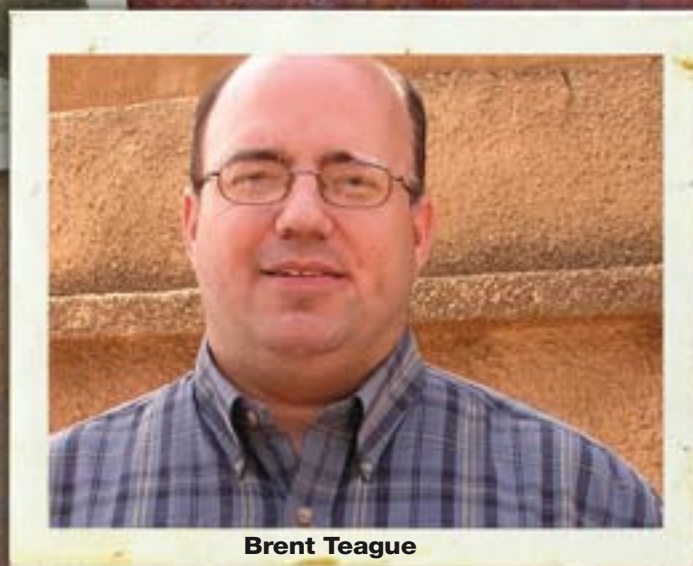


Terror in the Desert

Article and photography by Ken Horn

“I am immortal until my life’s work is done.”
— *George Whitefield*



Brent Teague

Brent Teague stared in disbelief. Soon he would be asleep, but right now he was awake ... very awake. His eyes were fixed on the gruesome equipment that taunted him in full view within arm’s reach of the doctors ... the equipment they planned to use to amputate his leg.

And then Brent drifted off to sleep.

Turn back the calendar 20 years. It's 1984, and 18-year-old Brent is attending a missionary kids retreat in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. The speaker, missionary Bob Hoskins, is concluding his message with an impassioned plea for young people to commit themselves to go to the Muslim world. The Holy Spirit grips Brent's heart and he rushes to the front. Pouring his heart out to God, he doesn't know that only he and one other youth responded to the appeal.

When Teague arises, he knows God's will for his life. "From then on, my course was charted," he says. "I began to prepare myself for the mission field and a Muslim country."

There were intervening ministries. He planted a Chi Alpha chapter at Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant, Oklahoma. Many of the students he reached were from other countries. He plunged into ministry in Africa during three years as a missionary associate in Togo. He married, and he and his wife, Shelley, served as associate pastors for two years in the United States before applying for missionary appointment to Niger, one of the neediest nations on the African continent.

When the Teagues arrived in Niger in 1995, they found a small group of missionaries from several countries and a few Nigerien believers. Brent knew right away that God wanted him to do church planting and evangelism. He plunged in with fervor.

God directed him to a portion of Niamey, the capital city, where there were no churches. With the assistance of six pastors and a group from West Africa Advanced School of Theology in Lomé, Togo, an outreach originally scheduled for one week turned into six weeks. And the Kouara Kano church was born.

Within three years Teague was pastoring three churches. One of them was in Tillabery, a city some 70 miles northwest of Niamey. Driving the road between Tillabery and the capital became a regular activity. On May 11, 2004, that ordinary activity turned into an extraordinary crisis, one that required not one miracle, but three.

On that warm spring day, Teague, then 38 years old, was driving the familiar expanse of sub-Saharan terrain accompanied by seven passengers — two pastors with their wives and children. The group planned to minister and return home that night.

Ten miles from their destination, a military-type cruiser pulled alongside them. Its three occupants brandished their weapons, but Teague and the others didn't immediately feel concern. They were

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The Niger River



First church plant



Ahmad, a Fulani, on the grounds of the AG Bible College in Niamey.



Niger countryside from the air

about three miles from a prison and thought the men were probably prison guards. But that illusion soon exploded in two sudden bursts of violence.

Two bullets from an AK-47 pierced the driver's door and slammed into Teague's left leg. Teague swerved as the slugs tore through flesh and bone before exiting the leg with a heat that left his pants leg smoldering.

Through searing pain, Teague mashed down on the brake with his uninjured right leg, and the car skidded to a halt. Somehow, no one else was injured.

The assailants burst out of their vehicle, waving their weapons and shouting commands. Teague lay slumped in the driver's seat, blood streaming from his wounds. One bullet had shattered bone at the left knee; the other had torn through the calf, splattering the car with pieces of flesh and muscle.

Teague, now in excruciating pain, had not yet suffered his last assault. Shaking him fiercely and waving their gun muzzles at the occupants, the attackers screamed orders.

Distorted with rage and in the throes of bloodlust, the men were terrifying. The group dared not disobey ... to do so would mean death.

