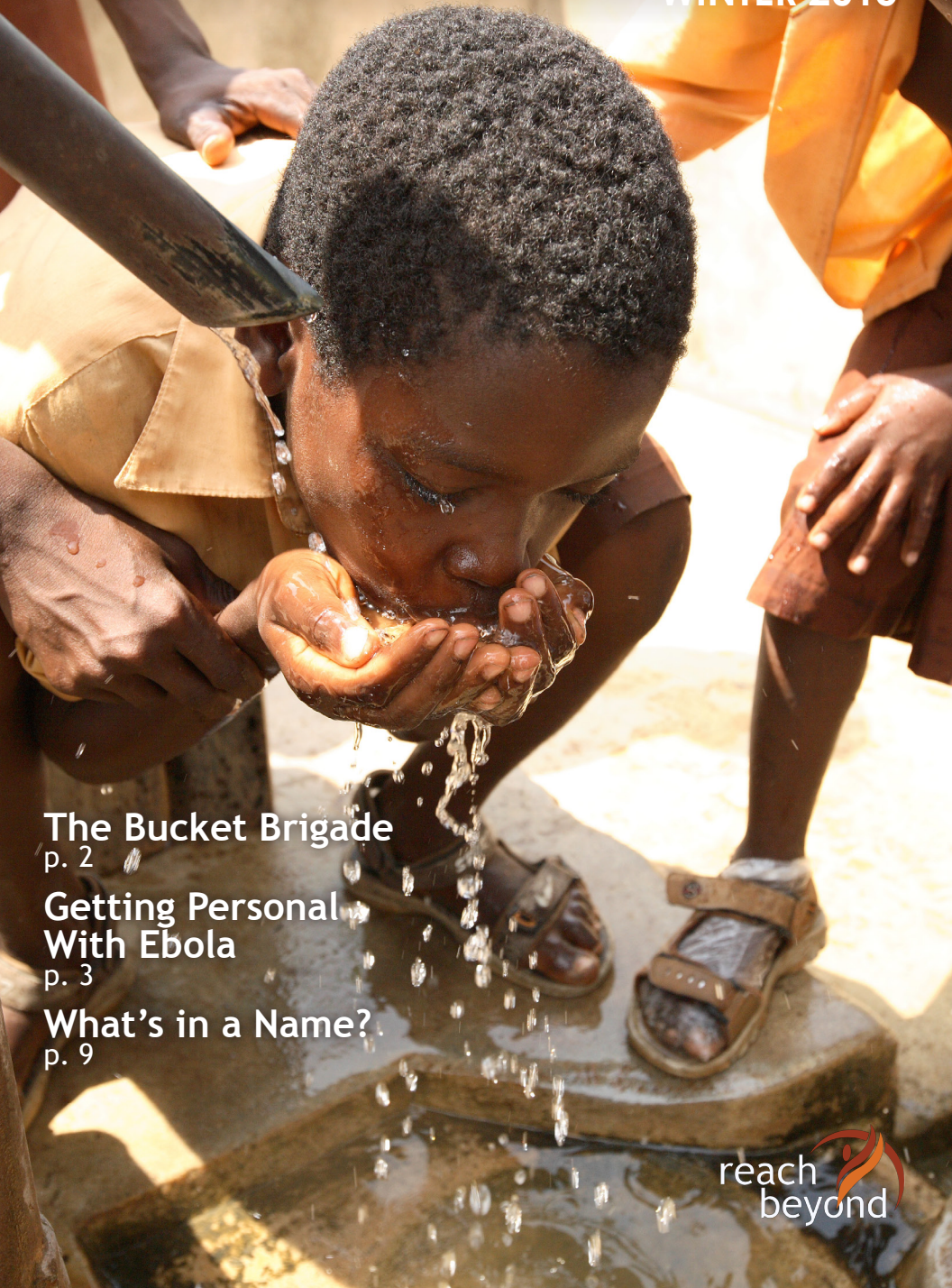


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# VOICE & HANDS

WINTER 2015



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# Wayne a word from



Dear Friend,

In many ways, the news media has moved on from what continues to be a growing tragedy in West Africa. As this publication went to press, there were more than 18,000 reported cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and most recently, Mali. More than 7,000 people have died, and in Sierra Leone and Guinea, there is no end in sight. And this is the “official” report. Because of poverty, lack of healthcare and reporting structures, the crisis is actually far worse than the numbers indicate.

