

DR. OGDON RICO (61)



A devoted servant, Dr. Ogdon Rico (61) doesn't do what he does for personal glory. He doesn't do it for "Ogdon Rico Day," though such a day was celebrated in Chandler, Ariz. Rico does what he does for the glory of God. It's been through God's grace that he has been able to serve so many and to achieve much, often against great odds.

Rico became a Christian at age 14 in Ensenada in Baja California, Mexico. Soon thereafter, he felt called to become a pastor. Since he was an American citizen, his pastor and Church of the Nazarene district leaders believed it would be better for Rico to attend Pasadena College rather than the Spanish-speaking seminary in San Antonio. The problem was that Rico knew almost no English.

"I had very little preparation for that level of education," Rico said, acknowledging that both language and academics were immediate challenges.

For the first few days, Rico scarcely left his room in the residence hall. He didn't know where to buy food or even that he had to register for classes.

"After a few days, a couple of students realized I needed help, and they took me under their wing," Rico said. "They registered me, showed me my classrooms, and introduced me to this different world."

With hardly any other Spanish-speaking students or faculty at Pasadena College at the time, Rico struggled academically. Somehow, by God's grace, he learned quickly enough to complete his degree.

"It was a difficult but wonderful experience," he said.

Rico served in Korea with the U.S. Air Force for four years. He was ordained by the Church of the Nazarene in 1964. After a short time of pastoring in California, in San Bernardino and San Fernando, he was called to Chandler, Ariz.

"I didn't like it at first," he admitted. "There were too many cows and too much dust for me, but I accepted God's will."

Staying where God had called him turned out to be a blessing not only to Rico, but also to the entire city of Chandler. God used Rico's willingness to change the lives of countless young people there.

While pastoring, Rico and his wife both earned master's degrees in education from Arizona State University. Rico became a bi-vocational pastor, serving the church full time and also working as a counselor at a local elementary school. He also earned a doctorate of ministry through the California School of Theology.

In his two roles of pastor and school counselor, Rico saw firsthand many needs in the community. It was in his nature to get involved. He joined the Community Action Program and helped with affordable housing projects. Since there was

no medical facility in Chandler, people had to travel 25-30 miles for care. Many pregnant women thus had no medical care before giving birth. Volunteers remodeled his church's annex and brought in volunteer doctors to provide services, especially for expecting women.

Rico also started a food bank. After several years, other agencies and organizations came in to help, and it grew to be the second largest in Maricopa County. Christian Community Center, an organization started by volunteers from Rico's church, eventually took over the food bank.

Rico also worked with his school and school district to help start English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs in Chandler. The school where Rico worked was 85 percent Latinos, with many students who, like Rico at the beginning of his Pasadena days, could not speak English. Rico's empathy, and collaboration with other staff members, created better opportunities for these non-native English speakers to learn and succeed.

In addition, Rico's church has planted three other organized churches and one mission that he said will likely become a regular church soon. Rico has also served as District Secretary for Southwest Latin American District for many years.

"Throughout my career, one of the things I have had to work on is to keep everything in balance," Rico said. "I would leave from work and go to school, be a pastor, and have my community responsibilities. You have to be mindful of keeping things in balance."

There were certainly challenging times when Rico had to rely on his faith and his call for strength. At one point, his church's roof caved in, and they had to rebuild it. They chose to "turn lemons into lemonade" during the rebuilding project by taking the opportunity to add an education building to the facility.

"Work and Witness people [from the Church of the Nazarene] as well as volunteers from the church and community came from all over to give us a hand," he said. "That was a big challenge, and we worked three to four years before we could finish the whole reconstruction. Now we have a beautiful sanctuary and education building, but it took a lot of resources, prayer, and money."

It was to recognize all these efforts and more on behalf of the community that the city of Chandler declared Sept. 24, 1992, "Ogdon Rico Day." Then on June 21, 2000, the Chamber of Commerce chose Rico as the "Outstanding Citizen of Chandler."

"My 40 years in Chandler have been very rewarding," Rico said. "They have been worth the cows and dust."

Rico's wife, Georgina, has served on the PLNU Board of Trustees for 30 years. They have two adult children, Lila Anne and Richard.

