

# Heart of a Missionary: The Jim Haverlock Story

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By

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If one were to poll just about any church congregation here in the US there would likely be at least a few older members who seriously entertained the notion of becoming a cleric or missionary during their younger days. Most did not. Some started out to do so but were pulled in other directions. Occasionally you'll run across an individual who shelved a religious vocation or calling to do charitable work as a youngster but who returned to this later in life.



*Jim Haverlock back in the "Good Ole Days"*

As a boy of five, [Jim Haverlock](#), harbored a deep desire to be a missionary and go to Africa to help the poorest of the poor. It was a powerful longing that persisted throughout his formative years and shaped his choice to enter seminary at age fourteen (14.) Here, Jim's natural tenacity served him well, though it was ultimately no match for certain "perennial enticements." By age nineteen he had dropped out of the seminary, was married, and had set his sights on achieving success in the world of business.

In the years that followed Jim gravitated into retail furniture sales and management where his "can do" attitude and do-it-yourself entrepreneurial spirit served him well. In time he went from running several furniture stores to owning four of them. By the 1970s life's P & L sheet looked pretty good for Jim: He had eight healthy children, a fat bank account, owned

a nice home and a small plane & boat for “fun time”, and was a mover & shaker in his local community as well as his church. If he had had a theme song at the time it would have surely been “I’m on Top of the World” by the Carpenter’s.

Few who reach “king of the hill” status escape challengers. Jim’s came in the form a marriage that ran out of steam, a crooked business partner and a series of setbacks linked to a roller coaster economy and an oil boom gone bust. By the late 1980s Jim’s marriage, home, plane and stores were all history and he was basically living out of his car and making his living as a traveling sales representative selling furniture to stores in the Dakotas, Montana, and the Carolinas. He remarried but later divorced.

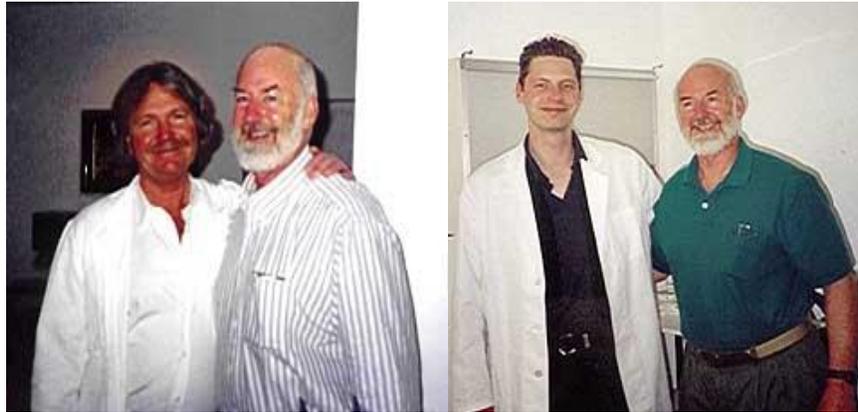
As the 1990s got well underway Jim seemed to have life by the tail once again. He was remarried and was enjoying a fairly prosperous life in a nice home on the beachfront in South Carolina. What could possibly trip him up? Oddly, it was tripping while jogging that signaled a new challenger had come-a-calling. Although it was possible to dismiss the occasional stumbling and falls he was now experiencing, soon it became obvious something was really wrong. Jim’s family doctor ran him threw a battery of basic tests but was unable to come up with a definitive diagnosis. A trip to the Mayo Clinic and ten days of almost nonstop testing brought a verdict: Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) or as it is better known, Lou Gehrig’s disease. Jim’s heart sank as he contemplated having his lifespan whittle down to a handful of years. Like most married men he turned to his wife for solace. She handed him his walking papers (“I didn’t sign on to take care of a seriously ill man”.) As though some demon lurking in the shadows wanted to add insult to injury Jim’s business partner run off with their business inventory, money and all. Jim was flat broke -- again.

It was then and there Jim decided that dying should be done up in the mountains, not on a beach watching an endless parade of tourists and locals out frolicking and having fun. After settling on the North Cascade Mountains up in Washington State Jim sold off his few remaining possessions and then packed essential clothing and treasured photos into a beat-up, rusting hulk of a car with 212,000 miles on the odometer. Although a mechanic friend was certain Jim’s rust bucket wouldn’t “make it out of this state let alone across the USA” it got Jim to his destination none-the-worse for wear before giving up the ghost a year or so later – pretty much as Jim expected to do himself shortly.

