

New Directions

Sometimes our lives are shaped by events, seasons, or persons. An event happened to me last week that will shape my life, perhaps as much as my conversion at the University of Nebraska in 1960.

by Paul Hensley

On Thursday, September 29, 2005 around 9 a.m. I drove to Glen Eyrie. Our Navigator Church Discipleship Ministry staff conference was winding down and I thought I'd get some casual photos of the staff. I took one photo of the Castle, got in my car and drove down to the Castle. During that short time I began to see red, blue, yellow and other colors in flashing fractal shapes in my right eye.

I went in to the foyer and ran into Darrell Sanders, our CDM director. I told him what I was experiencing. By this time the colors were fading to gray with occasional flashes of light. Darrell encouraged me to go to a doctor right away. I stopped by my home and called my ophthalmologist's office. They said to come down immediately. After two doctors examined me for about an hour they sent me to a retinal specialist in the afternoon.

After an angiogram of my retinas, Dr. Luu said that I had had a stroke in my eye and the damage was irreversible. He held out a 1% chance of recovery, but then said that he had never heard of a case of reversal. He said the good news was that I was still alive. If the stroke had occurred in my brain I could have died.

I asked if he was a man of faith or prayer. He said, "I'm a realist."

He said he had experienced one miracle in his life. His family and others had escaped from Vietnam in 1979 in five boats when he was 7. One boat hit a mine and sank. They were attacked by pirates who sank his boat. He said "We were alone in the open sea when a missionary boat appeared and took them to Indonesia. The captain of the boat was named

Jimmy, the personal name Dr. Luu now uses.

I told him about our friend, Anh Vu Sawyer and her book, *SONG OF SAIGON*. Anh, a third



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generation Christian, and her family had escaped on one of the last helicopters from the US Embassy in Saigon in 1976. I told Dr. Luu that I would give him a copy of the book on my next visit in a month. I truly believe my meeting with him was a God-ordained encounter.

Three years ago my brother, David, a pastor had a stroke following surgery that left him aphasic and partially paralyzed. We discovered there is a family history of strokes.

David had to take a medical retirement. But he and his wife, Nancy, have figured out how to continue to minister (see paper “Leading Without Speaking”).

For David, his powerful speaking voice and public ministry was what defined him. Recently I began thinking about what would be the most difficult thing for me to lose. I concluded that it would be my sight.

I do photography, web design, writing, and like to read. Perhaps God has allowed this affliction to lead me into new areas of service. I may be standing in front of a new Open Door.

Don't get me wrong. It has been a difficult time with lots of tears. The loss is sometimes incomprehensible. On the positive side I can see perfectly with my left eye. There is enough vision in my right eye to give me depth perception. I can drive, I can ride my bike, and I will be able to continue skiing.

Short of a miracle, the loss of vision is irreversible, but my brain will compensate over time and I should be able to do most of things I love to do.

Photography will be a challenge as I try to force my left eye to do what my dominant right eye used to do. I've got a new slogan for my business card:

One-Eyed
Wedding Photographer
Half Price

But more important than what I've lost is what I've gained. This may be a season in my life to be more outgoing in my witness and to be more reflective in my devotional life. Life is precious. Time is short.

