

An Accidental Tourist

By Randy Wilburn '64

Remember the movie? I know that movie from the inside. I believe my life is one described as the accidental “spiritual” tourist.

How did I get to St.Olaf? Going to college was not my plan. I was going into the Air Force like my two older brothers and get a free education. In March of my high school senior year, the YMCA program director of the local Y met with me. Gary was a mentor to me. For years I had worked with him at summer day camp and after school programs for children. On Sunday evenings I rolled around the floor with his children, ate popcorn and played games. He is one of many angels God sent to me. Sitting in his welcoming office he asked, “Why aren’t you going to college?” I responded, “I’m not smart enough and I have no money. No one went to college in my family.” Urging me to take the SAT’s, whatever they are, and paying the fee, began a movement of the Spirit which continues to this day. Thirty-five years later I called him and thanked him and told him what he had done for me. It was a very emotional reunion. Angels appear to show me the way; they speak the truth in love.

The first six months on the hill I spent in the basement of Ytterboe, on the toilet, expressing my anxiety and fear of failure. I was converted at St.Olaf. My whole way of seeing and being was transformed. Professors and students surrounded me with patient encouragement.

Every key event in my life has appeared to be “accidental”. All the advanced degrees and training are gifts from others who guided my way like a cairn on wooded trails in Maine. Yet, upon closer reflection, I believe God was swirling the waters, moving me along, inviting me to trust.

I trust. I trust the process. I trust outcomes. I trust others who ask me the right questions. I believe the voice of God incarnated in ordinary yet extraordinary life decisions. I believe there is intention in my spiritual tour. I can’t wait to see who shows up next.