BILL (66) & CONNIE (65) PATRICK

Bill and Connie Patrick's story is one of how God can turn challenges into opportunities and willing hands and feet into vessels for His work.

It began like many others: they met in college and fell in love. Quickly, their relationship was strengthened through trials. Connie's father passed away in an accident near the beginning of their sophomore year. Devastated, she found the compassionate listener she needed in Bill, and through that heartbreaking time, their connection grew deeper.

They were married between their junior and senior years. In 1965, Connie graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a music minor and began teaching third grade. Bill needed six units to graduate, which he finished in January 1966, earning his bachelor's in music education and minoring in political science. He joined the Army in February to avoid the draft, but his service was shortened when he was wounded in Vietnam. After seven surgeries in nine months, he was given a medical retirement. It was Bill's turn to lean on Connie.

For the next 20 years, Bill worked as a high school music and social science teacher, and the Patricks raised their two sons, Kirk and Sean. They were active members of Arden Church of the Nazarene in Sacramento, Calif. It was in 1993, after Bill's father passed away, that God took their lives in a new direction when He called them to serve as volunteer missionaries. Their military disability payments made the transition possible, as God turned the pain of Bill's past injuries into an opportunity to serve Him.

The Patricks' first assignment was to Papua, New Guinea, where they started a school for the children of the medical professionals. Though they faced a challenge when Connie became ill for two months out of their six-month stay, they returned to the U.S. with a desire to serve abroad again.

Still coping with "reverse culture shock," they drove to the Church of the Nazarene's General Assembly, where Bill shared with leaders their hope for more missionary work. Seven months later, they were on their way to Albania.

The 13.5 months the Patricks spent in Albania presented new challenges. They were there to support a missionary family in church planting in that devastated country. While Bill assisted the missionaries, taught guitar, and led worship, Connie taught English and other classes for women. But the first six months were difficult.

"I am convinced," Connie said, "that one of the enemy's most powerful weapons is to sow discord among the workers in God's kingdom. We did not comprehend the deep grief of the missionary couple who had recently lost their baby and experienced the near-death of the mother. Our relationship was strained, but God worked His miracle of grace and after six months everything changed. Praise be to God who hears our prayers. The divine message was clear. Never, ever close your heart to another person for whom Christ died."

In August 1995, after their time in Albania, Bill was invited to teach music at European Nazarene Bible College. Meanwhile, Connie taught voice and other classes for women. She also authored two books, *Windows to Albania*, and the story of ENBC entitled *The Miracle Goes On*. The Patricks stayed at ENBC until June 1999, and they look back on those years fondly as a privileged time when God provided them with rich relationships and opportunities to grow.



In June 1999, the Patricks were asked to return to Albania to help support Kosovo refugees who were in dire need. They assisted in providing basic supplies such as food, mattresses, and towels, and thanks to the collaboration of many aid groups, tremendous progress was made on the refugees' behalf in just three months.

"It was really an amazing endeavor to be a part of," Connie said.

In 2000, they also spent several months in Kosova as "house parents" to a group of American men and a young, female translator who had been a part of their church in Albania. The men were there to replace damaged roofs for people in need and plant the first Nazarene church in Kosova.

After all their time serving abroad, Bill and Connie returned to California in late 2000 to help care for Connie's mother. They stayed home until her passing at age 102 in 2009. During that time, Connie kept her connection to people from other parts of the world alive by volunteering to help English language learners in her community. She also visited the scenes of her childhood in New Zealand and wrote *Land of the Long White Cloud*, a book about the founding of the Church of the Nazarene there.

Then, in March 2009, the Patricks received an email from missionaries in Madagascar, asking them to take their place for eight months while they were on home assignment. Bill and Connie agreed and repeated that relief service in Madagascar two more times in 2012 and 2014. All three times, Connie taught English, and Bill took care of the finances for a ministry serving street children.

Currently, the Patricks are home in California, but they remain willing to meet needs as they arise and to respond to God's leading. They see themselves as ordinary and the experiences they have had as blessings from God. Their advice to others is based on this set of beliefs.

"After you've gone through a whole career and you come to retirement, don't just kick back and sit at home," Bill said. "You can get involved at home or around the world. We never dreamed of doing all that. Make yourself available and see what God can do."

"He's an amazing God," Connie added. "He really is."

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