



*STARTING FROM SCRATCH:*  
**THE STORY OF MY LIFE**

**UPDATED  
2005**

**WILLIAM E. PAUL**  
**THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS IT ALL**

**DEDICATION:**

**To**

**The Lord Jesus Christ,**

**Who Gave Me a Life**

# STARTING FROM SCRATCH: THE STORY OF MY LIFE

By William E. Paul  
The Only One Who Knows It All

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William E. Paul's personal Bible collection

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## FOREWARNED

Be forewarned . . . this book is about sorrow and joy, despair and hope, foolhardiness and good judgment, loneliness and love! In short, it's about *my whole life* . . . what I did, where I was, whom I knew, what I thought! If that turns you off, close the book now!

This book is made up of four main ingredients: *Stories*, *Narrative*, *Details*, and *Impressions*. Many of the stories have been told and retold for many years all across the country, while we sat around the breakfast table or on the living room couch with friends or family. Some are humorous, some serious, and some even a bit bizarre, but all as accurately as my memory allows. Because they have amused and entertained, (and at times brought uproarious laughter) some people have said, "Bill, you need to put those in a book." So, here they are, by popular demand! Some of them are known only by a few, others by no one but me.

The narrative portion connects all of the stories together. It gives the times, the places and the people associated with the stories, and *me*, so that a real person emerges through them all. It attempts to follow all of the major periods of my life, describing most of the highlights (and lowlights) that happened during each. I've tried not to omit something just because it wasn't flattering. Also some attempt has been made to follow a chronological sequence of events, but this was not always feasible so I have had to lump several incidents under one topic at times.

The details will be the most boring part of all, but hey, that's me. If some detail was significant enough to be remembered and make an impression on me, maybe *someone* will be glad it got recorded! Many of the dates and people mentioned will be of little interest to a casual reader, but fascinating to others. (Many of the details are a matter of record, noted in a ledger, publication, etc.)

The impressions are few and far between, yet constitute something of how I felt about life, how I viewed myself, and how I responded to various situations and people around me. They may even involve some *philosophizing*, but then it's my book, so I guess I have the freedom to include whatever I want in it!

But who cares? Who could possibly be interested enough in Bill Paul to bother reading a book about him? (I suppose every person who ever wrote an autobiography asked himself the same question). Well, first of all, *I* am! I have had such a wonderful life that I felt it was worth *reliving* all over again. So, I decided to do just that, on paper! As I reenacted in my mind every event, happening and occurrence, I was able to "re-feel" the sorrow, the joy, the despair, the hope, the foolhardiness,

the bursts of wisdom, the loneliness and the love that I experienced that first time. Haven't you ever read a book, watched a movie or heard a song over again?

Second, *some* of my descendants just might be interested enough to read it. Throughout the writing of this book I had constantly in mind my children, my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren, and the effect that reading this would have on them. *If* I have faced any challenge and succeeded in meeting it, maybe that will encourage one of them. *If* I have run into any obstacle and overcome it, perhaps that will help one of them to have the victory they need. *If* I have aspired to any worthy goal or attained any worthwhile objective in life, possibly that will motivate them to do the same. I suppose I could say to my descendants, "This one's for you, kid!"

At any rate, I feel I have 26 good, solid, potential readers (to date): six children, 15 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren (and maybe more to come). If only one or two bother reading this and benefit, it will have been worth the time, trouble and expense. If *none* of them do, it will *still* have been worth it . . . to *me*! So I look at it as a win-win situation.

Lastly, how I wish I had *really* known my Dad and my Grandfathers! While they were still living and able to share the exciting things that must have happened in their lives (in Europe), I was too young (and preoccupied) to care much about *whom* they really were, *what* they were really like and *how* they lived their lives! And I'm sure most of my descendants won't be reading this while *they're* still young (if ever), but most, hopefully, might have enough interest to pick it up . . . *someday*!

So, here goes . . . a "tell all" book about Bill Paul, the only one of its kind! If you've always wanted to know what Bill was *really* like, but were afraid to ask, here's your chance to know.

One more thing. I know the title of this book is a little goofy. But, trust me, its meaning plays a continuing role throughout the story of my life, and if you read the book all the way through, you'll pick up on its significance. But, if you just can't wait to find out, turn to page 52 *now*!

This book originally closed with the end of 1997. Nearly eight years have passed since then, and a lot has happened in my life during that period. This closing chapter (and I promise it will be the final installment) will bring my life up to the current year, 2005.

# 1927-1943

## ALLIANCE, OHIO

### BUDDING BALLPLAYER

#### MY ANCIENT ANCESTORS

Nineteen twenty-seven was a year of momentous events in technology, world travel and sports: Al Jolson starred in the first “talking picture”; Charles Lindbergh flew solo across the Atlantic; Herbert Hoover’s speech was the first long distance TV transmission; and Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs! But, in contrast, a rather insignificant event took place on April 12, 1927 when I was “home delivered” at 332 S. Seneca Ave., Alliance Ohio, the youngest of two children born to John and Katherine (Varady) Paul. (My sister, Margaret, was born Aug. 29, 1920). Alliance (pop. 25,000), was then a thriving railroad and steel mill town in northeastern Ohio, some 65 miles southeast of Cleveland and only about 30 miles from the Pennsylvania border.

My parents immigrated to America as children, with their parents, from Austria-Hungary in the early 1900’s. Mom arrived first on June 26, 1907, at age three, on the *S.S. Carpathia*, the same ship that five years later rescued the survivors of the ill-fated *S.S. Titanic*. She was accompanied by her mother Susie Varadi and her aunt Susie Varadi (her mother’s unmarried sister-in-law). (With a start like that, it’s no wonder I turned out so mixed up!). My dad’s parents, John and Susie Paul, (their names in the *Magyar* language of Hungary were *Pal, Janos* and *Zsuzsa*) came to America at an unknown date. (No, not all Hungarian women were named Susie). They apparently left Dad behind to be raised in his formative years by his grandparents on a farm in the district of Austria-Hungary then called Transylvania (now the northern part of Romania). Dad, their only child, then came to America when he was eleven, in 1913, to live with his parents who had settled in Alliance.

My grandfather, also named John Paul (*Pal, Janos*), whom I never met, was also raised on a farm in Transylvania. He was drafted into the Hungarian Army March 6, 1901 at age 21 and became a *Hussar*. That’s what they called their cavalry troops, recognizable by their tall, black fur hats! (It was interesting to read in his army record book that he was a “good rider and a good draftee instructor”). But he was placed on inactive reserve Dec. 31, 1903 and then concluded his army career on Jan. 5, 1906. When he actually arrived in America is not clear; his army record book indicates that he “reported for residency” (recorded in Cleveland, Ohio) in 1906, 1907 and 1908. Then an entry says he reported

his “departure to America,” as Aug. 11, 1908 with a final date, by the Consulate (at Cleveland), saying he “reported for residency” in 1914! It appears he died about two years later, in Ohio, at the young age of 36 of an undisclosed cause. His widow, Susie, remarried John Bandi and they lived in Canton, OH (18 miles from Alliance), where my step-grandfather operated a dance hall for many years. They had three children, Joseph, William and Charlotte, who, being about my age, never did seem like aunt/uncles to me. I saw them and my paternal grandparents only a few times during my growing up years in Ohio.

