

TERRORE IN PARADISE

BY RANDY HURST

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AUBRA GEORGE



The house in Palau where the attack on the Beebe family took place.

The long journey of **healing** and **forgiveness**

TERROR IN PARADISE



The Darrell Beebe family in 1986

Just before **MIDNIGHT, JULY 25, 1986**, a noise outside the house awakened Darrell Beebe. He and his family, new missionaries to Palau, were still getting used to their surroundings and the sounds that went with them. The mission house was six miles outside the nearest town and had no electricity or phone. But the windows were barred, so the family felt somewhat secure.

Darrell walked quietly downstairs to investigate the noise. As he checked the back door to make sure it was locked, a man suddenly pushed his way inside, hitting Darrell in the face with a beer bottle. Two more men broke through the front door. They attacked Darrell viciously, stabbing him in the side. Darrell kept fighting to protect his family until an attacker swung a shotgun like a baseball bat, striking Darrell in the head and knocking him to the floor.

The men dragged Darrell into the laundry room and told him that if he moved he would be killed. Darrell felt in the darkness, found a towel and held it to his head to try to stop the bleeding.

Two attackers went upstairs where Sherri had taken 11-year-old Jadie and 12-year-old Jeremy. One of them grabbed Sherri by the hair, threw her to the floor and kicked her repeatedly. Then he began tearing off her clothing. "Not in front of my kids!" Sherri pleaded. He blindfolded her, took her out of the house and down the gravel road, and raped her.

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When the man brought Sherri back to the house still blindfolded, she heard the other two men abusing Jadie. “She’s a baby!” Sherri shouted. “Leave her alone — take me!”

In the laundry room, Darrell was too injured to get up, but he could hear the men abusing Jadie. When he prayed out loud, one of the men opened the door and hit him. Helplessly he lay on the floor, praying quietly.

As he prayed, he repeatedly thought of Proverbs 3:5,6 — to trust in the Lord with all his heart. He later learned that at that same time Sherri was remembering a message missionary Charles Greenaway had preached at School of Missions about the three Hebrew young men in Daniel. The theme was that God is able to deliver us, but even if He does not we will still trust Him. “In that awful moment, the Lord directed both of us to trust Him,” Darrell says.

The most violent of the three attackers took Sherri about 200 yards away and forced her inside a World War II bunker. He physically and mentally tortured her, telling her that Darrell and the children were dead and that she would remain his captive for the rest of her life.

The men kept the family members separated for two hours. Holding a pistol to Jeremy’s head, they terrorized him by playing Russian roulette. They also told him that his parents were dead, and when they were finished with Jadie they would kill her too. Jeremy recalls, “I felt so small, helpless and worthless.”

At about 3 a.m., the two attackers in the house left. Darrell gathered his strength and went outside. Finding Jeremy and Jadie, he tried to comfort them while shouting Sherri’s name. Imprisoned in the bunker with the third man, Sherri heard him call but could not respond.

Darrell took the children and drove to the U.S. Navy Construction Battalion (Seabee) camp nearly four miles away. Sailors on duty radioed the police in town.