But there is practical hope. With Ebola, prevention is best way to stem the tide of the disease. And there is spiritual hope as we help those impacted in Jesus’ name.

In this edition of *Voice and Hands* you will read about some of the ways Reach Beyond is ministering to the physical needs of people around the world. But I also want to focus on an urgent project aimed specifically at making a physical and spiritual difference for people fighting this deadly situation.

Right now Reach Beyond is working with Believers Broadcasting Network, our partner in Sierra Leone, to launch a relief and prevention project called, “The Bucket Brigade.”

*But we need your help. This is a serious, unexpected crisis for which we need to raise money quickly.*

Please, read more about the project on the following pages and learn how you can make a difference right now.

Serving Christ together,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Pederson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Pederson  
President, Reach Beyond



## THE BUCKET BRIGADE: MAKE EBOLA KICK THE BUCKET!

In response to the growing crisis, Reach Beyond and our partners are launching *The Bucket Brigade* in the West African country of Sierra Leone.

According to our partners in the region, the most at-risk groups are children and families in quarantined areas. They don't have access to food, clean water or disinfectants—all necessary to fight the spread of the disease. Simply put, without food, starvation poses as much of a risk as the virus.

*The Bucket Brigade* is an effort to equip these families with the vital supplies they need to survive. Reach Beyond will provide large buckets containing food, soap, gloves, bleach and other necessities. These basic supplies will enable a family of up to five to maintain proper hygiene and provide enough food to feed them for several weeks while they are in isolation.

These simple items may be the difference between life and death for hundreds of people in Sierra Leone. And every bucket delivered is given in Jesus' name, sharing His love at a time when they are desperate for physical help and spiritual hope.

For \$100 you can provide a bucket of supplies to a family of up to five. Your gift of \$100, \$500 or whatever the Lord leads can save lives if we act quickly enough.

*Please give to today. A small investment can make a huge, life-saving difference. To give, complete the enclosed reply device or visit [reachbeyond.org/ebola](http://reachbeyond.org/ebola).*



## GETTING PERSONAL WITH THE EBOLA CRISIS

by Lee Sonius, executive director, Sub-Saharan Africa Region

Keeping up with the news has become a vital part of my daily routine. And each day I'm anxious to know the latest about Ebola whether I'm listening to the radio, watching television, reading the newspaper or surfing the web.

You see, the Ebola crisis is very personal to me. I was born to missionary parents in Sierra Leone and lived there until I was 8 years old. Then we moved to Liberia, and I consider Monrovia, Liberia's capital city, my home. Now the city is considered ground zero in the war against this terrible virus that has also devastated neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea.

So far it hasn't spread to Ghana where my wife, Michelle, and I serve in Accra.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, I often listened to SIM's Radio ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa)—also home to a hospital and school. It was the perfect place to grow up—an idyllic location on the shores of the Atlantic.

There were so many coconut trees that visitors would say, "It must be tough living in [a climate like that of] Hawaii." The beach was our front yard. Now this place is known for housing the world's largest Ebola containment unit.

My last trip back "home" to ELWA was this past January, just months before Ebola started showing up in Liberia. I was there to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the station.

Little did I know what was about to happen and how Ebola was going to affect all of my friends in Liberia. In September things were so bad at ELWA that Ebola victims had to be turned away from the treatment centers as all the beds were occupied.

Tragically, most went back home to die. Hundreds of men, women and children have died at the ELWA treatment centers, but thankfully, many have also survived.

I have personal friends who have died in Liberia, and I know some of the missionary medical workers who were evacuated to the U.S. after contracting the deadly virus.

Among those were Dr. Rick Sacra and family whom we have known for more than 20 years while serving in Liberia. We prayed, along with people around the world, for these missionaries whom I consider to be heroes. God answered those prayers, and they survived.

