

## Trying something different to shake things up on MFT

Sam Harley  
August 5, 2017



It was somewhere in my second year of fundraising on national MFT, in the South.

I was tired of hearing the same responses every day.

"You're fundraisin for your church? Well, I have mah own church that I contribute to. Thank you ver much."

I used to imagine the sign over the door of Mah Own Church. With Gothic lettering. There'd be at least one in every town.

On this day, I was fundraising a small town in Tennessee, the kind of place where by mid-afternoon, I would have spoken to most of the people living there. And just in the hopes of hearing different answers from people, I thought I'd try out a Scottish accent. See what happened. The accent part was easy; both my parents were from Scotland.

I walked up the walk to a brick house on a country road. Knocked on the door. A middle aged man in jeans, suspenders and a plaid shirt opened it and stood there.

"Hello surr, how're yu? Am fundraising for ma churrch today....."

The man's face lit up. "WHERE are yew from?" he asked.

"Scotland." I replied.

"And you're here doing mission work?"

"Aye."

"I'm Brett Johnson. A pleasure to meet you."

"Sam Harley. Likewise."

"Well, you must stay for lunch." (it was 10 am).

"Ah, that's kind of ye, but a must keep goin."

"Well, let me give yew a donation."

Two things hit me: one, this was working better than expected. Gone was the usual suspicion, heck this was an open welcome. Two, this was a small town where anything is news, and they'd be on the phone to their neighbors as soon as they shut the door. The word would be all over town in minutes, and people would be waiting to meet the Scottish missionary. If I went back to my regular way of speaking, even once, there might be some very upset people thinking they'd 'been had'. And I could think of no good way to explain that I just wanted to see what would happen. I now had to keep the accent up until pickup time, hours away.

Somehow, I managed to keep being Scottish until my captain met me at the pickup point. In the van with New York plates.

I never tried being foreign again, except for using a ridiculous accent just to help me loosen up. There's something liberating about speaking as if you're from another country, it kind of helps you be uninhibited and expressive.

Did you ever try something different to shake things up?

PS:

I must note here that a lot of Tennessee folks felt pretty insulted if you told them you were doing missionary work in their area. THEY didn't need saving, thank yew ver much. 'Furriners', like the folks in Nashville, they sure needed it. But not here. So a domestic missionary was often resented. But not, apparently, someone from an interesting country.