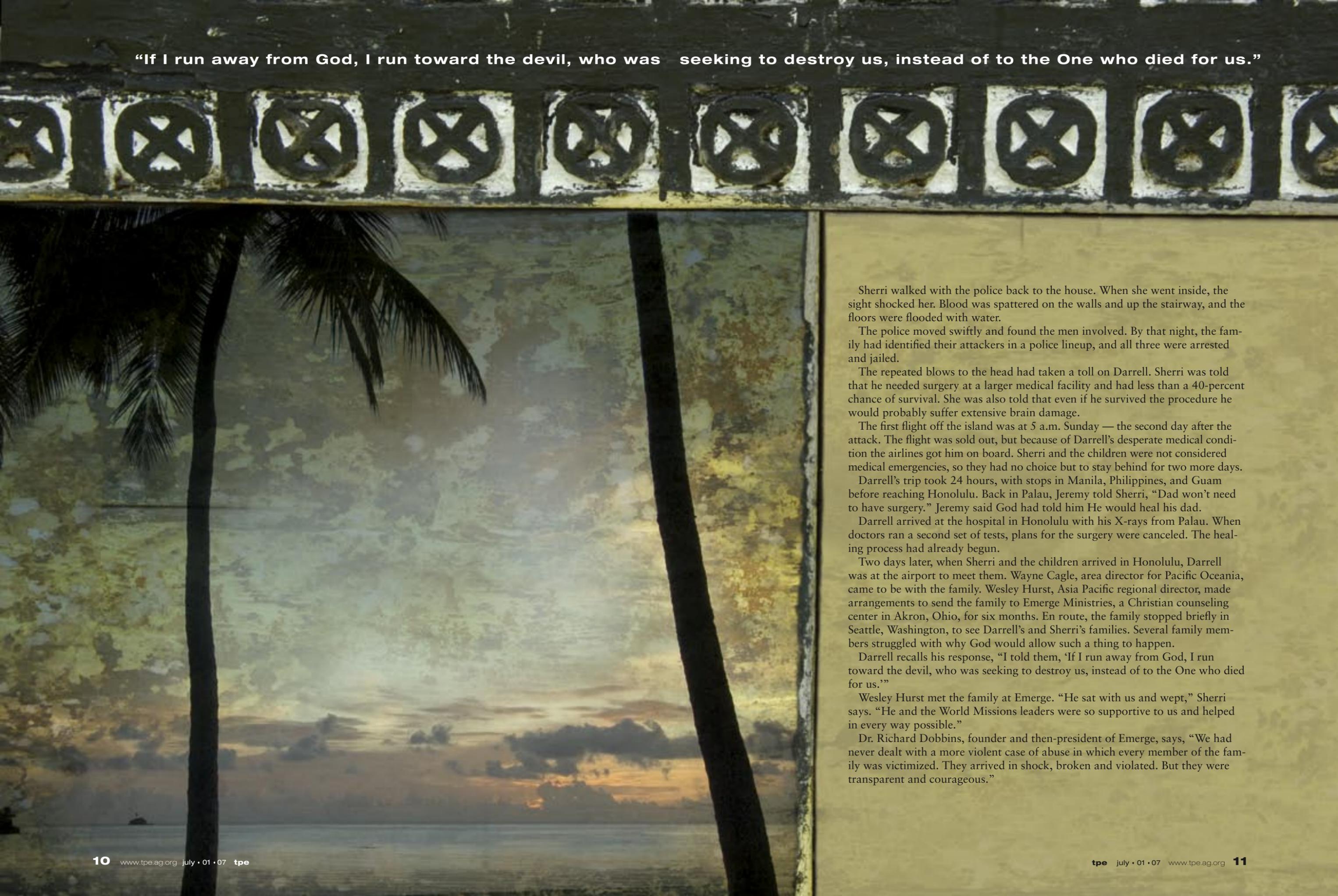
At about 5:30 a.m., Sherri heard voices outside the cave speaking Palauan. She feared that more men were coming to abuse her, but they were local Palauan men helping in a search team. When her attacker heard the voices, he tried to flee but was captured.

“We’re here to help you,” a voice called in English. “Your family is alive.” A policeman covered Sherri with his coat while other officers radioed the Seabee camp. Darrell and the children now knew that Sherri was alive.

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Sherri walked with the police back to the house. When she went inside, the sight shocked her. Blood was spattered on the walls and up the stairway, and the floors were flooded with water.

The police moved swiftly and found the men involved. By that night, the family had identified their attackers in a police lineup, and all three were arrested and jailed.

The repeated blows to the head had taken a toll on Darrell. Sherri was told that he needed surgery at a larger medical facility and had less than a 40-percent chance of survival. She was also told that even if he survived the procedure he would probably suffer extensive brain damage.

The first flight off the island was at 5 a.m. Sunday — the second day after the attack. The flight was sold out, but because of Darrell’s desperate medical condition the airlines got him on board. Sherri and the children were not considered medical emergencies, so they had no choice but to stay behind for two more days.