Yet my mind is filled with questions: Why do some people survive while others die within a matter of days? Why have so many children lost both parents, forcing them to fend for themselves on the street because people are afraid to take them in?

Is it any wonder that I have struggled with nightmares? There have been many, and in those dreams I'm back in Liberia, doing what I can do to help, wondering every minute if I've contracted the virus.

Lately there's been good news as the number of new cases in Liberia is declining—the first glimmer of hope in months. But the war on Ebola is far from over, especially as the situation may be getting worse in Sierra Leone or Guinea.

It's much too early to relax.

The Reach Beyond-UK office recently produced some excellent audio spots, helping to educate and inform the public about Ebola from a Christian perspective. These programs in Liberian English and West African French are being aired on many radio stations in the affected region.

I'm so thankful for all the healthcare workers who are putting their lives at risk to fight this virus. All of us need to do what we can to help eradicate this outbreak. Please continue to pray and give to those organizations on the front lines.

Now isn't a time for panic. It's a time for action. ▣





## TRANSFORMING LIVES VIA RADIO IN NEPAL

Bishal (not his real name) was no ordinary child. His grandparents as well as his parents were Brahman (Hindu) priests—seen as the most prestigious group in society, renowned for their education and spiritual insight.

“I was supposed to be a Brahman priest,” Bishal related. “My grandfather was grooming me to be his successor.”

He had the highest degree of respect for his grandfather, who even predicted that Bishal would become highly educated—just not in the way he expected.

In the early 1980s one of Bishal’s four brothers heard the gospel while listening to FEBA Radio and gave his life to Christ,



a decision that brought “great shame” to his family and society, eventually forcing him to flee the country.

“My brother shared the gospel with me and gave me a New Testament, but I said I would never become a Christian,” he shared.

Out of curiosity, however, Bishal began reading the Bible and came across the portion about Christ’s crucifixion. He read how the Roman soldiers were mocking Jesus on the cross, and He said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

“What kind of person is this?” Bishal questioned. “How can He forgive those who were crucifying Him? No human being can forgive in that way. I knelt down and prayed and received Him as my Lord and Savior.”

“At first I said I’d never become a believer,” Bishal admitted. “Then I said I’d never be a preacher or evangelist. I had seen my brother’s difficult life—always running away.”

Again, Christ intervened, this time while Bishal was studying economics. “I wanted a secular job, but God was persuading me and encouraging me to get into the ministry,” he recounted.

Since Christianity was still outlawed in Nepal, Bishal traveled abroad to study theology, completing his master’s degree and becoming a pastor.

In 2007, when Nepal became a multi-party constitutional republic, ending centuries of absolute power by the Hindu monarchy, it also opened the door for community radio stations that could broadcast the gospel.

Bishal used his influence to obtain a license for the first community radio station in his hometown, and in 2010 Reach Beyond engineers worked with him to put the station on the air.

Four of his siblings are now Christians, and although his parents still aren’t believers, they’re more open to the gospel and even offered their home to host the radio station, seeing it as providing a valuable service to the community. A second station was established in a major city a year later, and Bishal is also involved in television broadcasting.

When a lighting strike forced the radio station to go off the air for a few days, many listeners, including unbelievers, called to complain. “They said, ‘Why aren’t you playing those songs in the morning?’ We learned that the music was touching their hearts, so I’ve encouraged people in my church to write more Nepali songs,” Bishal noted.


Reach Beyond has worked with various partners to plant a total of eight



community stations in Nepal, the most recent going on the air in November 2014. This was the first such station to launch in 1½ years, making gospel broadcasts available to 100,000 people within range of the radio signal.

“Please pray for our country,” Bishal said. “Although it’s been declared a secular state, Hindu extremists have started to persecute believers and want Nepal to revert back to Hinduism.”

“We would like to see 25 community radio stations on the air across Nepal, and we want them all to have very good programming that transforms lives,” Bishal offered. “There are challenges in getting licenses, but everything is in God’s hands.”