I knew my maternal grandparents much better since they lived in a semi-rural area only about two miles from my house on the east edge of Alliance. Both of them came from Hungary also, but neither was fluent enough in English to carry on much of a conversation, so I had no meaningful relationship with them. Grandpa Joseph Varady, (as his last name was spelled in America) worked in a steel mill and seemed to spend most of his spare time reading a Hungarian newspaper. They had a cow so it became my responsibility to walk or ride my bike to their house for a gallon (glass) jug of milk once in a while. Mom was the eldest of five Varady girls: Mary (Truman), Susie (Bilcze, then Bunescu), Anna (Mitchell), and Julia (McPherson). Between them they produced only four children and Margaret and I were two of them. Grandma Varady died an agonizing death from stomach cancer at the home of one of my aunts when she was only 56. I was 16 at the time and it was my first experience with death and funerals. Grandpa Varady died at 72, after an unhappy remarriage. Since Grandpa Paul died before I was born and I saw Grandma Bandi (her remarried name) only a few times while growing up, I had almost no grandparent relationship. I often reflect on what bearing this may have had on the almost nonexistent relationship my own children had with their grandparents and my very limited relationship with my own grandchildren years later!

## **DEPRESSION DAYS**

My childhood was probably average for growing up in a family of middle-class, blue-collar immigrants during the Great Depression (from 1929 until World War II). Among my earliest recollections, I remember standing in long lines waiting in the hot sun to be given free baskets of produce (cabbage, carrots, celery, etc.), which were part of the government’s program for meeting the needs of out-of-work families. Dad did have some work during those years, however, doing labor jobs for the W.P.A. in parks, roads, etc. Among other items given to families on what was called “Relief” were very salty pork, rubber boots that



buckled up (called “galoshes”) and heavy sheepskin lined jackets. Since money was very scarce, we never went “shopping for groceries” like people do today. I was often sent to the corner store with just enough money to buy ½ dozen of eggs, ½ pound of butter (or lard), a pint of milk or three to four slices of lunch meat. Of course, it was not all economic, for this was before refrigerators . . . we had only an ice box so perishables would not last any longer than the blocks of ice we bought from the “ice man.” Speaking of “home delivery,” in those days almost anything would be delivered right to your door . . . and at no extra cost. We had a “bread man,” an “insurance man” (to collect monthly premiums), a “coal man,” a “milk man” (in a horse-drawn, rubber-tired wagon), and a “rag man” (a guy who went around pulling a wagon, asking people for old discarded rags, which he “recycled,” even before the word was invented). And at our house we even had a “beer man” (when money became less scarce we had cases of beer delivered to our house, which sometimes was the beverage for all of us at supper!).

Christmas was always a joyous time at our house. I remember helping to decorate the tree each year and Mom always put a wreath in the window of the front door. I didn’t get many gifts, but the ones I got were meaningful to me. I think I was six or eight when someone told me there was no Santa Claus. I didn’t believe him . . . I didn’t *want* to believe him. When I finally had to accept the truth, I recall it causing a deep, empty feeling inside for a few days. During the Depression, when we didn’t have much, someone took me to a Y.W.C.A. for a Christmas party where there were many other children, a tree and lots of presents. In looking back I now realize it must have been sponsored by an organization that helped underprivileged children during the holidays. But I never felt *I* was underprivileged, even though once, as a 2nd grader, I played the part of the poor crippled boy Tiny Tim in a school play, *A Christmas Carol*. (About all I remember of that episode was my one line, “God bless us, every one”).

Even though we lived right in town, not all homes had “modern” plumbing. While we had a commode in a small room of the house (called a “toilet”), there was no bathtub or sink there. I took my weekly bath (on Saturday night) in the middle of the kitchen floor, in a round wash tub. It was filled with hot water heated in a tea kettle on the gas range. How well I remember the “finale.” After soaping up, I would stand, then turn in a circle while Mom poured the warm water at shoulder height. Of course, we washed at other times too, but they were “sponge baths,” done at the kitchen sink! Not too much privacy, but everyone in the family always managed to keep clean and neat.

## MY EARLY CHILDHOOD

My childhood was relatively enjoyable, considering the several negative factors that I had to cope with. Having been born with a chronic skin disease called *eczema* on my hands, face and body, I suffered from the constant discomfort associated with the itching, redness, “weeping,” and unsightly scabbing that made me very conspicuous among my playmates and classmates at school. Some parents even warned their children to keep away from me, assuming I had something “catching.” On one occasion when my knuckles were smacked with a ruler by my 4th grade teacher for not doing well enough on a spelling test, my hand even bled. The cold, dry Ohio winters didn’t help much, either; my eczema was always worse then. The dirt and cold connected with playing marbles and sledding tended to aggravate the condition constantly. Of course, in those days there were no creams or ointments for keeping the disease in check. I still have the problem, but now there are medications which help keep it under control.

Then by the time I was in the 7th grade another “problem” developed. I began having small, round bald spots on my scalp. This condition was apparently not related to the eczema, but was the beginnings of *alopecia areata*, an incurable scalp disease which over the years gradually worsens until all the hair is gone. Needless to say, as I entered my teenage years I was extremely sensitive to the appearance this condition gave me. A characteristic of this disease is that the hair falls out (in spots) and grows back several times before eventually staying “out!” At any rate, in its beginning years it had a serious effect on my social life. It wasn’t until I was living in Youngstown in the 11th grade that I was able to wear my hair long enough (it had become the style by then) to cover most of the spots. With disfiguring hair and skin problems I simply had to develop an outgoing personality, using a lot of humor, in order to cope with rejection. Hey, it was a case of “survival of the funniest!”

As early as the first grade my “art” talent began to show up. I won a citywide contest for cutting out and pasting up on construction paper a picture of two “trilliums.” It was displayed in a downtown store window and the “prize” was a tree planted in my honor in the school yard. I think I was happy about the award, but never felt like I really *got* anything. (The tree was taken out some years later). I enjoyed art and by the 8th grade was art editor of the school paper, even having my own comic strip in each issue. This led to my planning a career in commercial art following graduation, but the Lord had different plans for me. I suppose I did put the artistic talent to use eventually, however, in

working on graphic layouts for several publication projects over the course of my ministry.

