

The Messenger

December 2007

A Message from the President, Bruce Kittleson

The Board of Directors and I officially welcomed Victor "Vic" Salazar to the OBI team as the Executive Director on 17 November, 2007. He will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of OBI and lead the efforts to advance OBI's objectives alongside the world's militaries. One of his first goals is to capture the rich history and successes of OBI by "telling our story well." In his words, "Many associates, donors and beneficiaries of OBI's service have helped to directly improve the quality of life of service members, their families and military communities. Their stories need to be shared for encouragement to others, to increase awareness of OBI's activities and capabilities, and to generate support from every possible source."

Vic spent over thirty years in military service with sixteen of those years living outside of the United States and serving in multinational environments. Throughout all his years of military service he has also served the community as a member of several ministry boards, as a school board president, as an international student body president and as a volunteer high school wrestling coach.

He and his wife, Pam, have been married for 33 years. Vic and Pam have 3 children, only one of whom is still at home. They reside in Alabama.



(Left to right) Vic Salazar, General Fonseka, Commander of Sri Lankan Army, Bill Barko, and Dick Stiliha

Zhanna's Dream

Olive Branch launched an exciting new program in Ukraine in October. One hundred-fifteen military wives and military women from Ukraine, Russia and Moldova were joined by the OBI delegation of fifteen American women for a conference on establishing Christian fellowship support groups throughout Ukraine modeled after Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC). In the twelve years we have worked in Ukraine, **this is the first time we have been able to host a stand-alone conference** for women from the military community.

Six years ago, Zhanna, (pictured in the middle) the wife of a Ukrainian colonel, who worked with Olive Branch, started a non-denominational Bible study fellowship group in her military community called **Club Ruth**. Drawing on the lessons she learned from Caroline Grube (left) and Nancy Smith (right) and the teams serving over more than a decade, Club Ruth became very successful in strengthening the faith of the members and providing opportunities for them to minister together to their families and their community.



Zhanna's dream has been to expand Club Ruth into a network of fellowship groups across the country. This conference was the fruition of years of work by the ladies of Olive Branch to serve the Ukrainian military family. At the end of the conference twelve ladies were nominated for the governing council with Zhanna as chairwoman.



In the week following the conference, the OBI team divided into three smaller teams and traveled to thirteen

cities in Ukraine, meeting with over 300 women, to encourage the establishment of PWOC-type military women's Christian fellowship groups throughout Ukraine. There will be more opportunity for follow-up to encourage these ladies and support their efforts to minister to Christian sisters in their own country.

***Assisting with Veterans
Rehabilitation in Sri Lanka***

At this writing, Lt. Col (Ret) Vic Salazar is escorting a team from the Walter Reed Army Medical Center visiting the Rehabilitation Hospital (RH) in Ragama, Sri Lanka. The RH treats 5,000 amputees from the 20-year war with the Tamil Separatist rebels (amputee patient pictured). OBI facilitated the visit of the Walter Reed team to help upgrade the capabilities of the Rehabilitation Hospital.

Vic relates his experiences: "Bruce, I have been close to tears a couple of times. The loss of limbs, brain trauma, blindness and spinal cord injuries plague the majority of those at the center. The bottom line is that they, the recipients, are very grateful. Two patients with brain injuries, one of whom is blind, kissed the hand of



one U.S. Army colonel on our team who was only wanting to shake their hands and thank them for their service. This was very moving and spontaneous indeed. Thanks for your prayers, Vic

OBI HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2007

- FEBRUARY*** ***Review of Sri Lankan Recovery Efforts
Conduct Medical Training, Colombo, Sri Lanka***
- MARCH*** ***Senior Military Chaplain's Conference, Hilton Head, South Carolina***
- APRIL*** ***Fellowship of Christian Military Ministries, Colorado Springs, Colorado***
- MAY*** ***Dedication of Soldiers' Homes in Sri Lanka
Military Leadership Training, Colombo, Sri Lanka
Clergy Training, Multiple Sites, Ukraine***
- JULY*** ***English Camp for Military Teens, Ukraine***
- AUGUST*** ***Host Ukrainian Teens' Visit to US
Visit of Association of Military Christian Fellowship (AMCF,
Vice President of South Asia Region (former Commander of Sri Lankan Army)
Presentation at International Association of Suicide Prevention, Killarney, Ireland***
- OCTOBER*** ***Women's Leadership Conference in Ukraine
Sri Lanka Leadership Development Training Courses
Presentation at Asia-Pacific AMCF Conference, Taiwan***
- NOVEMBER*** ***Commander of the Sri Lankan Army and His Spouse Visit U.S.
Board of Directors Meeting, Fairfax, Virginia***
- DECEMBER*** ***Accompany Walter Reed Team to Rehabilitation Center, Sri Lanka***

UPCOMING EVENTS in 2008

- JANUARY*** ***Reunion for English Camp and 2008 Planning Meetings in Ukraine***
- FEBRUARY*** ***Counseling Training, World Partners USA, Keystone, South Dakota***
- MARCH*** ***Senior Military Chaplain's Conference, Hilton Head, South Carolina***
- APRIL*** ***Clergy Training in Ukraine***
- JULY*** ***OBI English Camp for Military Teens in Ukraine***