Thanks to dedicated people like Bishal, there are now more than 850,000 Christ-followers in Nepal. 





## A SPIRITUAL ‘SUPERHERO’ BRINGS HOPE TO WEST AFRICA

In a world hungry for superheroes, the earth only gets saved on big screens and TV shows. But there are real heroes who can't fly or show superhuman strength. These people rarely make the headlines, humbly serving God in amazing ways amid unthinkable circumstances.

Ransford Wright is one of those people.

Ransford was born in Sierra Leone—one of the poorest nations in West Africa. At age 19, he dedicated his life to serving Jesus, but little did he know that his commitment would mean surviving a civil war, working amid abject poverty, and most recently, ministering to thousands amid the growing Ebola crisis.

Through it all, Ransford has maintained a relentless resolve to help his people spiritually and physically.

In 1992 he helped launch a radio ministry called Believers Broadcasting Network (BBN)—around the same time a 10-year civil war broke out that would claim 50,000 lives. When the fighting spread to Freetown, Ransford's home city, many were forced to flee, and much of the radio equipment was lost.

At one point Ransford moved the remaining equipment to his own home in the hope of continuing the broadcasts. But that dream ended when a bomb dropped through the roof, destroying not



only what little he owned, but all of the broadcast equipment.

“At some point you get discouraged,” recounted Ransford. “People said, ‘Go do something else.’ But there was this passion that couldn’t let me go.”

Finding old radio equipment and a generator, he soon put BBN back on the air—at least for a few hours a day. As he prayed and read Scripture, BBN became a lifeline of hope and truth for traumatized listeners.

In 2002 the war finally ended, but the aftermath impacts the country to this day. People continue to suffer from the effects of guilt, anger, trauma, addictions and depression. The needs of the nation are changing, so Ransford adapts with them.

In 2011 BBN opened a counseling clinic, providing one-on-one emotional and spiritual care for many of the thousands who seek help during the station’s popular, live call-in program. The results are astounding. People who were bitter enemies during the war have found freedom in forgiveness. Marriages have

been saved. Young people struggling with anger and PTSD have found healing.

Now Ransford faces yet another crisis of epic proportions. Ebola is ravaging Sierra Leone and other nations in West Africa. While the epidemic has become back-page news in the U.S., it’s a daily reality for local residents.

Ransford tragically lost two family members to the virus, so is this the catastrophe that will finally cause him to raise a white flag in surrender?

Not even close. In partnership with Reach Beyond, Ransford is conducting an emergency Ebola response outreach called *The Bucket Brigade* (see page 2 for details). Typical of his resolve, he is taking the fight straight to the frontline of those in need.

There’s no “S” on Ransford’s chest. He doesn’t wear a cape or possess supernatural powers. He’s just an ordinary man whom God is using to do extraordinary things that no Hollywood superhero can match—making an eternal difference in people’s lives. ▣





## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

When Jesus spoke to the paralytic in Luke's Gospel, He demonstrated His authority to forgive and His compassion to heal.

That's Reach Beyond's passion—to reveal the love of Jesus as His “voice and hands.” In fact, the mission manifesto declares, “We refuse to watch people for whom Christ died suffer in pain and poverty when we can help restore them in His name.”

Sheila Leech, vice president of global healthcare, recently shared the following incredible example of how God used a medical team from Reach Beyond to do just that:

Emmanuel used to go by another name. Today his name reflects a transformed life.

But he didn't always believe God was with him.

Emmanuel lives in a small village in remote Ghana. He was afflicted with a disease in which parasites inject microscopic worms that migrate through the body and can cause a condition known as “elephantiasis,” characterized by massive swelling of the arms, legs or trunk.



He had suffered with elephantiasis for years, causing a huge open wound over the bottom third of his leg. Emmanuel believed that it was caused by evil spirits.

When I saw Emmanuel for the first time, he was with the other patients in the hot sun, waiting to see a doctor. I saw that his lower leg was covered with filthy rags, so I decided to take them off and clean the wound so the doctors could get a better look.