After spending a month living in a Teepee on the side of a mountain Jim moved into a small studio apartment. While considering what to do with his remaining time he decided “doing business as usual” would be an exercise in futility and he’d be better served by using what was left of his cash reserves to see the world. Thus began a trek that took Jim from the mountains and ocean of Washington State to Malaysia then on to Germany, Singapore and Thailand. To conserve his meager resources he often traveled with just a backpack and stayed in hostels and at camp sites. And though he drained his cash reserves as he moved from country-to-country and town-to-town, he grew wealthier in terms of the new relationships he had forged and the “extended family” he had added to the Haverlock clan.

Jim’s worsening symptoms reminded him daily that the sands in his particular hourglass were running out. But something deep down inside him kept calling out, “The diagnosis is

wrong!” Was this denial? To find out Jim submitted to a whole battery of specialized tests at the famous Nieper Clinic in Germany. Clinic director Hans Nieper, MD conveyed the results himself: Jim had progressive multiple sclerosis and not ALS. He felt like a condemned prisoner who had been handed a pardon. Inner voice-1, Mayo Clinic-0. Both men were ecstatic.



***Jim at the Nieper Clinic (Germany). Left - Jim with Dr. Ledwoch. Right – Jim with Dr. Heindorf. [Click to access other photos of Jim in Germany.](#)***

Back home in the Methow Valley (Washington State. [Click to access photos Jim took](#)) Jim faced a not unexpected reality: Though he has been living frugally on about \$300 per month his money was running out. He needed to go to work and make a living! A few of his new friends talked him into obtaining a real estate agent license and working part-time with them. Jim adroitly mastered the real estate biz and did well enough to enable him to buy a rundown real estate business that had only 3 listings to its name. In practically no time at all Jim had amassed over 140 property listings and as a result had gone from the bottom of the local real estate barrel to being #3. He did so well, in fact, that he could afford to hire 4 agents. And though Jim’s newfound lifestyle did not change all that much, he was feeling productive and independent again and proud of the fact his crew were making a good living as well.

In time the progressive nature of his neurologic condition worked its insidious black magic on Jim and with this his mobility and speech steadily deteriorated. No longer able to handle his real estate business, Jim merged his firm with another while continuing to work part-time. During this latest “life transition” Jim learned how to use a computer and to build simple websites. While doing this it occurred to him that he should marry his newfound computer savvy with what he’d done previously, namely sell home furnishings. Except this time it would be a virtual as opposed to a brick and mortar store. [1shop4u.com was born.](#)

In the twelve years that have passed since Jim launched his on-line store he has managed to do well enough to meet his own needs, take on a fulltime assistant who is rearing 3 children plus a part-timer, and even donate to help others. As Jim puts it, “I still live a simple lifestyle. I own no home or buildings or property, drive a car that is 11 years old with 146,000 miles on it and have furniture and lots of books, the bed I always wanted and a productive, experience-rich lifestyle.” And while MS has landed him in a motorized scooter

most of the time he has lost none of his passion for life and people nor has his zest for female companionship abated. In fact, in the tiny picturesque hamlet Jim calls home (Twisp) his front door sees more women pass through it than most major department stores! Nothing to set tongues a-wagging, just ladies who drop by to check on Jim, break bread, watch a movie or just hang out and chat.



***Jim's wheels***

In 2003 two ladies would enter Jim's orbit and not only won his heart but also revived his tabled desire to help the needy in Africa. One was a Ugandan professional lady named "Teddy" and the other her (now) orphaned niece, Martha, 6. In time Jim would also welcome a collection of other good-hearted souls into his life; folks who live near Teddy's village in rural Uganda and look after her and a great many children orphaned by AIDS and other calamities that have befallen this oft troubled African nation.



***Teddy & Martha (2008)***

As Jim and Teddy got to know each other it became apparent that there was more to their relationship than fond feelings. Indeed, friendship gave way to love in short order. The big question confronting them was how long it would take to get Teddy into the US. If they had met and filed a fiancé visa application in the days before 9-11 the hurdles they would have to jump and the time involved would have been formidable but not interminable. But this was post 9-11 and Homeland Security's US Citizen & Immigration Services mission to keep terrorists from setting foot on US soil cast a shadow over Teddy's visa application. No appeals from Jim or the immigration lawyer he retained moved things forward. It seemed as though Homeland Security gave greater weight to Uganda's history of having produced corrupt politicians criminals, kidnappers, extortionists and yes, even terrorists than to the

fact Teddy was a simple village girl with an unsullied past whose greatest ambition had been and was to finish her accounting degree and [own her own business](#).

Homeland Security's foot-dragging, though intended to keep out those intent on engaging in terrorist acts from ever setting foot in America, was keeping a good woman and a good man apart. After weighing every conceivable option, Jim and Teddy decided to secure visas, first to England and later to Mexico, and spend some time in both countries together. This they did.

Visas, of course, expire and cannot always be readily renewed or at least not endlessly so. Jim and Teddy knew their days together in the U.K. and then Mexico would be numbered. Eventually their stay in first one and then the other came to an end. This not unexpectedly steeled their resolve to be together in the US.