Despite his critical injuries, Teague, nearly blinded by pain, was shoved onto the laps of the passengers in the backseat as one of the assailants drove the car off the road. Mercifully, about a mile into the desert, this part of the ordeal came to an end.

Now the believers were presented with another harsh reality. Out of sight and some distance from the main road, the men may have herded them there for even more sinister purposes. Soon they learned their fears were real — these men had murder on their minds.

The assailants argued among themselves. Apparently their hijacking had been a case of mistaken identity. They had attacked the wrong car. But the deed was done and there was no turning back. Demanding the believers' valuables, the men manhandled the passengers, seizing anything that seemed of value, including Teague's cell phone.

With the occupants out of the vehicle, the crazed men seized the car, leaving Teague in a bloody heap on the ground, unable to move. The driver who had commandeered the Speed the Light vehicle gunned the accelerator and sent the car directly toward Teague's wounded form.

As the car barreled toward Teague, the terrified believers reacted with Holy Spirit-heightened strength and agility. They pulled Teague

out of the way a split second before the vehicle would have crushed the fallen missionary.

As the assailants fled the scene, the Christians stood stunned, finding it hard to believe that such sinister events had occurred. But they could not hesitate long. They had saved Teague's life, but if they did not do something fast he would soon die of his injuries. In shock and agony, he lay bleeding to death.

One pastor fashioned a tourniquet out of his wife's headscarf and applied it to the injured leg in an attempt to slow the bleeding. They knew they had to get help for him soon. They tried to carry him, but his pain was too great. So a pastor stayed behind with him as the six others hiked back to the highway.

Teague had grown up in Africa. His parents, Willard and Jerlene Teague, served nearly 30 years as missionaries in Ivory Coast and Togo. Brent knew the stark reality of his situation. He was more than 50 miles from the nearest medical facility. He didn't see any possibility of survival.

"I lay there thinking that this was the end of my life," Teague says. "I started thanking the Lord for all He had done for me and for the privilege of serving Him." He asked the Lord to take care of Shelley and their two daughters, Ashley and Amber. Then the Holy Spirit spoke to him.

Your mission in Niger is not over, He said.

Unknown to the victims, a cruiser laden with heavily armed troopers was making a beeline for the scene of the incident. As the six hikers reached the road, the troopers' vehicle came in view. Frantically they flagged it down. Twenty minutes after Teague was shot, help arrived. Miracle number one.

But the situation was still desperate. The troopers transported Teague by military vehicle to the highway and secured another truck to take him to the Tillabery hospital. Teague knew yet another miracle was needed there.

Doctors are in short supply at the Tillabery hospital. Often not even one doctor is on duty. But miracle number two began taking shape a week earlier when a doctor was transferred there. It was not just any new doctor; it was one from eastern Niger where violence was rampant. He was experienced in gunshot trauma.

That experience translated into action. The physician quickly stabilized Teague, neutralized the likelihood of infection and fashioned a



Teague (front, center) with national Niger AG leaders and missionaries at the Bible college in Niamey.



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Teague and an AG pastor



From left: Brent, Ashley, Amber and Shelley Teague



makeshift brace to protect the injury. Teague was then transported to the hospital in Niamey.

Miracle number two was complete. God's intervention was even clearer when these facts are added: One week after the attack, the doctor was transferred out of Tillabery. For much of the time since then, the hospital has been without a resident physician.

In Niamey, Shelley arrived as Brent was being wheeled into the hospital. She followed a trail of blood into the emergency room.

Teague was barely conscious as he was wheeled into surgery. "You're beautiful and I love you," he told her over and over again.

Surgeons successfully reattached muscle and prepared Teague for evacuation to Paris. There equipment equal to the daunting task of reconstructing his shattered leg awaited.

In Paris, doctors delayed several hours, expecting infection from shrapnel and the long-exposed wound to prevent any attempt at saving the leg.

And so Brent drifted off to sleep — a sleep from which he expected to awake with only one leg.

Miracle number three was waiting for him when he awoke. Emerging through a groggy haze, Brent soon realized the pain he felt came from his left leg. It was still there!

The surgeons had found the wounds free of infection. Doctors and nurses expressed their surprise when the bandages were removed. Eight days later, Brent was flown via medevac to the United States.

Three more surgeries, 11 pins, a metal plate and a skin graft later, Teague was ready for rehab. After eight months of rehab, the Teagues returned to Niger on January 11, 2005. The cane that was Brent's constant companion is no longer needed. How active is he? "We've been able to return pretty much to full activity," he says.

And he returned to the country of his call. The entire family was in accord. Niger is their home, the place where God wants them. The tragedy would not take any more from them than it already had. It would not steal their ministry.

Today an international group of Assemblies of God missionaries from 10 countries interacts with 40 national ministers and 35 churches in Niger. Teague supervises six churches and directs the Assemblies of God Bible school.

And the Teague family is happy to be home. **tpe**

KEN HORN is managing editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.
E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.