## **GRADE SCHOOL DAZE!**

From my earliest schooling I was a bright student. Learning came easy for me and I was one of the top two children in academics throughout grade school (1st-8th grades). I got “100s” on most tests, with very little studying. When final exam time came each year I was always “exempt.” That meant I was excused from school those days and recall so vividly roaming around the deserted town with nothing to do, and no one to play with, while the rest of the kids were still in school, sweating over final tests. This situation didn’t exactly win me friends. Ah, the price of adolescent brilliance! I remember a poor retarded boy, Vernon Wittenbrook. He used to tell me that his father had been, in this order, a farmer, a painter, a preacher and a drunkard! One day, in the third or fourth grade, a teacher took Vernon and me down town to an office building where we were given all kinds of tests by men in white coats! I was shown drawings and had to tell what different ink blots meant to me. I was also shown brown tone photos of 19th century figures with different facial expressions and had to give my impressions of them. In looking back, I now realize they were giving psychological evaluation tests to the brightest and “dumbest” kids in the school. But they never did tell us which one was which though. I always wondered!

But, in spite of my orneriness I was quite popular all during grade school. According to the June 2, 1941 *Seneca Flash* (school paper), of which I was art editor during my final year there (8th), I was voted “most popular boy” and “boy most likely to succeed,” as well as class president. In fact, our “graduation issue” said (modestly), “William is very well liked by all his classmates, doing a fine job as the leader of the class. A great deal of responsible work is connected with the job.” But they also took note of my tendency to “goof off,” saying in the same issue, “William seems to be a very good boy but has to be coaxed to do his art stenciling by the advisor once in a while. We hope it doesn’t get him into trouble.” (I was actually three persons in those days: “William” in the class room and on all papers, “Billy” at home, and then “Bill” from about the eighth grade on). But my favored status would all change, however, when I got to high school, and especially after moving to a larger school in Youngstown for my junior and senior years.

In spite of being a good student I was also the class clown most of my grade school years. I enjoyed wisecracking a lot and pulling clever pranks to “show off.” I especially enjoyed embarrassing the teacher in

front of the class. One day in the 5th grade the teacher caught me carving my initials on top of my wooden desk. When he asked, in front of the class, if I would do that on my piano at home, I cracked, "We don't have a piano." He didn't see the humor in my reply, but it got a snicker out of the rest of the kids.

One day in the 7th grade I was caught sailing a paper airplane out the open class room door into the hall. As luck would have it, it came to a gliding stop right in front of the shoes of Mr. Andrews, the principal. Of course, in those days that behavior earned a "licking" with a leather strap in the principal's office. I still remember his famous last words before he began laying it on, "Grab your ankles!" (That only happened to me once, so I wasn't all that bad).

Paradoxically, even though I was quite mischievous in school, I somehow endeared myself to several of my teachers. Miss Hartzell, a red-haired, Scotch spinster used to open us boys' winter coats and feel to see if our hearts were beating very fast when we returned to school from lunch. If they were, she would scold us for running to school instead of starting out early enough to "walk decently." On the first day of school in her class (6th grade) she was calling out the names of her new students to take roll. When called, each child would respond by saying, "here." Eventually she called out "*Edward Paul*." No one answered. She called it again. Still, no answer. Some of the kids turned to me, snickering, and whispered, "Isn't that *you*?" With a frown I shook my head, until finally I caved in. "Here" I replied. After class Miss Hartzell called me to her desk and asked sternly, "William, why are you going by your middle name 'Edward'? I see you were called 'William' your first five grades." I apologized meekly. Later the kids asked me the same question. I replied, "Never mind. If Miss Hartzell says I'm Edward, I'm Edward." (I never did figure out how she got my first and middle names mixed up). This was one of my first experiences at being intimidated. But surprisingly, I eventually became one of Miss Hartzell's "pets." On Saturdays she began taking me and Goldie Grecu to the woods *bird watching*.

I lived only two blocks from school, so the daily walk---sometimes alone, sometimes with other boys---became a harrowing "experience" at times! Fights were a frequent "happening," usually white kids against blacks. About one fifth of my school were blacks, called "colored people" or "niggers" in those days. This part of Ohio was full of immigrant families also, so racial and ethnic slurs were the common way of referring to each other (though not necessarily in their hearing). Italians were called "wops," or "dagos"; Poles were called "Polacks," and, of course, we Hungarians were called "Hunkies" (short for

“Bohunk”). I remember in the 5th grade a black kid named Herman Johnson. He sat right in front of me so we had frequent conversations and interaction. Herman was a little bigger than I, but as with most of the black kids in my school, he was rather jovial. For some reason one day Herman told me he was going to beat me up after school. Well, I wasn’t much good at fighting. I was small and always a little scared, especially of “the colored guys.” Herman kept up the threats and, as he observed my discomfort at the news of the forthcoming beating, he taunted me all the more, even laughing about it. But he would never tell where or when the sad day would come. Finally, I’d had it. If I were going to get beaten up, then the sooner the better. This prolonging the occasion just made me all the more nervous and fearful. So I told Herman, “After school *tonight!*” He agreed. So I hurried out of school and waited on the sidewalk out front for my beating. And I waited . . . and waited . . . and waited. No Herman. I didn’t know what happened to him. When I spoke to him about it the next day, he made some lame excuse and repeated the threat. Well, I never did get beat up. I think I learned the lesson that the sooner you face up to an unpleasant situation, the better. Since many “problems” never actually materialize, you can save yourself a lot of worry.

## **A RESTLESS ADOLESCENT**

Being seven years younger than my sister, it was like I was an only child. While I did have a few loyal boy friends, still I was lonely a lot of the time. After school, Saturdays and during summer vacation I would spend much of my time just roaming around town . . . usually along the downtown city streets and alleys. My parents never went on vacation, camping trips or such things. About the only places I recall going anywhere with my parents was to the homes of their adult friends. They would just sit and talk, sometimes until late at night. These were boring times for me, but I had never heard of that word in those days. So I guess you could say I was bored, but didn’t know it.

And without any more constructive activities to occupy my time, it isn’t much wonder that I got into various kinds of trouble . . . or near trouble. I spent many hours hanging out at pool rooms, usually with older guys. I was about 15 when I took up smoking, to be like the rest of the kids. During summer vacation I used to walk aimlessly along railroad tracks, often for miles out of town, going nowhere in particular. I would climb onto box cars and jump off into piles of sand. I would wade across the Mahoning River near the edge of town, just for the kicks. I remember one day wading across when the current was extremely swift. I couldn’t

swim and the stream got chest deep on me when suddenly I stepped into a hole. I almost went down, and if I had, I certainly would have drowned. I would steal things from department stores and grocery stores, usually when two or three of us were together . . . candy bars, comic books, cigarettes, knives . . . almost anything small that we took a fancy to. Once in a grocery store I grabbed a milk carton full of coins being collected for what was called “Finnish Relief” (a collection for the people of Finland) while a buddy distracted the store clerk. The clerk chased us for blocks and almost caught us. The school found out about the incident and I thought I was “finished!” Although nothing was ever proven conclusively that implicated me, I still got into trouble with my parents.

## **FUN THINGS**

My playthings around the house were usually the few toys I got for Christmas or my birthday . . . toy tractor, jacks, a spinning top, Lincoln logs, Chinese checkers, an erector set, model airplanes. I liked collecting match book covers and especially baseball cards. I actually had a Babe Ruth, a Lou Gehrig, a Jimmie Foxx, a Bob Feller and many other stars of the late 30’s. (I’m the guy who would be rich if my Mom had not thrown away my baseball cards after I left home. O well!).