Darrell’s trip took 24 hours, with stops in Manila, Philippines, and Guam before reaching Honolulu. Back in Palau, Jeremy told Sherri, “Dad won’t need to have surgery.” Jeremy said God had told him He would heal his dad.

Darrell arrived at the hospital in Honolulu with his X-rays from Palau. When doctors ran a second set of tests, plans for the surgery were canceled. The healing process had already begun.

Two days later, when Sherri and the children arrived in Honolulu, Darrell was at the airport to meet them. Wayne Cagle, area director for Pacific Oceania, came to be with the family. Wesley Hurst, Asia Pacific regional director, made arrangements to send the family to Emerge Ministries, a Christian counseling center in Akron, Ohio, for six months. En route, the family stopped briefly in Seattle, Washington, to see Darrell’s and Sherri’s families. Several family members struggled with why God would allow such a thing to happen.

Darrell recalls his response, “I told them, ‘If I run away from God, I run toward the devil, who was seeking to destroy us, instead of to the One who died for us.’”

Wesley Hurst met the family at Emerge. “He sat with us and wept,” Sherri says. “He and the World Missions leaders were so supportive to us and helped in every way possible.”

Dr. Richard Dobbins, founder and then-president of Emerge, says, “We had never dealt with a more violent case of abuse in which every member of the family was victimized. They arrived in shock, broken and violated. But they were transparent and courageous.”

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Within the first couple of days at Emerge, Jadie regressed to behaving like a 4-year-old. Counselors explained she was returning to an age when she felt safe, and it was a natural part of the healing process. They said it likely would last at least two years, but within only six weeks Jadie returned to acting her true age.

THE TRIAL

Just five months after the attack, the family had to return to Palau for the trial of the three men. The ordeal proved more emotionally devastating than the attack itself. Darrell and Sherri were especially concerned about the trauma the children would experience by having to relive the events of that violent night, facing their attackers and testifying in detail before a crowded courtroom.

Since the Beebes were the only witnesses to the crimes, guards were assigned to each of them for protection from possible reprisals from the attackers' family members. Area director Wayne Cagle and his wife, Judy, flew to Palau to be with them throughout the trial.

During testimony the Beebes learned the men had watched violent horror films and pornography and had reenacted some of the scenes during their attacks. Each of the three men was convicted of multiple counts of burglary, trespassing, kidnapping, rape and attempted murder. Their sentences ranged from 18 to 28 years in prison.

The most violent perpetrator, who had held Sherri captive in the bunker, escaped six months later and was killed during a gunfight as police pursued him. The Beebes were traveling at the time but received a message to call the prosecuting attorney in Palau. Darrell called from a phone booth.

“The prosecutor told me that he thought we would want to know that the worst perpetrator was dead,” Darrell remembers. “I went back to the car and told Sherri, ‘It’s really sad that that man is dead. The one message he needed was of God’s forgiveness, and he didn’t get to hear it.’ To my amazement she replied, ‘But, Darrell, he did get to hear it. I told him.’ Sherri had witnessed to that man in the bunker — so he went into eternity knowing how to be forgiven.”

