



# The Servants of the Word

Christmas 2007

## Don DeSmith: Brother and Man About Town

There is a long list of interests and accomplishments which set our good brother Don DeSmith apart: born and raised on a rural Michigan farm, he earned his private pilot's license by the age of 17. He holds a Master's degree in computer engineering along with an MBA. For five years he co-owned a cutting-edge software development company based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He currently serves as the president of Servant Systems Inc., the software enterprise owned by brothers in The Servants of the Word. Lest Don be charged with "all work and no fun," he is also an accomplished water skier—slalom, trick skis, forward, backwards; he does it all.

But that's not the half of it: as an undergraduate at the University of Michigan Don encountered the Lord in a powerful way, gave his life to him, met up with some other young men living single for the Lord, and joined up. He made his lifelong commitment to our brotherhood in 1981. Don is now 54 and still going strong.

Don now works full time for Servant Systems Inc., serving clients who are using our scheduling software to run their businesses. His most recent project has been the development and installation of scheduling software for Christmas Decor, a nationwide franchise that "puts up and takes down" holiday decorations for individuals and businesses. Don is also the primary marketer for Servant Systems Inc., drumming up new clients to grow the business.



Another of Don's traits is no doubt rooted in the Belgian frugality he learned from his parents and grand parents—he is the inveterate sales shopper. Don has never found a sale he didn't like. He freely admits he goes shopping for fun. From time to time we might affectionately mock him for the sheer pleasure he takes in saving a buck, but then again we stand in awe over the number of bucks he's saved!

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**Don demonstrates his skiing skills on a nearby Michigan lake.**



Beloved family and friends,

A blessed and joyful Christmas to you from all of The Servants of the Word! May our incarnate Lord fill your hearts and your homes with his presence and his grace in this time, and throughout the coming new year. The Lord’s coming to the world in the flesh has utterly changed the course of human history. Emmanuel, our God is with us, and we are never alone.

Over the course of this past year, we in The Servants of the Word have experienced very tangibly the presence of our God with us, and we are enormously grateful. We have rejoiced in the lifelong promises of two of our brothers from the Philippines, Abyong Calo and Jojo Baquiano, and in the renewal of their one-year commitments of Brian Laba, Brian Lalonde, Peter Jess Legaspi, and Marlon Castro. We have seen his ongoing blessing on so many aspects of our life and our mission.

We pray that you have also experienced in this past year the nearness of our God who is with us, and that the coming year will be even more filled with his gracious presence and his blessing in your lives. We love you, and we thank God for all that you are for us! ▲

In Christ, the word made flesh,

John Keating

**The Lord’s coming to the world in the flesh has utterly changed the course of human history.**

**Don DeSmith, continued from page 1**

While we may have some fun at Don’s expense, we love him dearly and hold him in very high esteem. Don is exemplar in the way he lives our life, whether in prayer or in serving our mission. He has a heart for evangelism and is always looking for ways to reach out to others with the truth of the gospel or with a simple helping hand. Don is a great brother to live with—I should know since he and I have lived in the same household for the past 13 years. If we found a dozen young men just like Don, we’d take them all! ▲

– Dick LaCroix



**In the News: Brothers Have a Part in Writing World History**

A three-year academic project recently culminated for Mark Whitters. Seen at [www.FactsOnFile.com](http://www.FactsOnFile.com), the feature publication is the Encyclopedia of World History. Mark was the editor of “Vol. 1: The Ancient World: Prehistoric Eras to 600 C.E.” In order to complete this volume, Mark enlisted 45 contributors from around the world. The efforts of this group, which produced over 240 articles, included besides Mark Whitters, nine other members of The Servants of the Word: Bruce Franson, Andrew Pettman, Jake Yap, Don Schwager, Steve Clark, Dan Keating, John Keating, Bruce Yocum, and John Yocum. ▲

## **Building Walls, Building Bridges Teens Lay Down Their Lives for Their Friends**

Ask any rancher about the importance of keeping good, strong property fences and the answer will always be the same, “Good fences make for good neighbors.” Little did we know when our Honduras mission teams began building a high security wall on the perimeter of an orphanage property, that our efforts would also pave the way for a bridge of goodwill between the sponsoring orphanage and an influential neighbor.

The month of June 2007 saw nearly 20 high school-aged youth serving in a COPPRIME-sponsored orphanage in the country of Honduras. Our stated objective was to build a 456 feet long, 8 feet tall security wall in order to keep the “good” people in and the “bad” people out. Months prior to our arrival, a small group of children from the orphanage, though well-loved and cared for, successfully escaped via a neighbor’s property. That neighbor informed us of his fear that his guards could have mistakenly shot some of the children during their night flight from their home while crossing his property. Our teams banished that thought and threw themselves headlong into completing this important barrier that would by summer’s end satisfactorily forestall future escapes.

Facing enervation and fatigue at times, two respective mission teams, a boys team followed by a girls team, worked determinedly in the hot, tropical weather while removing tree roots, digging wall footings, mix-

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ing concrete, hauling hundreds of wheelbarrows of sand and gravel, carrying hundreds, if not thousands of large stones, and hand delivering over six hundred concrete blocks all without complaint. Our teams also helped drain a swampy part of the property so that our wall could transverse it. Intermittently, the neighbor would fulfill his self-imposed supervisory obligations and inspect the work of our team. While listening to his astute suggestions and endeavoring to follow them, our team pushed courageously toward our own



self-imposed goal: the completion of the wall. After attaining our goal, the neighbor, a man of sound reputation and insuperable integrity congratulated our team for a job very well done. Prior to our teams’ work, no working relationship existed between the orphanage staff and this neighbor. God used our teams to help bond an ongoing working relationship that we are confident will endure and one which will further enhance the safety and wellbeing of the children of COPPRIME.

**Our wall that will save lives in the future.**

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## Building Walls, continued from page 3

During the month of July, our two other mission teams continued to increase goodwill and extend the kingdom of God to our Mexican neighbors along the Arizona border. A team of young men in Naco, Sonora helped with the construction of a new kitchen and a long-awaited health clinic. In the midst of their work, the young men would regularly entertain the attention-starved children of the home, bringing a lot of life and joy to the children of Casa Hogar Emmanuel.

Our team of girls finished out the mission summer in Agua Prieta, Mexico (also just across the Arizona border) assisting several families in the construction of their homes as well as beginning the construction of a security wall around a neighborhood warehouse containing short-term, mission brigade supplies. Being “light-footed as a cat on a hot toaster” took on new meaning with this crowd as they completed the installation of several shiny, new, and blistering hot roofs for economically struggling families in the neighborhood where they worked. Their fervor in completing this hard work and the joy with which they carried themselves spoke volumes to the people they served.

It has been a pleasure to serve the poor of the western hemisphere with so many fine and dedicated young people. With God’s love burning strongly in the hearts of our young people, our future is indeed bright. It is an honor to answer God’s call to be part of this life-changing work. ▲

– Mike Kramer



### Note From the Editor:

In the printed version of the Fall 2007 newsletter, our recent lead article on Nico Angleys contained several factual errors which we regret and would like to rectify. Nico was born in Geneva, Switzerland rather than in Italy and he made his lifelong commitment to The Servants of the Word in the fall of 2003, rather than 2004. Our apologies to Nico. ▲

### WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Servants of the Word gets its support through the financial earnings of the brothers as well as by donations from our benefactors. Many of our brothers work for sacrificial wages or for no pay at all. Please consider if you can become a financial sponsor of The Servants of the Word. Your prayers and support are appreciated in our work with young people and our community development work.

**THE SERVANTS OF THE WORD**  
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