

First Sunday of Lent

“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Matthew 7:7

This true story tells about pledging myself to act when God chose to answer my prayer. The result is amazing! When Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia died, it left a leadership vacuum filled by a madman, Slobodan Milosevic. His military forces swept through the Balkans in what became known as the Bosnian War in which 100,000 people were killed, over 20,000 Bosnian women raped and 2.2 million people displaced. In July, 1995, during two weeks of “ethnic cleansing”, over 8,000 men and boys were slaughtered in Srebrenica. It was the worst massacre since WW2.

The United Nations was tasked to restore peace and order in the Balkans with the help of NATO. On September 18, 1997, a UN helicopter carrying officials crashed, killing twelve passengers. They were working to rebuild Bosnia’s civilian police force. Among them were two of my retired FBI Special Agent associates, David Kristovich and Al Beccaccio. They left behind large families. I knew both of them. We were greatly saddened. In a moment of prayerful reflection, I pledged to follow their noble example when God chose to provide the opportunity for me.

In late 1999, I read the interview of a UN Peacekeeper returning from the mission ongoing in East Timor. I called him up to learn the US State Department’s contractor for personnel; it was DynCorp. He told me there were also missions happening in Bosnia and Kosovo. I called the DynCorp recruiter, and was interviewed then and there. The next morning, a big overnight envelope arrived at my door and the fast track process began. It also swept in my son, a local deputy sheriff, who accompanied me on two missions. I lived with him during those missions and learned to appreciate him as another man.

In the period 2000–2006, I served in Bosnia as a Monitor with the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF), in Kosovo as a police officer with the UN Mission (UNMIK), and a short time as a Police Advisor in Iraq.

I cannot overstate the huge impact the experience made on me and my family. Our accomplishments far exceeded my wildest expectations.

God did indeed open the door for me! The bottom line is; ask not what God can do for you; instead, ask what you can do for others.

Dear Heavenly Father, We thank You for Your promise to lead us where we can be of service to others. Grant us the patience to wait for Your guidance and confidently act where led. In the name of Your Son, Christ Jesus we pray. Amen.

John Heidtke

(Since 1963, John Heidtke has served with municipal, county, state, federal and international law enforcement agencies.)