague, with Bibles

When the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Bill Bathman phoned Brother Andrew and told him that, as the Russians were coming towards us, we should seize this opportunity to go into the strife-torn country to distribute Russian New Testaments to the Soviet soldiers. They agreed to meet in Wenceslas Square, Prague. Theirs were just about the only vehicles going into Czechoslovakia, passing columns of refugees fleeing in the opposite direction out of the country. Bill Bathman and Brother Andrew climbed on to Soviet tanks to hand Russian New Testaments to the invaders.

Partnering with Open Doors

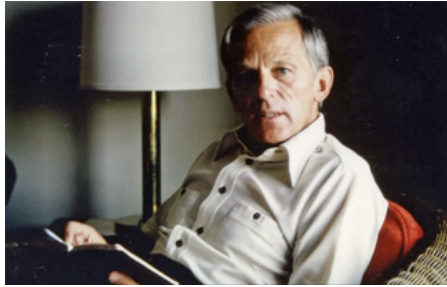
Over the years, it was a joy to work together on a number of joint projects, including in Angola and Sudan. Frontline Fellowship helped deliver and distribute thousands of Bibles for Open Doors in war-torn Islamic Sudan. We hosted Open Doors workers and recovered and towed one of their vehicles thousands of kilometres after it was abandoned in a flash flood, in what had been a dry riverbed inside southern Sudan. Brother Andrew and I regularly corresponded. We promoted and sold his books.



The Power of the Printed Page

I can still remember what I read in God's Smuggler, during training in the South African Infantry. Every day on the shooting range, when we took turns in four sections, I used the 75% of the time that we were waiting for our turn, to pull his book out of my side pocket and read

more of his fascinating testimony. What I read amongst the sound of rifle fire during those days on the shooting range is still clear in my mind. By 2002, God's Smuggler had sold 10 million copies in 35 languages.



Be More Radical for Christ

When asked if he had any regrets about his life's work, Andrew replied: "If I could live my life over again, I would be a lot more radical for the Lord!"

"Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." Daniel 12:3

Article by Dr. Peter Hammond

<https://www.frontlinemissionsa.org/in-memorium/remembering-gods-smuggler-brother-andrew>