Since 2009 Jim and Teddy's romance has been a long distance one largely transacted by phone, emails and snail mail. Jim worked his Internet furniture business and even began his own web building and optimization service aptly named "Dreamcatcher Consulting." Teddy started a business consultancy business.

In the ensuing years Uganda has been hit by severe economic and political unrest and widespread corruption, while America has found itself battling one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. And while most folks would be tempted to "take care of their own" and wait for the dawn of better times, Jim and Teddy elected to reach out and help others far worse off than themselves. This includes having taken on two Ugandan children, a girl whose mother died after giving birth to her and a one month old boy who was abandoned by his mother and found on a street corner.

Trying to alleviate the suffering in even a small village in Uganda proved a daunting task. To Jim's way of thinking it was akin to living out the story of the little Dutch boy who tried to plug holes in a dike only to have new ones pop out at every turn. But if he and Teddy did nothing many good Ugandans would surely move from poverty and its attendant miseries into the realm of starvation, sickness and death.

Jim realized that one of the best ways to help people is to set up educational programs that teach them how to fend for themselves. He was mindful of the venerable old adage "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime." With this in mind Jim and Teddy considered the possibility of setting up a FREE school in a remote area near Teddy where people live in extreme poverty; where they have no clothing, eat a single meal each and every day, and have no roads or means of transportation; a place where people have no hope, no dreams, little food, no clothing, grass & mud huts to live in and only one thought in mind – namely, how to survive from day-to-day.

The school Jim and Teddy envisioned had a start in the form of a few hectares of land they acquired. They even found a young woman with a newly minted degree in education who signaled her willingness to teach for a pittance. What was needed to bring this dream to fruition was money; funds to construct a simple schoolhouse and establish a garden the

locals could use to raise enough crops to at least afford the students and teacher one nourishing meal each day. Jim has since steadily poured all he can into this project.

If there is a drawback to sacrificial giving it surely lies in the fact it becomes exceedingly difficult to say “no” to new charitable appeals and projects. In February 2006 Jim took on the task of raising funds to help fund the construction of water wells for a small college (540 students) and 3 surrounding villages. This project was completed and the students began investing the 2-3 hours daily they used to spend hauling water from far away to their studies. In addition, he began sponsoring and paying the tuition for several especially needy and deserving young people.



***How most Ugandans got their water before Compassion Vision helped put in wells***



***Villagers getting water using a well Compassion Vision funded***

**[Click to access more photos](#)**

Jim realized that for all his giving the unmet needs of these villagers far exceeded what he could financially cover by himself. He needed helpers and givers. Friends and neighbors stepped up to the plate enabling Jim to formalize what was fast becoming the missionary enterprise he had envisioned as a young man. This culminated in the official birth of Compassion Vision, a 501 (c) nonprofit collective devoted to “healing the world one person

at a time." Jim's entrepreneurial, business and web design & optimization skills all came into play to help launch and sustain this labor of love.

When asked to reflect on his calling and that of his Compassion Vision partners Jim shared this from his heart:

"The mission of Compassion Vision lies in providing poor children from single parent homes, abandoned deaf kids, orphans and others left on the streets to fend for themselves, those, in short, who have little hope or future to look forward to, a chance to get an education that will equip them with what's needed to become productive, caring, compassionate citizens. Along with meeting their education needs, Compassion Vision strives to provide these needful souls food, clothing, shelter, medical care, mosquito nets, clean water wells, and much more. This is all spelled out on our website <http://www.compassionate-vision.org/> which I encourage readers to visit and get acquainted with."

That Jim, Teddy and Compassion Vision is a blessing to the Ugandans they support is a given. But to Jim's way of thinking he has been given far more blessings than he has ever directly bestowed or facilitated:

"I have been richly blessed by helping these suffering Ugandans. To help you understand what I mean we need only consider four (4) precious little Ugandan children who lost their father to malaria at a tender young age. This left their future, their destinies if-you-will in the hands of an uneducated mother who made and sold grass mats, the only money-making skill she possessed, and worked a small garden for food. She, along with the 4 children, lost all hope of ever moving beyond bare subsistence living. Then we met and I was able to get the oldest child into school where she excelled despite being taunted by her peers due to the fact she had no shoes and only one outfit to wear. Thankfully, once the other kids learned how smart she was they began seeking her out to help them with their homework which put an end to the taunting. This young woman, who had no confidence or self-worth, now has abundant courage, strength, and confidence and continues to grow and excel. She is, in fact, a caring, giving, and focused soul who has set her sights on becoming a nurse. For the very first time in her life she is able to dream big, to set and reach goals, and make friends. And when she unexpectedly lost her mother in May 2008 I became her remaining family. She and her three siblings have, and do, call me Daddy, and regularly make a habit of bringing their questions and concerns to me, even seeking my advice on every facet of life, including boys and how to handle them. Needless-to-say these kids have blessed my life and rewarded me far beyond the few dollars I have invested in them and the little encouragement I have been privileged to give them. They have taught me so much about giving, loving, caring, sharing, and living life. And yes, I genuinely consider what they have given me to be the richest reward one could ever hope to receive in this lifetime. And least I be remiss, I should mention that the other three siblings have also been able to go to school. Two graduated top of their classes and are now working. One owns her own secretarial business and the other does construction and electrical work, plus runs