Away from home I spent much of my time playing baseball. I loved baseball! Often I just wanted to skip meals so I could go out and play baseball. My team was usually sponsored by some local grocery store, bicycle shop or lodge. We had little equipment and since my position was “catcher” that meant often playing with no chest protector or mask! And the ball fields we played on were hardly regulation, sometimes not even having a backstop behind home plate. We lost our first game 31 to 4! I got a good workout though, running after “passed balls” clear down the block! I once played on a team opposite a much younger boy, Lenny Dawson, who later became the famous NFL Hall of Fame quarterback for the Kansas City Chiefs (his older brother Josh was in my class). I played a little basketball also, but was too short to be very good. They were mostly pickup games at the Methodist or Christian Church gyms. This was the extent of my “church going” in those days. I loved to ride my bike and sometimes went as far away as Salem (14 miles away), just to turn around and come back. Roller skating (outdoor), kite flying and tree climbing were also great summer activities I enjoyed. In the fall I liked to attend high school and college football games at Mount Union College Stadium. I spent countless days working on little “go-carts” which somehow never went very fast, steered very well or

stopped very quickly. I hung around Bud Twyman's dad's grocery store a lot where Bud and I had a little room in the back we used for a "club house." I also liked going to carnivals that came to town, usually sneaking into some attraction, since I seldom had enough money to pay my way in. Neighborhood games like "Kick-the-Can" and "Raindrop-Three" also consumed many enjoyable hours during the long summer evenings.

Besides Bud, the grocer's son, my other playmates included Mike Tangi, who became an attorney and later a prominent judge in Alliance. Another was Joe Mastroanni, who started out working in a grocery store and then went on to become a millionaire, owning the largest shopping center in the area, as well as a variety of real estate enterprises. I also played a lot with Raymond Bradshaw, a black boy whose house was right behind mine, on the corner of the alley. While my parents allowed me to play with him, they cautioned me against ever going into his house, which was more of a shack, and reeked of catfish and suckers, which his "father" caught for their daily meals. My relationship with Raymond was bittersweet. We were best of friends, but then would get into arguments and fight (at times like this I would call him "chocolate drop"). I think the close relationship I had with Raymond helped me develop an affinity for blacks, for in years to come I found it easy to relate to all minorities and I think they could always detect a genuine affection for them on my part.

## **SIBLING ANTICS**

One incident of my childhood stands out most vividly. Perhaps, it's because it involved a strong emotion . . . fear. I attended movies very often . . . probably two or three times a week, including every Saturday matinee (I just had to see the next episode of the weekly serial movie). One reason I attended so often was that Mom sent me regularly to be there for "bank night" to get the premium given to the one holding the winning ticket number (No, it wasn't the lottery!). I saw all kinds . . . westerns, war movies, musicals, gangster shows, and *scary shows*. One particular movie featured a scene where a huge gorilla snuck up the fire escape into the bedroom of this beautiful lady. Of course, as the woman opened her eyes and saw the gorilla, she was *terrified* . . . as were all of us kids watching the movie! But the unusual thing about it was that the gorilla did this *only* at the sound of tom-toms. So that night as I was about to fall asleep, I heard "pom, pom, pom, pom." Now, my sister Margaret's room adjoined mine, with only a curtain across the doorway dividing us. I frantically called out, "Marge, stop doing that!" Sleepily,

she called back, “Doing what? Go to sleep.” So it got quiet again . . . then, “pom, pom, pom, pom.” This went on until Margaret finally admitted her prank. But for years I suffered from problems with being alone in total darkness. Yet in spite of our age difference, Margaret and I had a special relationship. She spent time playing games with me . . . Chinese checkers, jacks, etc. Of course, she always beat me, which always produced frustration and often even tears. Perhaps, this had a part in developing in my personality a keen sense of competition and made me a “poor loser.”

## **PLAY BALL!**

I enjoyed participation in several social activities in my younger years (mostly with boys). When I was 12, I wanted to join the Boy Scouts because several friends were in it and told me about their camping trips and other fun things. But, in order to join the troop that met at this Methodist Church they required the kids to attend their Sunday School. So, I went one Sunday, only to be put into a class of *first graders*, who could hardly read. That was my first and last day of Sunday School! But they still let me join the Boy Scouts, where I rose to the rank of Tenderfoot!

I was also a member of a boy’s athletic club, the Mohawk Athletic Club (No, we didn’t need a goofy haircut to join). These were clubs of 10 to 20 boys (ages 10-15) that met for regular meetings at the Y.M.C.A. to learn about all different sports. Our adult leader would ask us questions on baseball, basketball, football, golf, boxing, etc., and a score would be kept. We were encouraged to read the sports page in order to keep up on sports activities. We also formed a baseball team that played in a league. Another feature was that we got to attend “Hot Stove League” meetings. These were meetings of kids interested in baseball and other sports where a well-known sports figure would come and give a talk on his experiences, sportsmanship, etc. At one of these I got to hear and talk with Honus Wagner (about 68 at the time), famous early 20th century baseball Hall of Famer. (His early baseball card is now being sold for up to \$300,000!). I even got his autograph, which eventually joined the journey into oblivion along with all my baseball cards! I had an Uncle Johnny, who was an avid baseball fan. He took me to Cleveland on several occasions to see the Indians play. I saw such great stars as Jimmie Foxx, Hank Greenberg, Bobby Feller, Ted Williams and others. The most memorable game I ever saw was on July 16, 1941, when Joe DiMaggio hit in his 56th consecutive game, a record that still stands (the Yankees beat Cleveland 10-3 that day).



## **LEARNING TO WORK**

But childhood was not all fun and games. I learned to work and be responsible at a very young age. Around the house, being the only boy, I had many jobs: mowing the lawn, spading and weeding the garden, cleaning wall paper, washing windows, raking leaves, trimming shrubs, cleaning gutters, washing woodwork, beating rugs, shoveling snow from the sidewalk, painting the house, shoveling coal, scrubbing the porch floor, running errands (grocery store, etc.). An unusual job my Mom had me do was to write business letters for her. She could read and write well enough, but for some reason asked me to write (she would dictate) to companies and businesses about an appliance or to order something from a catalog. I feel sure this was valuable experience that helped me years later in the various writing projects I attempted. I was being trained in expressing ideas in clearly stated terms.