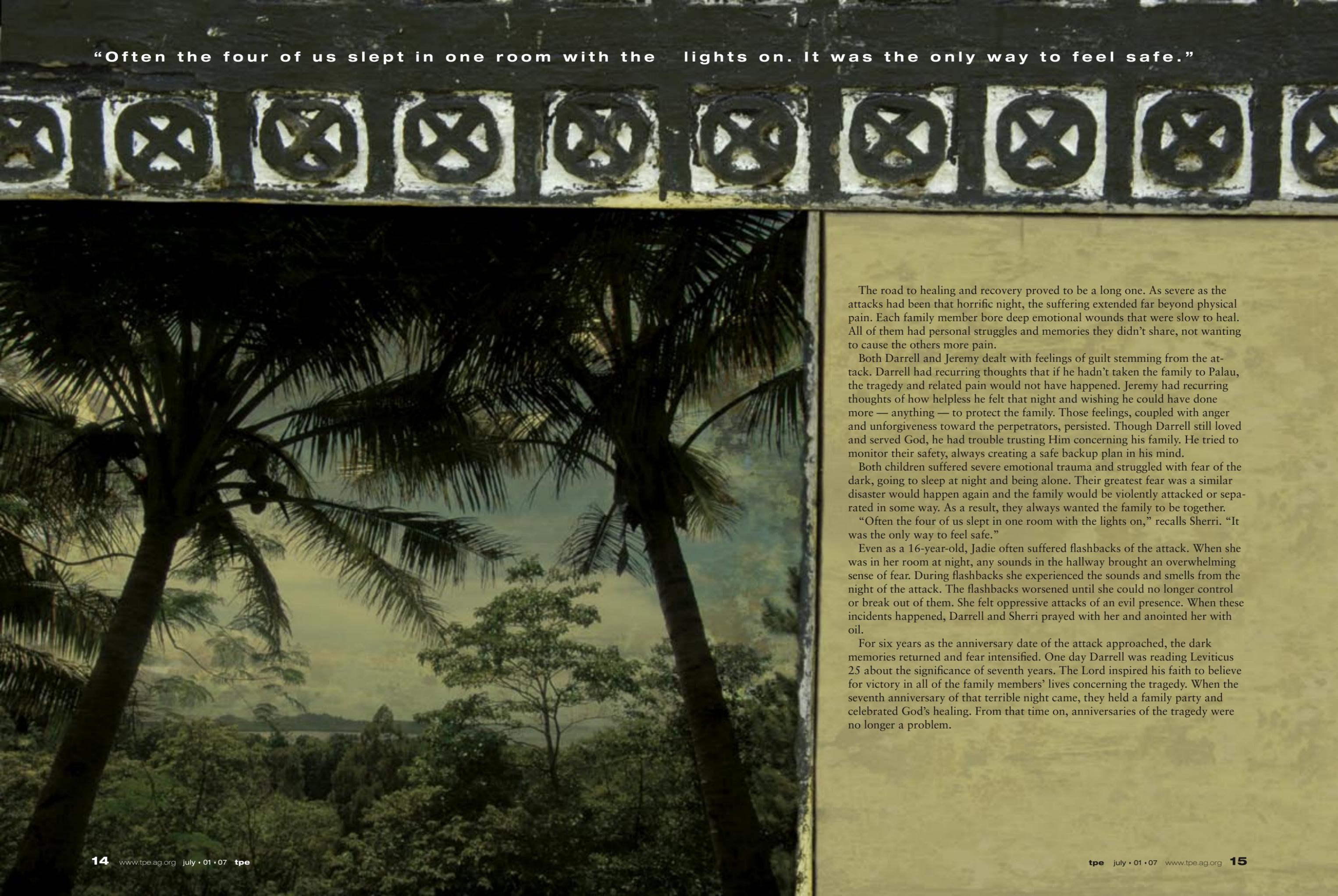
HEALING AND RECOVERY

The Beebes transferred to Japan for missionary service, but Jeremy and Jadie were not recovering well. Darrell and Sherri came to the conclusion they should focus on their children’s welfare and return to the United States.

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The road to healing and recovery proved to be a long one. As severe as the attacks had been that horrific night, the suffering extended far beyond physical pain. Each family member bore deep emotional wounds that were slow to heal. All of them had personal struggles and memories they didn't share, not wanting to cause the others more pain.

Both Darrell and Jeremy dealt with feelings of guilt stemming from the attack. Darrell had recurring thoughts that if he hadn't taken the family to Palau, the tragedy and related pain would not have happened. Jeremy had recurring thoughts of how helpless he felt that night and wishing he could have done more — anything — to protect the family. Those feelings, coupled with anger and unforgiveness toward the perpetrators, persisted. Though Darrell still loved and served God, he had trouble trusting Him concerning his family. He tried to monitor their safety, always creating a safe backup plan in his mind.

Both children suffered severe emotional trauma and struggled with fear of the dark, going to sleep at night and being alone. Their greatest fear was a similar disaster would happen again and the family would be violently attacked or separated in some way. As a result, they always wanted the family to be together.

“Often the four of us slept in one room with the lights on,” recalls Sherri. “It was the only way to feel safe.”

