

# Next to my tree\*

An update from David Thomas's perspective:

Newberg, Oregon, January 2017

---

\* In Kinyarwanda, "ku giti cyange," literally, "next to my tree," means "in my opinion," or "from where I stand."

---

## King of the Cab

The following poem by David Thomas was written from his memories as a four-year-old missionary kid in Bolivia.

I stand tall, feet spread, braced, comfortable.  
My arms rest on the back of the bench seat in the  
cab of the pick-up.  
I face the wide front window  
Relaxed, but intense, ready to take everything in.

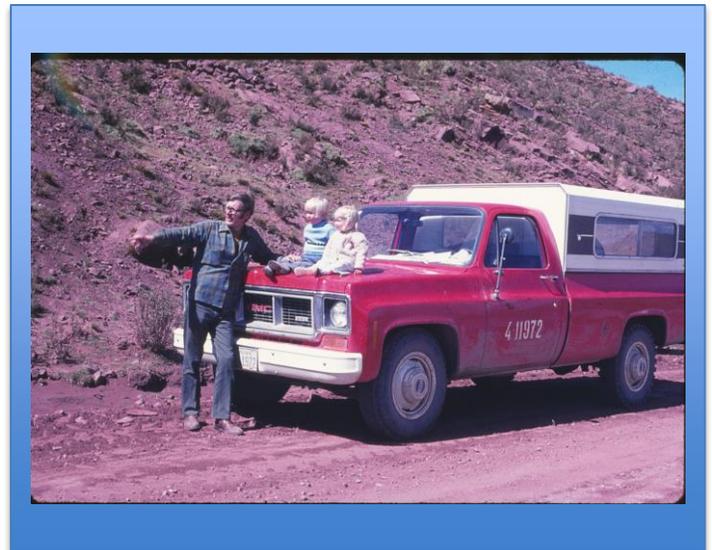
We're going on a trip, and nothing could be better.  
It's me, my dad and some *hermanos*.  
We're up and out of La Paz, into the *campo*.  
We've got many miles ahead of us.  
We get to drive all day!

There is so much to see, so much to imagine.  
You never know what we'll experience  
We might see vicuña, or a condor  
We'll probably get to cross a river.  
It might even be deep enough to splash over the hood!

We might be going high into the mountains above the Altiplano, up to Pacajes,  
Or maybe we'll drive down into the steep Yungas valleys to Coroico, or Caranavi,  
At night in the jungles, the bushes and trees flash by.  
Maybe we'll see a puma jump across the road frozen for a split second in our headlights.  
It's best to always pay attention,

Sometimes we're lucky and get a flat tire, or engine trouble.  
Then we get to fix the problem.  
Usually just one tire goes flat, but if two go flat then we get to patch the tube.  
Of course Dad does the work, but I can help; I hold the lug nuts.

Sometimes we get stuck in mud, or a landslide blocks the road,  
Then the fun multiplies as we get to work our way through the mess.



David and his sister Kristin seated on the GMC pickup where he was "king of the cab," along with his dad, Hal Thomas in 1974.

Even with so much excitement I get tired,  
I sit down next to Dad. I see no road, just the bright red dashboard.  
I doze off; an *hermano* makes me comfortable.  
But soon I wake and stand up again.  
I've got to pay attention— there is so much to see.

I don't want to miss the shapes of the clouds.  
The sky is always trying to tell me a story.  
I might miss a dragon!  
I listen to the laughter and stories we share in the cab.  
The landscape keeps changing around me.  
I need to keep my mind wide open, to dream, to listen, to see.

Later when it's getting dark, with hours of driving still to go,  
I lay my head down on Dad's lap.  
I see the steering column and feel the wheel turning an inch from  
my face.  
Dad's legs, feet and arms are moving,  
Acting without thought as he pays attention to the road.  
A sweater makes this active, bony, uneven, bed more comfortable.  
I watch his feet on the pedals,  
Quick, precise, steady, sure, safe.  
I see the wires and dust under the dash,  
I feel the heater on my face,  
My hand brushes the dust on the floor.  
Content, bouncing, confident, dusty, satisfied – I fall asleep,  
I know I will wake up ready for some more wonder-filled  
adventures.

Years have passed—other roads in other lands,  
filled with adventures and problems to solve,  
and many wonderful companions along the way,

It's late now, and there are still miles of road to go.  
I sit down and rest.

Who is in the drivers' seat now?  
Where does my Father want to take me?  
Am I ready to be King of the Cab again?  
Am I ready to stand up and take in the road?

I'm only 46, my best years still ahead.  
Father, with you in the driver's seat,  
I take my place standing tall, feet braced wide, comfortable.  
I can't wait to see what's ahead.  
I'm here, I'm ready, let's go!

I am co-facilitating an on-line Discipling for Development Foundations course through the Navigators D for D program January through March. Joe Fry, our lead facilitator, was one of our D for D coaches in Rwanda. We have a great cohort of 15 participants with ministries all over the world including China, Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Peru, Thailand, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Ecuador, and Independence, Kansas. We have three Friends participants: Renita Butler (MAYM) desires to see whole-life transformation among the homeless in Independence, Kansas; Russ and Sarah Badgley (EFM) hope to plant a disciple-making movement among the Shuar people of southern Ecuador; and Ben Kibbe (Damascus Friends Church) wants to plant churches and foster whole-life discipleship among the Lahu people in northern Thailand. Please pray with me that God will use this course to bring deeper insight, personal transformation, and greater ministry effectiveness among the participants. Pray for wisdom and effectiveness as Joe and I interact with everyone in the course.

**96% Ministry Support**

If you would like to be a part of David's financial support team and/or prayer partner, please contact EFM at:  
[efm@friendsmission.com](mailto:efm@friendsmission.com)