But I also held jobs for pay (I wasn't paid for household jobs, and never got an "allowance"). One of the first ways I earned money was gathering up in a wagon old newspapers, cardboard and copper to sell at the junkyard (they didn't call it "recycle" then). This brought in a few pennies for spending money. Then I started selling newspapers on street corners in downtown Alliance. I had a few regular customers, but it was not like a real "route." Later, I got a real paper route which called for regular daily responsibilities, where I not only delivered the papers but also had to "collect" once a week. Sadly, not everyone paid up so this taught me something about business and people. Later, I worked at the newspaper office stacking papers for kids to pick up for their routes. Then one summer I worked at a local lumber yard unloading boxcars. But my job as a Western Union telegram delivery boy when I was 16 (.50 per hr.) was the one I liked best. In those days we would deliver, by bicycle, the actual telegram to people's homes and businesses (later people were just phoned, or faxed). While I never made much money, I did learn the value of it, and also valuable lessons on diligence, punctuality and responsibility.

## **FAMILY MATTERS**

My relationship with Mom and Dad was mixed. I always felt they loved me, but they were stern disciplinarians, and "lickings," mostly by Mom, were fairly often and sometimes quite severe. (I must admit, however, that I got away with plenty of mischief for which I was never caught or disciplined). She used Dad's razor strap, a stout piece of leather 3 inches wide and 1/4 inch thick. I "got it" for sassing, disobedience and failure to comply with their often very strict wishes.

Once I hid the razor strap in hopes of preventing or delaying the punishment. That was surely dumb, for when Mom finally found it, I got a worse “licking.” Dad’s displeasure was vented mostly in words, many times by using vulgarity; Mom’s discipline was often done in visible anger. But both of them gave me a sense of belonging, and I felt secure as part of a solid family structure. Mom and Dad were always there for me, though there never was much hugging or kissing. I was to learn how to show affection much later.

## **MY CARING MOM**

Mom was my main teacher. She gave me instruction in manners (open the door for ladies, walk on the outside of the sidewalk, etc.), in personal hygiene, in letter writing and she even taught me to dance (we would dance together in the living room to old 78 records). She even taught me a number of Hungarian words. We would also play word games as we sat on the porch swing during summer evenings. Mom and I went shopping, on long walks and to movies together. Both Mom and Dad were fluent in Hungarian and sometimes spoke to me in *Magyar*. I could understand, but would always respond in English, never becoming fluent in the Hungarian language. I have always regretted this. In later years, when Mom lived alone in widowhood, she was always very supportive of me, my family, my work . . . I know she felt her only son could do no wrong. I wondered if she wasn’t subconsciously trying to compensate for the years of over strictness and severe discipline. Parents do that, you know. I learned from Mom. After my Dad died, Mom moved back to Alliance and lived there alone as a recluse, until dying of uterine cancer in 1986 at age 83.

## **MY HARDWORKING DAD**

Dad was very industrious, and although he went only as far as the 4th grade in school, as an adult he took night school classes and was able to obtain a working knowledge of algebra and trigonometry which helped qualify him for his lifelong occupation as a machinist. Except for a brief period during the Depression he held good jobs all his life (Morgan Engineering in Alliance and United Engineering and Foundry in Youngstown). In spite of Dad being away at work so much (for several years he commuted from Alliance to Youngstown) and being away with his friends at taverns, we did have a good relationship. I remember when I was little climbing on his chest as he lay on the couch (he took frequent naps because of the strenuous work he did). Dad would take me places with him . . . to taverns mostly, where I would sit

drinking Pepsi while he drank beer and talked with his friends (we always walked everywhere, since Dad did not have a car). I can still remember that smell . . . beer mixed with stale cigarette smoke. Then he would take me to see an old Hungarian relative of ours. Again, I recall standing around, having to amuse myself for hours on end while they talked! But Dad liked mushrooms and once in awhile he would take me into a damp woods early in the morning to pick mushrooms. I hated mushrooms, but loved being with Dad. Dad also had an exceptional art talent. When I was still quite young (eight to 10 years old) Dad and I used to sit at the kitchen table drawing pictures and cartoon characters together. If I have any art talent, it surely came from Dad, both inherited and exemplified. I don't remember Dad teaching me a lot but I do remember well one thing he used to say: "Don't ever do anything that will bring shame to our family name." Not a bad idea! While Dad was never very expressive of affection, by word or hug, I never doubted that he loved me.

## **RELIGIOUS INEXPERIENCE**

Ours was not a religious household. We never went to church. There was no Bible in our home (I never saw a Bible until being issued a small New Testament upon joining the Navy). No one ever prayed in my hearing. There were much vulgarity, obscene language, fighting and arguing, especially when I was little, during the Depression. Drinking was a common practice in our home . . . beer and whiskey. Dad used to say we were "Hungarians, Democrats, and Unitarians," so that's what I would always tell my teachers at school when asked. In thinking back, I recall Dad telling me he had read Karl Marx's works as a young man, and he sometimes commended Hitler for his leadership in Germany (this was before WWII began). He was also a staunch supporter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. From all this I now gather that Dad was a devoted Socialist, at heart, at least.

But religious thoughts and impressions were not totally beyond my experience. I recall on several occasions lying in bed late at night or early in the morning . . . thinking about death. Such thoughts were always unpleasant. Death meant the cessation of all the fun, friends and family I enjoyed so much. It meant no more baseball, movies, marbles, bike riding . . . all the things I loved to do. To me, as a preteen, death was darkness, nothingness . . . the end! I don't think I ever perceived of it as involving punishment or reward of any kind.

My exposure to religious matters was very limited, but there were a few incidents I observed with more than casual interest. These no

doubt influenced what I thought about religion, and especially Christianity, during my formative years. I recall looking out of my bedroom window on Sunday mornings and seeing two small children, all dressed up in white suits and dresses, including gloves. There they were, every Sunday, marching to Catholic mass! I didn't know what all they would do there, but I was quite impressed with the faithful attendance and dedication of those children. Then, an uncle who went to church on occasion (he was a bartender by trade), once brought me some little leaflets with pictures of Jesus and other Bible characters. I think they must have been Sunday School quarterlies, containing brief lessons and Scriptures. I remember looking at them often, and wondering about them . . . who were they? what did they do? I kept them along with my match book covers and baseball cards. Then I learned about a situation with one of my sister's girlfriends. She was Catholic and on her way to a dance on a Saturday night, where she would be drinking, she stopped by the church building to attend confession. Somehow that just didn't seem right to me, but I had no Biblical knowledge to make such a judgment. Perhaps the most bizarre impression made on me as a child was what I saw in a small, white, frame church building across the alley behind my house. One night, as I heard loud singing coming from the church building, I crept up to a window to look in. I was astonished to see people tossing a little baby around and catching him. There was sawdust on the floor, so I guess it wasn't too dangerous if they had dropped him. But I couldn't figure out what that activity had to do with "going to church." Certainly the formalism of Catholicism and the fanaticism of Pentecostalism were hardly the proper bases for me to make an intelligent assessment of Christianity. But hey, I was only a kid!