Even as a 16-year-old, Jadie often suffered flashbacks of the attack. When she was in her room at night, any sounds in the hallway brought an overwhelming sense of fear. During flashbacks she experienced the sounds and smells from the night of the attack. The flashbacks worsened until she could no longer control or break out of them. She felt oppressive attacks of an evil presence. When these incidents happened, Darrell and Sherri prayed with her and anointed her with oil.

For six years as the anniversary date of the attack approached, the dark memories returned and fear intensified. One day Darrell was reading Leviticus 25 about the significance of seventh years. The Lord inspired his faith to believe for victory in all of the family members' lives concerning the tragedy. When the seventh anniversary of that terrible night came, they held a family party and celebrated God's healing. From that time on, anniversaries of the tragedy were no longer a problem.

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FORGIVENESS

All four of the Beebes testify that forgiveness was the greatest challenge.

Jadie says, “What we have learned is that forgiveness is definitely a process. It does not mean the offense that was done to you was acceptable or that forgiveness in any way diminishes or lessens the offense. The enemy tried to keep me in a state of unforgiveness — convincing me that if I would just hate those people, I would be in control of my life. I would have power over them, and they couldn’t hurt me anymore. But instead it became like a noose around my neck until I listened to God’s voice to love and forgive. Forgiveness releases us from Satan’s hold and from the attachment of reliving the pain of a memory again and again.”

God’s miraculous work of healing in the Beebes’ lives is clear from their present ministries. Both children are in full-time ministry today, evidencing the emotional and spiritual healing and restoration the Holy Spirit has accomplished. Jadie and her husband, David Hager, pastor the Vineyard Church in LaPorte, Indiana. Darrell and Sherri Beebe pastor the Assemblies of God church in Mossyrock, Washington. Jeremy and his wife, Jennifer, are Assemblies of God evangelists based in Mossyrock.

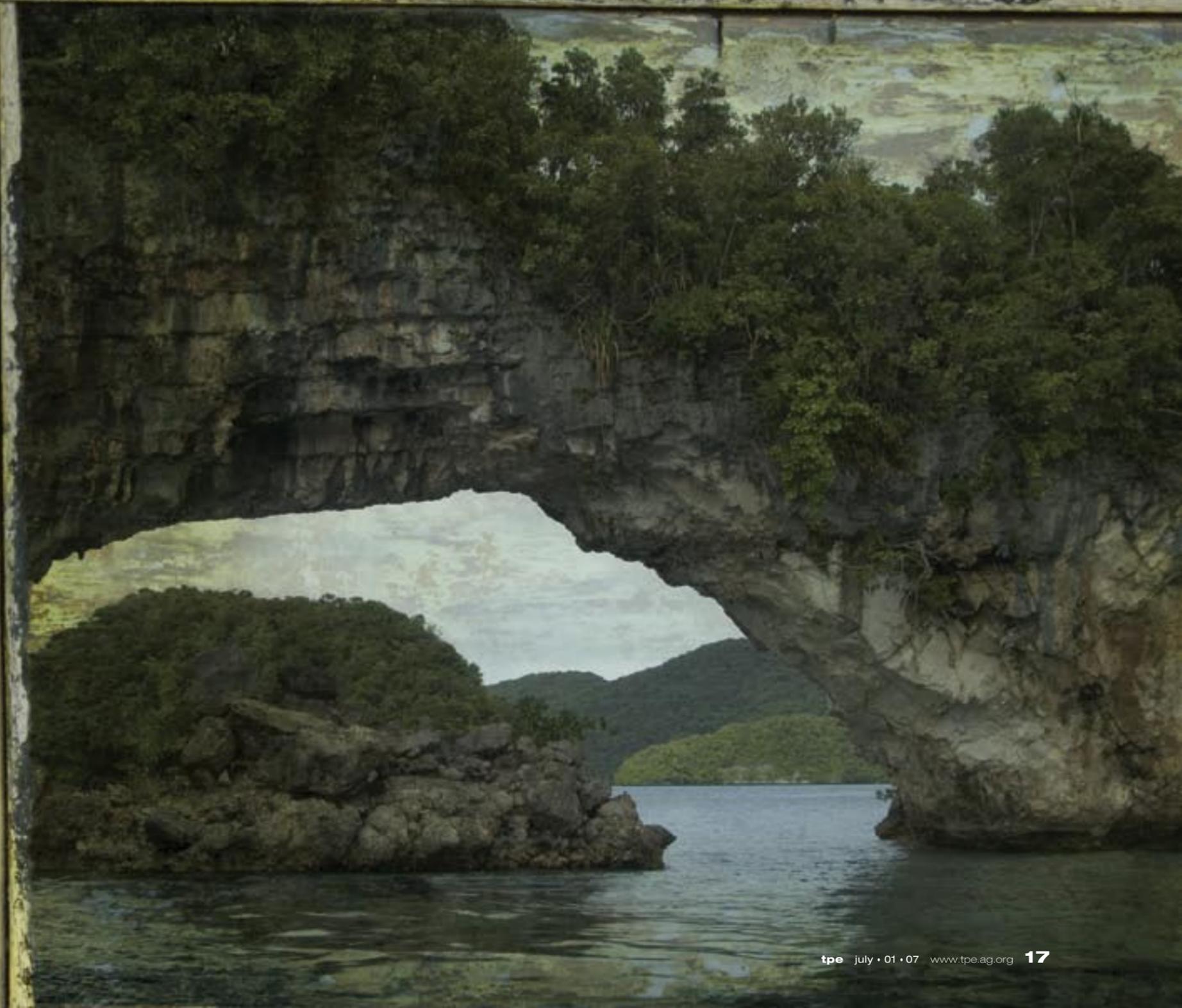
In 2000, the Beebes were flying to the Assemblies of God Celebration in Indianapolis when they met Grady and Janet Smalling, missionaries to Europe, on the airplane. The following June the Smallings invited Sherri to Kosovo to minister to Muslim women who were victims during the civil war in the Balkans. Darrell and Sherri have since returned several times for ministry to refugees of the Bosnian war, especially women who were interned in the rape camps.

