

# THE WALA STREET JOURNAL

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Winter 2006 Edition

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*Welcome to another edition of the "Wala Street Journal", published irregularly (usually about the time we start to feel guilty for not sending out Christmas cards). This time, it's been about two years — so here's an update on some of the news in the Wala household in the last biennium.*

## Vonna Becomes Red Cross Volunteer, Pastor

September 2001: Disaster strikes, as terrorists destroy the World Trade Center. Vonna wants to go to New York City with the Red Cross to help minister to recovery workers. But incapacitated by aggressively advancing secondary progressive multiple sclerosis, she is unable to go.

September 2005: Disaster has struck again, this time in the form of Hurricane Katrina. Again, Vonna wants to help. But this time, the situation is different. At 10pm on June 8, 2003, Vonna was instantly, completely and miraculously healed of her multiple sclerosis, following a prayer service at church (see our web site for further details). After two years, not one MS symptom has recurred, and the Red Cross agrees to deploy her to Louisiana. For two weeks, Vonna travels from town to town, helping out at shelters (many operated by local churches) in cities such as Shreveport, Alexandria, Leesville, and De Ridder, providing physical and emotional support to those displaced by the storm.

In her "spare time", Vonna continues counseling as a Licensed Associate Marriage and Family Therapist, works part time as a parent educator with the Waseca Schools, and is taking college classes to receive her teaching license. In addition, "Rev. Vonna Wala" received her ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God last April, and volunteers as "care pastor" of our local church. Of course, none of this could have been imagined by the bedridden and wheelchair-bound Vonna of 2½ years ago, and not a day goes by without her thanking God for her miraculously restored health.



## Phil Teaches in Ukraine



In October 2005, Phil had the opportunity to join three pastors on a week-long trip to Ukraine, teaching at churches and Bible schools in the southern part of that former Soviet country.

Most of the teaching occurred at a Bible school at a church in the city of Krivoy Rog, where new believers are preparing to add to the 500-plus congregations this church has already planted from Ukraine to Afghanistan.

A highlight of the trip was the opportunity to travel to several small villages in southern Ukraine and participate in the establishment of new churches there. Seeing 50+ villagers packed into a small house to eagerly hear about the love of Jesus (lower left) is a memory not soon to be forgotten.

As the only non-pastor on the team, Phil found unique opportunities to teach from the perspective of a scientist, who is not afraid to embrace *both* biblical truths and scientific discoveries in a way seldom understood by the polarized scientific and religious communities.

Although we worked with wonderful translators (upper right), Phil did attempt to re-learn some of the Russian he studied in college 30 years ago, and found opportunities to say a few words, and even sing a few songs in Russian ... which were received with great appreciation (and even one standing ovation) by the very warm (or at least sympathetic) Ukrainian audience.

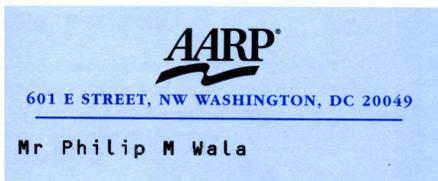


## Phil Becomes a Quinquagenarian

On December 8, 2005, Phil completed his first half century on this planet — which was a great shock to all those who could have sworn that he must have passed that milestone years ago.

Nonetheless, Phil accepted this inevitable turning point with dignity and grace — provided, of course, that your definition of “dignity and grace” incorporates curling into a fetal position and whimpering like a wounded puppy.

**WELCOME TO AARP!**



His family is happy to report, however, that while Phil is moving a little more slowly, and groaning a little more loudly these days, he is still able to feed himself and control most of his bodily functions.

## Stephanie Becomes a Quindecenarian



As Stephanie turned 15, she escaped from the Turkish prison where she was being tortured for her undercover work as a secret agent. After breaking every one of her bones in a freak giraffe herding accident, she recovered just in time to pick up another pile of gold medals in the Winter Olympic ice-diving competition.

Note: the above paragraph *may* include some slight exaggerations, but the ever-creative Stephanie thought a few embellishments might enhance her real story. In truth, she is an outstanding student in her sophomore year of high school, where she participates in gymnastics and works part time as an assistant gymnastics coach. She is also looking forward to getting her driver’s license in a few months, and she never misses an opportunity to zing her dad with her quick sense of humor.

## Four Take Vacation — Three Return

In August, the four members of the Wala family packed up the van and headed east, stopping overnight in Holland, Michigan (which was much less Dutch than Vonna had hoped), before heading on to the Niagara Falls area. We spent several days en-



joying all the attractions at the Falls before heading on to the beautiful Finger Lakes region of New York state. After a few days in Ithaca, New York, *three* family members, with a much more lightly loaded van, began their melancholy return trip to Minnesota.

## Jeremiah Becomes an Ivy-Leaguer

Graduating near the top of his high school class, Jeremiah was honored with a Cornell Tradition Fellowship at Cornell University (Ithaca, New York), where he is studying physics, widely considered to be one of the most demanding programs at one of the most academically demanding Ivy League schools.



Jeremiah quickly learned how much work it would take to meet the demands of a Cornell education, but has risen to the challenge and is successfully charging into his second semester of honors physics and math, already going beyond what some other schools would cover in two or more years.

In his rare moments of free time, Jeremiah has enjoyed making friends and joining a band in his “Just About Music” dormitory, a side trip to New York City, and enjoying the gorges and waterfalls of the beautiful campus.

## Reflections for the New Year

2004 was a sad year as we said goodbye to both of Phil’s parents: his father succumbing in April to a long battle against small strokes, and eventually, Parkinson’s disease; and his mother passing away in August of that same year, after surgery for a broken leg suffered in a fall.

But while it was hard to say goodbye, we were thankful for their full lives (85 and 82 years), their durable marriage (nearly 63 years) and the heritage of faith they left behind through their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



As we enter another year, our prayer for you is:

if you’ve been blessed with such a heritage, that you continue in it, and pass it on,

if you’ve had such a heritage, but have abandoned it, that you would return to it,

and if there hasn’t been that kind of heritage in your family, that you would be the one to establish a new heritage from this point on.

With our love,

*Phil, Vonna, Jeremiah and Stephanie*