## **HIGH SCHOOL DAZE!**

Perhaps the most difficult of those first 16 years of life in Alliance were the last two (1941-1942, 1942-1943) . . . my first two years at Alliance High School. It was a time of turmoil for our nation as well as one of personal stress for me. When World War II began for the USA (Dec. 7, 1941), I remember sitting on the living room floor, listening to the radio with Mom when news of Pearl Harbor was announced. Mom cried. How long would it last? I was just 4 months shy of 15 years old. Would the war still be going on when I was old enough to be drafted? Several of my grade school friends (a little older) had already gone into the Army . . . two of them were later killed in action! My role as the most popular kid in grade school was now history. And high school was much *harder* than South Seneca grade school. I really

didn't know how to study, so my grades fell to barely passing. The school was big and I would get lost trying to find my class rooms (never have been good at directions). "German" proved to be a very difficult course to master, but I liked industrial arts, engineering drawing, English grammar and U.S. History. But with adolescence now well under way, there was a pressing desire to have a social life . . . in other words, *girls!* But my skin and scalp conditions were getting worse, so that created constant problems. I didn't seem to fit in with the more popular, richer kids from the other grade schools. Dad was now talking about moving 35 miles away to Youngstown in order to be nearer his work (commuting via car pool had become a bigger problem due to gas/tire rationing). In short, these were not the best years of my life. I wondered how the next two, my final ones of high school, would go. Little did I know that I would never even attend my high school graduation!

# 1943-1945

## YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

### SKINNY JITTERBUG

#### BIG CITY BLUES

In the summer of 1943 the whole country was caught up in “war fever.” The war was far from over but was definitely going in our favor. The Germans were falling back on the Russian front; America and Britain had become victorious in North Africa against Rommel; South Pacific islands were gradually being taken back (New Guinea, Solomons, Gilbert, New Britain, etc.); the Alaskan islands of the Aleutian chain were recaptured; German cities were now being bombed relentlessly and Italy had been invaded and conquered (July-Sept. 1943). Upon graduation most of the older guys I knew were either being drafted or joining the service. I was already past 16.

It was at this time that my parents and I moved to Youngstown (population about 175,000 in 1943), about 35 miles from Alliance. (Margaret was already gone, married to a fellow high school student Ralph Reeder, who was in the Army). We now lived within walking distance of Dad’s job at United Engineering and Foundry. This was much better for him since he was having to stay in a rooming house in Youngstown for the previous year and came home only on weekends. I was now several miles from South High School and often had to take the city bus to school, or anywhere. Again, I felt out of place . . . a much bigger school, all new kids, difficult subjects (algebra, geometry), along with the acceleration of social problems! For reasons I was never fully able to fathom, I became the butt of much teasing by several boys at school. Perhaps it had to do with my skin/scalp condition, which was unsightly. If it were today, someone would probably have called me “pizza face.” Kids! They can be so cruel! Some even made fun of my big nose! Ouch! Would you believe, one older boy even gave me the nickname “eagle beak?” (I should have just told them it was my face that was too *small!*). At any rate, I seemed to gravitate toward making friends with older people. Bob (33) and I struck up a friendship. He was a single guy (whose sister was a fortune teller at an amusement park), who lived in a nearby apartment. We would go to dances together (Elms Ballroom, Idora Park Ballroom) and various bars and night clubs, where we drank and danced to juke box music after the ballrooms closed (between 1-4 AM). By now almost all of my bald spots had grown in and I wore my hair in what was called a “conk” . . . fuller and longer in the back (but

nothing like the hippies of the 60's). This helped cover the few I had left. Then I found a medication, "Mazon Skin Cream," a coal-tar based, non-prescription cream that seemed to keep my eczema somewhat under control. Somehow I got by. And so the "big town" kid focused his attention on his greatest passion . . . dancing.

## **ZOOT SUITER!**

The crowd I went with and the mood of the times helped me to grow up fast. School was now just tolerated. My thoughts, as those of all the other guys, revolved around going into the service. Even the pictures I was drawing at that time were of servicemen. You couldn't say that I had anything like "normal" junior and senior high school years. I focused on clothes, dancing and girls . . . usually in that order. I carefully picked out the fabrics and had all my suits tailor-made. They were "zoot suits," according to the current style at that time, especially for the dance hall and night club crowd. (I even wore these suits to high school). This was also the "big band" era, and most of the name bands came through Youngstown in those days (Dorsey brothers, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Stan Kenton, Les Brown, Vaughan Monroe, Duke Ellington, etc.). I would always go to see them, either on stage at the Paramount Theater, or at dances at the Elms Ballroom. With all the practice at home, I soon became a very skilled dancer. The big craze then was "jitterbugging" and I was really good at it. In spite of my health problems, I did gain some popularity because of my dancing ability. There were times at the Elms when my partner and I would "jitterbug" to Stan Kenton's "One O'clock Jump" for almost half an hour. The whole dance floor would back up and form a large circle, just to watch us! I was in my glory when dancing. It was not just a pastime . . . it was a passion!

## **FEW SCHOOL FRIENDS**

I did have one girlfriend in high school though. She was Italian and kind of heavyset. I think she liked me, because she often invited me over for an evening of "necking" in her living room. I recall having a spaghetti dinner with her and her parents on one occasion. But that didn't last because I really didn't care for her. I had only one real boy friend in high school, Bill Bushling. But he seemed to have a "smart alec" personality and so didn't have many friends. Maybe that's how we managed to get together. I did very poorly in school, barely passing several subjects. (I flunked 11th grade algebra, the only class in school I ever failed). I had little incentive to learn, which wasn't helped by a few indifferent teachers (they hired older men, because all the young ones

were in the service). I was smoking pretty regularly by then and one day was reprimanded by the school dean for smoking on the front steps of the school building (you were required to be *off* of school property before smoking). I had no active school social life and took part in none of the school's activities.

## **HELPING THE WAR EFFORT**

I worked part-time in a department store in Youngstown, stocking shelves, and even did some selling during the Christmas rush. I had a crush on a pretty, married girl named Stella (24), who worked there. Her husband was in the Army so she was kind of lonesome too. We would dance together at a nearby bar, but it was never anything serious. Then, during the summer of 1944 I worked as a millwright, 3rd class, at Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation, one of the large steel mills for which Youngstown was noted. Because of so many men being in the service, they hired high school kids. They worked us all three shifts in one week: 8 AM-4 PM for two days, then, with just eight hours off, we would go in for the 12 midnight-8 AM shift for two days. Then, after eight hours off, we would go in for the 4 PM-12 midnight shift. They operated this way in order to get out more production for the war effort. The work was very strenuous and hot. As a millwright helper (.78 per hr.), my job was climbing up onto huge blooming mills and greasing the pistons that turned over white-heat steel ingots (2,000 degrees) before they went through rollers and were reduced to long steel bars. I also operated the hydraulic doors of the blast furnace, raising and lowering them as men would shovel in "slag." I did many other hot, dirty jobs, involving heavy lifting and much sweating. As could be expected, this worked havoc on my skin condition.