Jadie accompanied her parents on one of the trips. Many of the women in the camps had taught their children about vengeance and justice. Sherri and Jadie were able to effectively speak from their experience concerning the necessity and power of forgiveness through Christ.

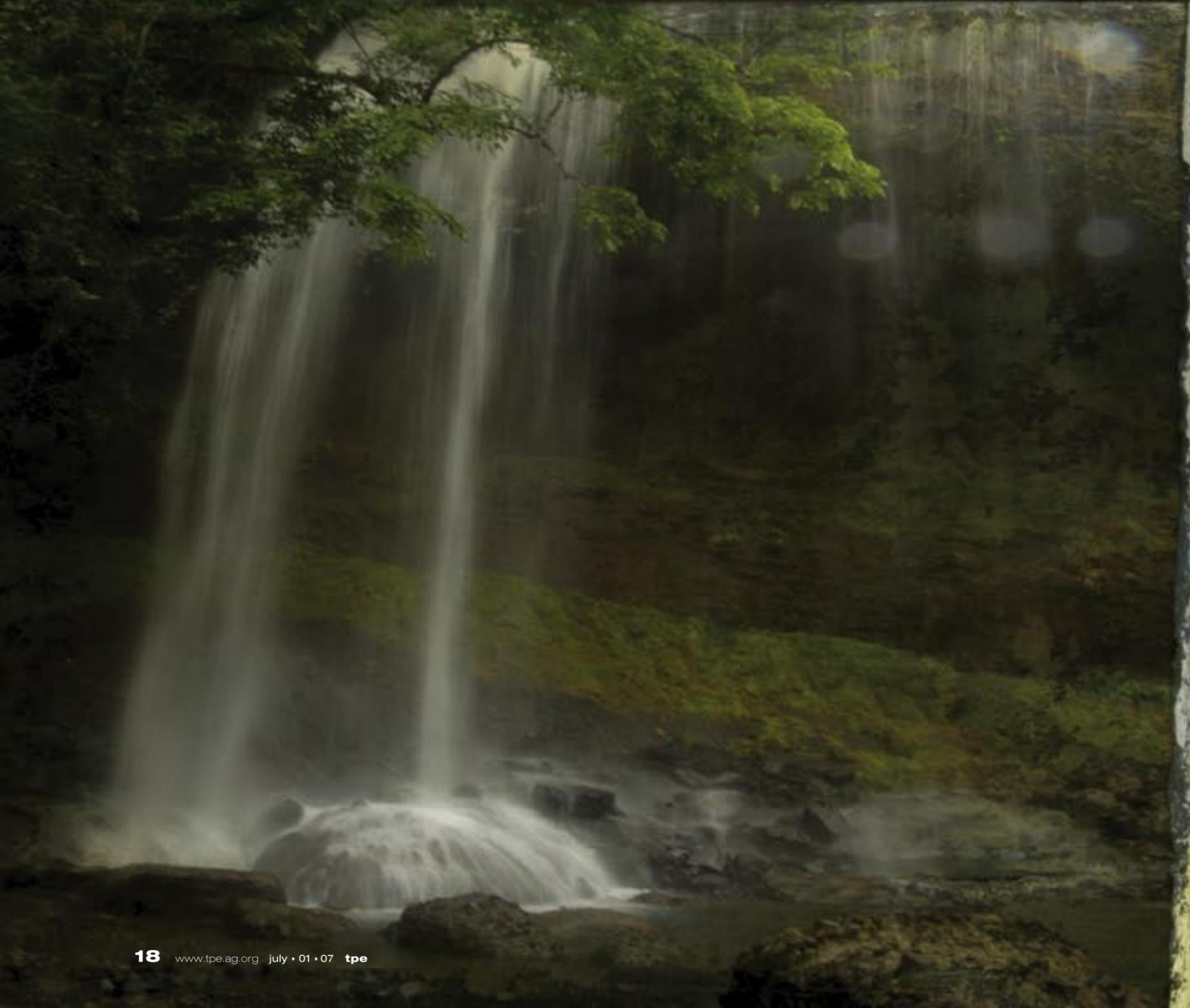
The week this issue goes to press, Sherri is in Macedonia ministering at two women’s conferences on the subject of grief, recovery and forgiveness.

For the past 10 years, Darrell and Sherri felt they would one day return to Palau. When Dale and Delight Eytzen, AG missionaries to Palau, contacted the Beebes in July 2006 and asked if they would consider returning for several days of ministry, they felt the time was right.

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God was preparing Jeremy as well. During a prayer retreat last August, God revealed to Jeremy he had never verbally forgiven the men in Palau. Jeremy believed he had forgiven them in his heart, but he hadn't spoken about it. As he declared aloud his forgiveness, a spirit of intercession came on him and he began to pray for the Palauan people. The Holy Spirit assured him that someday he would have a spiritual inheritance among them.

Then Darrell told Jadie, “We're going to Palau. Would you like to come?” Her response was, “Have a great time. This is definitely not for me.”

“I didn't want to go, but I didn't want my family to go without me,” Jadie says. “My initial reaction, even after 21 years, was fear. My first thought was that feeling fear meant my healing wasn't complete. I felt that I had done everything God had asked me to do, and I wasn't ready to start a new part of the healing process. I thought, *I'm trying to raise a family and take care of children, and I'm not in a position to deal with such deep mental and emotional strain.* I really struggled and cried, and for the first time in many, many years I had nightmares. But as I prayed and sought God, He affirmed to me that His plan for this trip was one of great blessing.”

Asked what she wants people to remember from her family's story, Jadie replies, “I want them to remember victory for a family that Satan tried to destroy. There was a time in our lives when he was winning, and we had to make strong, very clear decisions every day to climb the mountain of forgiveness to healing and freedom.”

What the Beebe family suffered brings perspective to most people's pain. Their healing offers a hopeful example to others who are victims of violence or abuse. God's grace and power can bring miraculous restoration, even when emotional scars are too deep for any natural human recovery. Jadie expresses it well: “God wants to take us beyond just a tolerable recovery to the abundant life He has planned for us.” **tpe**



RANDY HURST is communications director of Assemblies of God World Missions.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.