his own honey production business. With a little help and encouragement, and support, they have excelled, far beyond what they had previously hoped and imagined.”

Jim pauses for a moment and shares yet another account of specific charitable works he and Compassion Vision has taken on. In listening to him speak it is unclear who was blessed more, the givers or the grateful recipients:

“A Uganda mother of three children named Anne introduced me to a mother of 7 children, 6 born deaf. This mom, with no education and a husband who abandoned her and her children, did the best she could to simply provide meals and shelter. Working with Anne we have managed to get these special children clothing, food, and into a special school where they could learn sign language and basic skills. For the first time in their lives, they have other children to play and share their lives with. Prior to this, adults and children avoided them and even ran the other way. This enterprise is called the ‘Gabba Centre for Deaf and Blind Children’ which Compassion Vision helps support. We have also taken on another charitable work led by a Catholic priest who, until we stepped in, was the sole support for 43 deaf, abandoned kids; children whose only source of water has been dirty swamp water they haul about and use for bathing, cooking, and drinking; water that makes them sick most days. These precious kids now have a ramshackle shack to shelter them from the elements and 2 bedrooms to sleep in each night. The priest is providing some education so that in the future they can be self-sufficient.”

Jim realizes that it is all-too-easy for Americans to let these perilous economic times overshadow problems elsewhere. To “take care of yourself and your own” seems a logical recourse. Jim is sympathetic but quick to put things in perspective:

“Here in the US most of us we greet each new day by rolling out of a comfortable bed, flip a switch and have instant light, then head to the kitchen where we turn on a faucet and have either hot or cold running water for drinking or cooking. We prepare our meals on an electric or gas range and then dress ourselves with decent clothes and shoes. Most of us have a car or reliable public transportation to get us from our homes or apartments to our jobs and at the end-of-the-day have surplus money to spend on ourselves. Now consider the Ugandans Compassion Vision helps: People who have to sleep on dirt floors, have no electricity, no kitchen or range, and no water except what they can fetch in jerry cans from wells located miles away. And cooking? Most must chop down trees and bushes to cook the single hot meal they will enjoy each day in the grass or mud one room hut they call home. They typically have no clothing, or just one badly worn outfit, no car or other transportation except their own feet, and no job or hope of ever getting one save for lugging water for people who are too old or sick to do so. Few have the luxury of hoping or dreaming of a better day. Needless-to-say, if we each spent a single month living as they do, we would realize how blessed we truly are and how much surplus we have that could be marshaled to help those who have nothing.”

[Click to access more Compassion Vision photos \(Africa\)](#)

Now step back for a moment and consider Jim Haverlock. A man whose days are one long struggle to keep his businesses and himself afloat; who struggles to get about in a body ravaged by multiple sclerosis ([Click to access Jim's article on his journey with MS](#)); whose lady love lives half-a-world away in a land where poverty, corruption, disease and a short life are status quo. If ever a man was entitled to get frustrated, angry and even sullen it is Jim. But as you have read he prefers to reach out to help others as opposed to dwelling on his own miseries. Jim's approach isn't really all that surprising when one reflects for a moment on the fact he is heeding the call to minister to others he originally felt as a young man but had set aside; a calling unlikely to ever again see the light of day but that had burst forth from the shadow lands, thanks in large part to a long, unanticipated series of twists and turns and contingencies; the sort of thing that many folks would call the handiwork of God.

Jim and Teddy continue to hold out hope that Homeland Security will approve Teddy's visa application and by so doing permit the two lovebirds and their extended family to reunite. In the meantime they both do what they know best, what has become a way of life: Namely, keep helping each other and others. It would seem Jim's summons to the life of a missionary has not only been realized but expanded to include Teddy and all who share their burden for the suffering people of Uganda.

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Readers interested in learning more about "Missionary Jim" or contacting him [should click this link](#). Information of the eight souls who serve on the board of directors for Compassion Vision can be readily accessed by clicking this [link](#).

### **Additional Reading**

[Jim's "Flyin' Blind" MS web site](#)

[Click to access Jim's "My Father's Day with God" \(photos\)](#)



Jim's autobiographical book "[Challenging the Dragon](#)"

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