## **LOOKING FOR TROUBLE**

Some people I met or hung out with at bars, dance halls and night clubs were anything but upright, honest individuals. One such acquaintance was "Blackie," an ex-con, who had served time for selling narcotics (that wasn't a very common practice in those days). He approached me one night and offered me a "deal." He said his girlfriend would lure an older, wealthy guy, up to a hotel room, slip him a "Mickey Finn" (a drug-laced drink), then "Blackie" and I were to drag him out into the hall, "roll" him, and split the money! I wasn't too impressed with the idea, so didn't show up at the theater where we were to meet for the "caper." Another time I was sitting at a bar with a guy who was bragging about dodging the draft. He had smoked a cigarette that had been dipped



in iodine, so that, when taking his Army physical, a spot on his lung showed up on the X-ray. I just laughed at him and said, "You're just a coward!" He didn't like that very much and pulled a tiny 22-caliber gun on me. I just pushed the gun away and left. I was a little cocky myself, and not too sensible.

While living in Youngstown, I would make occasional trips back to Alliance (on the bus) to spend a weekend, or longer, with some of my boy friends. I stayed nights with my Aunt Anna, but would spend the rest of the time at friends' homes, drinking and dancing (to records in the living room). Once at a New Year's Eve party, I passed out from drinking, and ended up lying outside in the gutter (in the darkness I could have easily been run over). Of course, Mom and Dad knew nothing about such activities.

On one of these visits to Alliance, I was hanging out at my favorite pool room with several guys. An older (38), retarded fellow was also there with us when someone got the bright idea of tossing cigarette lighter fluid at him. He didn't realize what was happening, thinking someone was spitting on him. Then someone started lighting matches and throwing them at the poor fellow. Pretty soon all of us were doing it. Suddenly the retarded guy lit up like a bonfire! He started screaming and beating his back against the window of the pool room. Of course, we all ran. A few days later another boy and I were picked up by the police for questioning (the other boy later became a prominent attorney and was elected a county judge). We denied having anything to do with the incident, insisting that we had been at this boy's house where he was getting ready for work. A few weeks later, when I was back in Youngstown, my parents got a phone call from the Alliance police, requesting that Dad bring me into the police station. So Dad and I traveled the 35 miles on the bus, in silence. When we got to the police station, the officer on duty could not find any record of my being charged or wanted for anything . . . he looked in both juvenile and adult records! Dad returned home very upset. I went that night to stay with Aunt Anna. When I shared the whole story with her 80-year-old mother-in-law, who was living with them, she replied sweetly, "I know Billy, I was praying for you." This made a lasting impression on me. I had never been told by *anyone* that they had prayed for me. And I was still amazed at how there could have been *no record* of my being wanted at the Alliance police department. It wasn't until the fall of 1996 that Judge Tangi (the guy I ran away with) told me that it was Bob Kimes who actually lit the poor fellow on fire and that he was convicted and given several years probation for it. (The retarded fellow suffered only minor burns).

## **GOING TO WAR**

As I was approaching my 18th birthday (April 12, 1945, the day President Roosevelt died), I decided to join the Navy, as I didn't want to be drafted into the Army. By then the Allies had invaded Europe and were advancing toward Berlin. In the Pacific our invasion troops were moving ever closer to the Japanese islands. Dad and Mom were reluctantly agreeable for me joining (as were all parents in those days), so on March 29, 1945 (while still 17) I enlisted. The one obstacle that might have kept me out was my skin disease. But I used the "Mazon" cream day and night for weeks before taking the physical, then passed it without my eczema being discovered (but I wasn't cured, by any means). So, as a skinny 116-pounder, I was sworn in at Cleveland and then sent home to await being called for boot camp. That day came on May 11, 1945 (three days after V-E day, the end of the war in Europe). But there was still a war to be won in the Pacific, and it looked like I would be taking an active part in it!

# 1945-1946

## U. S. NAVY

### WORLD TRAVELER

#### BOOT CAMP

Upon entering the Navy at 18 in May 1945, I couldn't have known, of course, that I would never again live in Ohio. (Since I left for the Navy a month before graduation, Mom had to go to the graduation ceremony to accept my diploma for me). Over the previous few years Dad had made known his hopes and wishes for me on more than one occasion. His "plan" was that I return to Ohio, attend a nearby college (he would pay for it), earn a degree, become a Civil Engineer, marry a nice Hungarian girl and settle down nearby! I think Dad felt that his own limited education had kept him from achieving anything beyond a machinist. He wanted his only son to do better. As things turned out, none of Dad's dreams for me would ever materialize. I'm sure he was deeply hurt and disappointed over this.

I have often reflected on the likelihood of my ever becoming a Christian, must less a preacher, if I had returned to Ohio after the war. I had known no one even religious, let alone a New Testament Christian. None of my friends seemed to have the slightest interest in spiritual matters. Then my lifestyle was decidedly unlikely to place me into contact with Christianity. Drinking, dancing, attending bars and night clubs certainly did not lend themselves to spiritual influences. The few friends I had were all very worldly, with no discernable inclinations toward "church." And my immediate family, while honest, hardworking, moral people, had given me no direction toward God, the Bible or church. I am fully convinced that it was the providential leading of God that moved me away from my birthplace and eventually to Christ!

I reported for "boot camp" at Camp Decatur, Great Lakes Naval Training Center (near Chicago, IL) on May 11, 1945 (I had never been farther from home than 70 miles before). Due to the country's accelerated pace for the upcoming invasion of Japan, my stay at boot camp was shortened to just eight weeks (with no "liberty"). The first "problem" I encountered was being issued a *wool blanket* that had obviously been stored in *strong moth balls* for some time! My "under control" eczema very soon got out of control. My extreme itching and scratching at nights disturbed a number of the other men housed in the huge barracks (there were about 600 in my company). This earned me

the dubious and unflattering nickname “itchy-bitchy” (Ouch!) from a few of the young, outspoken recruits! Here we go again!

In spite of my skin problems I found boot camp to be quite an adventure. I was not too happy with the strict discipline they required but soon got adjusted to it. The main activity I remember was the *marching!* We did it every day out on the drill field . . . probably to help us develop harmony and cohesiveness . . . because sailors are seldom required to march. Some of the other exciting drills we learned in order to prepare us for warfare: we approached a steel building full of burning oil and “put out” the fire with powerful hoses; we spent hours in the gym doing calisthenics; we operated 20 mm and 40 mm antiaircraft guns mounted on turrets, shooting at aerial targets pulled by airplanes; we engaged in target practice with rifles; we donned gas masks, were turned loose in a building filled with tear gas, then required to remove the masks before leaving the building (this really bothered my skin condition). Ironically, it rained on the day we were supposed to have instruction in operating small boats. (This always seemed odd since, after all, we *were* in the Navy!) Those of us who couldn’t swim spent every evening in non-swimmers class (while others were at the canteen having sodas). I recall the first session, when the instructor wanted to teach us that a body will float. We all stood in a swimming pool chest deep when the instructor barked out, “Take a deep breath and then grab your ankles!” (It reminded me of what Mr. Andrews used to say at Seneca School before giving a “licking”). Of course, when we did, our heads went under water, while our backs *did* float! Now the instructor had warned us to remain that way until we heard his whistle blow. But, one by one some of the guys bobbed back up, struggling to their feet. The instructor then spent time bawling out each one, while the rest of us were still trying to hold our breath . . . and our ankles. In spite of going to non-swimmers class nearly every night, I never did learn how to swim!

