

## The Journey of a Home Mission Pastor from Texas to Alaska and Back

**J.W. AND LILLIAN EAVES HEARD THAT A PASTOR WAS NEEDED IN HOONAH, ALASKA, AN INDIAN VILLAGE ON CHICHOGOF ISLAND 80 MILES FROM JUNEAU. HERE'S THEIR STORY AS TOLD TO LIFESTORY AUTHOR BRUCE MARTIN.**



**Bruce Martin**  
Leawood, Kansas

We knew it was a call for us. We sold our house and everything, packed our station wagon and four little boys and went to Alaska. We got to Juneau in August. Jay went immediately to Hoonah, but found there was no available housing. The church folks said not to worry, stay in Juneau until things opened up. We put the boys in school. Jay got a job in the post office and a little while later he started working as a police officer.

We enjoyed our stay in Juneau and made many friends for life. Jay sang in a quartet as first tenor. The quartet sang at the Governor's prayer breakfast that Easter. We joined the choir, Jay singing and I played the piano.

May of 1968 the Mayor of Hoonah came to Juneau and asked Jay to take the job as police chief and we found a place to rent.

We lived off the land, all the halibut, salmon, shrimp, and crab we could eat and wild blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries in abundance.

In the fall we had a bear come in our house about 10:00 p.m. Jay and our oldest were at a basketball game at the High School. The boys and I ran into a bedroom. I opened the window and screamed. People said they heard me two blocks away. The men from town grabbed their guns and came running. When the window was opened, Sam started to jump out but it was a long way down and I pulled him back. I tore his shirt. When we ran out of the house the on-lookers thought the bear had mauled him. The bear tore the back door off and the men broke in the front. They chased it into the woods and killed it. They loaded it on a pickup truck and brought it back to town. It was 9 feet tall and weighed at least 1000 pounds. When Jay got home, he had to board the back door and put the front door back on its hinges. I prayed for snow so the bear would hibernate. It snowed so much that fall our neighbors on the downward slope had to tunnel out their front door.

After four years in Hoonah, we were called to Pelican as pastors. It was a fishing village on the other side of the island. There was a boardwalk instead of a street. Jay got a job at the Cold Storage fish plant. We made an order for groceries for the fall ship. It is hard to decide how much peanut butter and catsup four boys can eat. Jay ordered a case and a half of milk from Juneau to be flown in weekly. The men at the cold storage asked him how he could afford it. He said it was his beer money. The men always saved money for the beer each week, so they knew what he was talking about. They asked him one day to go with them for a beer. He said, "Sure, make mine "root"."

Jay also taught Drivers' Ed at the High School. The school had bought a small car and the students learned to drive on the boardwalk and at low tide. When they were ready for their test they flew to Juneau. The High School there loaned them their Drivers' Ed car to practice on the highway. All the students took

the test and passed.

From Pelican, we went to Barrow. The Church was beautiful with stained glass windows. The old church attached was made into a living quarters for the pastor. The Eskimo people were loving people and so kind to us. Two main events come to mind. There was a tradition of a Thanksgiving feast where about 400 people were served. The floor in the church was covered in plastic and the fellowship hall was turned into a butchering room for the whale donated for the feast. The meat was cut up in chunks, family size and served raw. Each person brought a small cutting board and ulu, Eskimo knife. The meat was cut in thin slices and eaten. There were twelve teenage couples, the boy carried a tray and the girl served. I was amazed. I don't know what to expect so I baked twelve pumpkin pies. They were never served so I asked someone about it. They said they were going to give them to the servers.

We had a Camp Meeting in February. All the villages in the Arctic Circle were invited. The committee said we were to house all the non-native guest and they would house the Eskimos. There were so many I lost count. It was wonderful. At the end of the meetings before everyone went home our guests said they would like to eat some native food. The church folks cooked up walrus. Everyone seemed to enjoy it but in the night they were so sick they all thought they might die. Jay was up taking care of them. He had a bathrobe with a hood he wore. The next morning our guests were all sitting around drinking weak tea and talking about their experience. One man told the

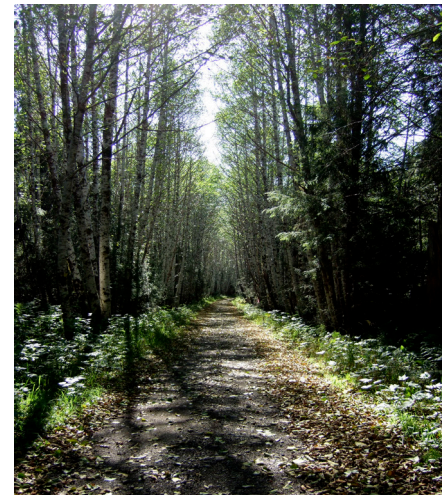
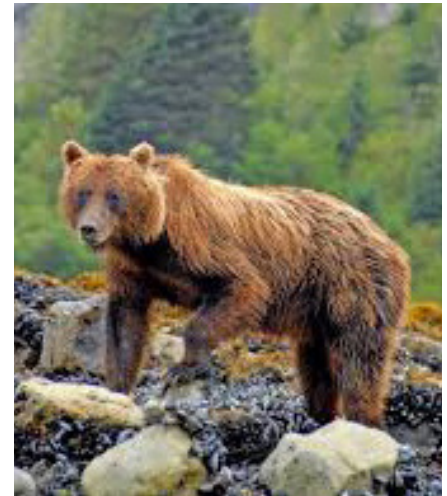
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others he was so sick he thought he saw a monk in the hallway. Of course it was Jay in his hooded bathrobe.

The two older boys were ready for college and they wanted to attend in Texas. We came back and built a home in Navasota, Texas and Jay pastored the church there. We stayed eight years then went back to Alaska when the boys were all settled. Jay pastored the church in Angoon on Admiralty Island. It was a beautiful building and beautiful people. The basement was not finished, along with the fellowship hall and Sunday school rooms. We moved into a Sunday school room and lived there for about a year while Jay finished the basement and built a parsonage.

Admiralty Island is noted for its many bears. There was never an incident while we were there. Each household had a CB and when a bear was sighted in town they alerted everyone where it was and the people would get out of the way.

We stayed in Angoon seven years and came back home to pastor in Bryan, Texas. After five years there Jay had a stroke. He is now bed ridden. The Lord has given us rest. We have lots of help. Our youngest son and his family live with us and my brother also. Jay and I sit here and sing and think of the blessings the Lord has given us. He has been so good.



Published by  
**THE CENTER FOR LIFESTORY WRITING**  
Olathe, Kansas 66062

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*The Journey of a Home Mission Pastor*  
As Told to Bruce Martin, Leawood, Kansas  
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**Sharing memories with  
friends and family, one brief  
story at a time.**