As I took the rags away, my heart sank at the sight of what appeared to be a huge open sore on Emmanuel's leg and foot. "Necrosis" usually needs to be surgically removed, and I was fearful that Emmanuel would lose his foot. However, as I gently cleaned the wound, I realized that the black appearance had to do with local remedies and leaves that had been applied. There was a huge sore, but maybe this leg could be saved.

Abandoned by family and friends because of this horrendous condition, he had nobody to take him to the hospital and no one to help pay his bills.

Two local missionaries consulted and decided they would accompany Emmanuel to a hospital to see what could be done. He left with a clean dressing on his leg, and perhaps some hope in his heart.

Emmanuel would need to go visit the hospital many times in the following weeks.

Who would take him? Who could pay for his dressings?

Thanks to Reach Beyond's generous donors, the mission agreed to pay for


Emmanuel's dressing changes while the local Ghanaian church covered his bus fare to the hospital each week.

When Reach Beyond missionaries Drs. Mark and Laurie Nelson went to do a follow-up visit to that community four months later, they were astonished to see a man radiant and praising God. It was Emmanuel.

His leg was healed, and through receiving love and kindness from the local church, he committed his life to Christ. He was transformed!

No longer in fear of the spirits he thought had attacked his life, he had changed his name to Emmanuel, "God with us."

Was it worth spending all that time and energy on one needy patient?

Ask Emmanuel. 



Emmanuel waits to see a doctor regarding an infected wound on his lower left leg.



## CENTRAL ASIA CARAVAN PROVIDES MORE THAN A **PHYSICAL CHECK-UP**

Elina (not her real name) seemed drawn to the foreign medical workers who visited her remote valley in Central Asia last fall. She had come to the visitors' clinic the previous day, seeking relief for her ailing mother-in-law who had little access to medical help in this far-flung location.

Team members from the Reach Beyond caravan determined there were no more treatment options available for her mother-in-law, so they prayed with Elina and bid her farewell.

"But she came back," explained Steve, one of the physicians on the team. "Perhaps it was the prayer ... perhaps it was the headache that brought her back. She sat down, responded to a couple of questions about her mother-in-law and started talking to us about her headaches."

As Steve began probing about the things that might trigger a headache, he learned about some hard issues within Elina's family.

"Then I started to explain about physical hearts and emotional, spiritual hearts," he continued. "As I ventured nearer the possibly forbidden themes for a visitor from outside—in a valley with 25,000 followers of Muhammad and nary a one of Jesus—it became harder and harder for me to try to explain how badly I would love for her to know Jesus."

"Elina said that as a child she had heard of Isa (Jesus) and had begun to follow Him. She came from a town that had a few believers ... but later she married a man from another valley where nobody knew [the Lord]."

“She said she even had a copy of the New Testament ... and sometimes read parts of it, but she had a hard time understanding it,” Steve recounted. “I asked the Father to help her understand the Word and welcome Jesus into her heart. I prayed that He might bring her peace amid her troubles.”

“[My translator] prayed, and then I asked Elina to pray, to ask Jesus to come to her and help her understand. She prayed a faltering but purpose-driven prayer. Certainly my desire for her was to have the strength to stand as the only [believer] in the valley.”

Elina was just one of some 700 patients seen by the team, divided into two groups, during seven working days. This was the second time a medical caravan team had come to the area from Reach Beyond.

Not only were team members able to reach out to people in the area, but they had opportunities to minister to some of their translators who came from larger cities.

“Several of the translators are thinking more seriously about how to reach their own people in the rural sector,” said Martin, the team leader. “One has already moved away from [her home] with her pastor husband to live in a particularly difficult and resistant, unreached area.”

One of the first things the group did was check on the clean water system that had been installed by last year’s team in response to an urgent need for safe water in the community.

“We found that the community had taken good care of their new water supply,” Martin noted. “My biggest concern was



how a water system would survive the extreme temperature swings of 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in summer to minus 40 degrees in winter. However, despite the harsh weather conditions, we found the water system to be fully operational and providing a continuous supply of safe drinking water to the village.”

