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## Answering God's Call: The Hoards

by *Charity Winters*



Adapting to life without Walmart is the last thing this family is worried about. Jonathan and Melanie Hoard spent 10 years of their lives waiting to get here, and they're excited to finally arrive. This spring, Jonathan was offered the full-time pastor opening at the Seldovia Bible Chapel. He and Melanie, and their two children, Abigail Elaine (4) and Levi Nathanael (2) arrived on the ferry on May 3rd to begin ministering to a place that God had laid on their hearts for years. Both have interesting stories about where they grew up, met, married and ended up in Seldovia. We'll start with Melanie.

Melanie grew up in a very small, rural town called Mann's Choice, PA where her family holds deep roots. The town is a "blink-and-you'll-miss-it" spot with most of its inhabitants spread out amidst the countryside. Melanie lived there surrounded by most of her immediate and extended family. Her grandfather helped found Pennwood Church which is where she attended regularly.

Jonathan was 17 when his family moved to Everett, PA where his father pastored the small congregation of Pennwood Church. This is where he met the love of his life, Melanie, but, being 5 years her senior, romance was in the distant future. In the meantime, Jonathan struggled through some wayward teenage years before heading off to Penn State for a degree in forestry. After one miserable semester, he decided to follow his best friend down to Bryan College in Tennessee. As soon as he got there, he ended up attending a missions conference that was "life-transforming." There he dedicated his life to God and that summer went on a missions trip to Alaska with Max and Donna Embery, missionaries to the Alaskan bush. During his 2 and ½ years at Bryan, he always felt the urge to go back to Alaska. So, he transferred to Alaska Bible College in Glenallen and completed his degree there.

During his time in Alaska, Jonathan and Melanie had started "mail-dating," as Jonathan put it. He faithfully wrote her everyday and called her twice a week. They both state that it was a unique and special courtship. Melanie was still a senior in high school, but with their constant communication and Jonathan's gifts of volcanic ash and cassette tapes of songs he had written, Melanie says, "I felt like I was there, too!" Thus, Alaska was imbedded in her heart as well. While she waited, Melanie attended Lancaster Bible

College for a year and a half.

Finally, the day of their wedding took place on March 11, 1995. Max Embery flew out to marry the couple. From the beginning, Melanie and Jonathan agree that “we always felt we would be here [Alaska] someday – we just didn’t know how or when.” But, God had other plans in the works for them at first. Jonathan ended up taking on a full time position at Tull’s Hill Bible Church (which has an interesting history – you should ask them about it sometime!). They ended up staying there for 10 years, much to their surprise. But Jonathan admits, “It was a huge growing experience for us and a wonderful first church.” The people became family to them. In the meantime, Melanie and Jonathan kept scoping out the mission field. For a while, Mongolia looked promising, but nothing ever worked out. Max and Donna Embery kept in contact and always informed them of openings in Alaska. Jonathan even candidated in Seldovia 2 years ago. “But God said “no,” he explains. After that visit, they thought that was the last of their chances for Alaska. But 2 years later, Seldovia Bible Chapel contacted Jonathan to ask if he was interested in taking a position. And here they are today!

So far, things have been great and the family is adjusting well, even the kids. “Everyone has been so accepting. They have loved us like a family,” Melanie claimed. She had the hardest time saying goodbye to her best friend. Jonathan misses his yard. Both miss country drives – which can be difficult in a place with only one decently sized road. So the family tries to take a drive out to Red Mountain once a week. But for them Seldovia “feels like home.” They love the people and the beauty of their new surroundings. And when they wonder if this is the right thing or not, Jonathan says, “God always convinces us along the way that we made the right choice.”

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**Sunday morning service 11:00 am**  
**Sunday evening soup and sandwich on the 3rd**  
**Sunday of each month at 500 pm**  
**Sunday School 9:45 am Sunday morning**  
**Men's bible study - Tuesday evening 730 pm**  
**Women's bible study on**  
**Tuesday 430 pm, Wednesday 730 pm**  
**Ground Zero teen monthly activity**



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