Martin was also glad to hear from some community members who had recently attended a wedding banquet in a nearby village. “They spoke with great pride about their new water system,” he said. “As a result, people from other villages in the valley have begun asking how they might get a water system.”

The water project and the medical clinics opened doors into the community, and the team was able to do more than just provide a physical check-up.

“On numerous occasions the doctors, nurses and translators had opportunities to share on a spiritual level with the patients,” reported Martin. “Sometimes, knowing that we were Christians, the patients would ask for prayer. Several of them took steps to follow Jesus or come closer to Him during the time we were there.”



## ECUADOR BECOMES WORLD'S SECOND COUNTRY TO ELIMINATE RIVER BLINDNESS

It was 1976 and clinical pathologist Dr. Ron Guderian had scarcely embarked on his 24-year missionary career with Reach Beyond when he came across some patients in Ecuador's northwestern jungles who displayed an odd combination of symptoms.

Many of the indigenous Chachi people he encountered in Zapallo Grande, a village along the Cayapas River in the province of Esmeraldas, complained of severe itching, disfiguring skin conditions and visual impairment. Some were completely blind.

Deciding to dissect a noticeable nodule protruding from the back of a female tribal member, he discovered a long white-colored worm inside. He began pulling ... and pulling ... with his tweezers until he'd extracted an organism that measured 50 cm (20 inches) in length.

Dumbfounded, Guderian began doing some checking, and all signs pointed to *Onchocerca volvulus*, a worm that gives birth to millions of microscopic larvae called *microfilariae*. The larvae migrate beneath the skin throughout the body, causing *onchocerciasis* (river blindness). The tiny larvae are transmitted through bites from infected *Simulium* blackflies that live along tropical rivers.

However, the disease was virtually unknown in Latin America—99 percent of cases are found among river dwellers in Africa—and Guderian faced widespread skepticism from the international medical community.

It wasn't until 1980 that the *Ecuadorian Journal of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine* documented the first case of river blindness in Ecuador, and it took several

more years before Guderian's findings were recognized worldwide. The disease is also known to exist in tropical areas of Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico and Guatemala.

Meanwhile, using the limited resources available in Reach Beyond's community development department, Guderian assembled an international team of health workers to research the debilitating disease, treat patients in Ecuador and find a cure.

The team discovered that chloroquine, a common malaria medication, could help prevent the disease. Then the pharmaceutical giant, Merck & Co., made the first donation of its groundbreaking drug, ivermectin (Mectizan®), to Ecuador to treat river blindness. That's when Ecuador initiated the National Program for Control of Onchocerciasis, a cooperative effort between Reach Beyond and Ecuador's Ministry of Public Health.

Even after Guderian and his wife, Eleanor, left Ecuador in 1999, he made dozens of trips back to the country, working with a team of Latin American medical professionals that carried on the research and treatment program.

The three-year pre-verification period, during which no treatment for the disease was administered in Ecuador, began in 2010. Then in 2014 Ecuador was verified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as having officially eliminated river blindness—the second country to receive this status, preceded only by Colombia a year earlier.

Last November the Ecuadorian Ministry of Public Health recognized Guderian for his contributions to the elimination of

river blindness in the country. This month department officials will hold a special reception for the WHO delegation, presenting the official document declaring Ecuador to be free of river blindness.

Guderian said it's amazing what has transpired since he discovered the disease in Ecuador. "We did a small study in three Chachi villages and found that more than 60 percent of all adults there were infected," he noted. "A meeting was called with the chief of the tribe, Pedro Tapuyo, and his council to relate what we had found."

"After hearing the results of the study, he looked at me and said that he and his people greatly appreciated our coming to this area to help with their health problems. However, he was very saddened by the finding of this new disease—which there was no known cure—that could, and was, causing blindness."

The chief then challenged Guderian, "Are you going to let us die with this 'curse,' or are you going to seek a remedy for this disease so my children and grandchildren won't die or go blind?"

"Because of Pedro, I took up the challenge," Guderian recounted. "If he had not challenged us, I'm not sure where we would be today." ▣





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