One highlight of boot camp was about half way through, when my mother and sister (who was then living at home with her first child while Ralph was overseas) visited from Ohio. This was a real morale booster, as well as a time for me to share, with pride, all my exciting new military experiences.

## **OUT TO SEA**

Following my completion of boot camp, I spent ten days leave at home in Youngstown (July 1945). The time went by quickly and was filled with the usual . . . dancing, drinking and night clubbing . . . only

this time I was somewhat more popular, sporting my dorky Navy uniform.

Upon returning to Great Lakes, I was immediately shipped out on a troop train . . . going *west*. We all surmised that we were heading for California, to ship out overseas. I have two recollections of that trip that made lasting impressions on me. One was seeing a troop train, full of Japanese prisoners of war, heading *east*. The war was over for *them* . . . but just beginning for us! I remember their grins . . . full of gold teeth. And they were eating *sandwiches*, while we had meager C-rations for food. The second impression was the breathtaking beauty of the Colorado mountains. I had never seen mountains before. Little did I know that I would someday live in that state for eight eventful years.

In a few days I arrived at the Naval Receiving Station at Camp Shoemaker (near San Francisco), where mostly I just goofed off for about a week, and got my immunization shots (I ended up shipping out before getting my final cholera booster shot!). Finally, on July 28, 1945 I heard my name called on the loud speaker. I was immediately bussed to a pier in San Francisco, where I staggered up the gangplank carrying my heavy sea bag, and reported for duty aboard my ship, the *U.S.S. Electra AKA-4*. This would be my home for the next five months, and the ship on which I would travel to Japan and the Philippine Islands. I had not been aboard an hour before I felt the sensation of movement. I was unpacking my sea bag below deck when I blurted out, “We’re *moving!*” To the crew of seasoned veterans of several invasions, such a remark by a “boot” was quite amusing. So I rushed topside only to see us passing directly under the Golden Gate Bridge! I recall my voyage across the serene, blue-green Pacific ocean as one of the most pleasant experiences of my Naval career. And, somehow, the fresh sea air, and relative tranquility I experienced while at sea, contributed to some of the best health of my life. My skin condition was at its best. I really enjoyed being out to sea and would remember those times fondly during the difficult times that were to come the following year.

During the many weeks I was at sea, there was an incident that stands out in my mind as spiritually significant. With so much free time on my hands, one day I decided I would get out my “Bible” and read it (actually, it was a Navy issue, pocket New Testament)! So I went to a secluded place, a deserted hold in the bow of the ship where no one would see me, and began reading. I had never read the Bible before this occasion, so thought the logical place to start was at the beginning. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat

Judah and his brethren . . .” I glanced across the page . . . “begat . . . begat . . . begat.” Just as I thought; the Bible was a meaningless series of unintelligible words, suited only for religious fanatics, and which made no practical sense at all! So I tossed the New Testament into the bottom of my sea bag, and never attempted to read it again for over a year!

Another situation that made a lasting impression on me was my relationship with a young man I met aboard ship. I don’t remember his name for sure anymore, (I’ll call him Dan) but I remember well his *attitude*. He and I would play catch on the wharf when our ship docked (yes, I carried a baseball glove overseas). He was my age, 18, and we became close friends. But when our ship docked at ports in Honolulu, Manila or Japan, and the rest of us would go on “liberty” at bars and dance halls, Dan would never go with us. Several of us sailors would coax, and even goad him, but he *always* refused. Yet he would never say *why*. I always wondered. Was he a Christian? I will probably never know in this life!

The six-day sea voyage to the Hawaiian Islands was very enjoyable. We arrived at Honolulu Harbor on Aug. 3, 1945. During the trip much of my time was occupied in scraping and repainting the hulls of LCMs (Landing Craft Mechanized) and LCVPs (Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel). These small boats (called “Higgins boats”) were attached to the deck of the large ship by cables, on top of holds containing equipment and supplies. During invasions they were hoisted over the side by huge cranes and then filled with tanks, jeeps, supplies and military personnel. They would then head for shore, where they dropped their ramps in the shallow water of sandy beaches, so troops and vehicles could move on inland. I was one of the 3-man Navy crew on one of these small boats and learned that I had been assigned to the *Amphibious Force*! Our purpose in the Hawaiian Islands was to take on troops, equipment and supplies for the impending invasion of the Japanese Islands themselves! My ship was being berthed in Pearl Harbor, awaiting further orders, when the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the subsequent surrender of the Japanese on Aug. 16, 1945!

As I awaited orders for what my ship would do next, I was given “liberty” in Honolulu. Again, it consisted of going to dances, night clubs and trying to pick up girls (we frequented a WAC base for this purpose). One of the amusing things that happened at the dances I attended was to notice that the Hawaiian girls were especially attracted to blacks, ignoring us white guys. Later I was to learn that some of the black guys were telling the girls that they were *American Indians*!

## OCCUPYING JAPAN

In his book, *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb*, author John Ray Skates describes the times, the ships, the troops and the beachheads where landings were to be made during the invasion of Japan's main islands. The *Electra* was scheduled to land units of the 98th Infantry Division (Army) on southern Kyushu in November 1945! According to top secret, official war plans, the time and place where my ship was to participate in the invasion, together with estimates of the enormous casualties that would likely have been encountered by both sides, I am convinced that I probably would never have survived the invasion! So, the dropping of the world's first atomic bombs (Aug. 6 and 9, 1945), while killing thousands of Japanese, almost certainly became the occasion of my being alive today! An awesome circumstance, and one that later took on providential overtones for me.

With the war now over, contingency plans, which were already in place, called for redirecting invasion forces to become occupation troops. That meant that my ship would now land its troops, equipment and supplies on the shores of Japan . . . hopefully without hostility. So the *Electra* sailed from Pearl Harbor on Sept. 7, 1945 (five days after the signing of Japan's surrender), stopping at Saipan, in the Marianas Islands for 4 days, before arriving off the coast of southern Honshu, where we landed our troops at the small village of Wakayama on Sept. 27, 1945 (I could never have dreamed that I would be married exactly two years later, to the day!).

The next three days and nights would prove to be among the most memorable of my entire Naval career. We all gathered below decks, Army troops together with Navy crew members, to receive a short talk from the Chaplain. After all, there was no way of knowing whether or not we would encounter resistance from the Japanese. There was no assurance that word of their surrender had reached all of the remote areas of the islands. So, the occupation forces were going in, fully battle ready, expecting the worst but hoping for the best! Our 12 landing boats were lowered over the side, loaded with cargo, and then proceeded cautiously to shore, filled with oil drums, equipment, supplies and personnel. Scores of other ships were doing the same, so that the night sky was studded with the running lights of hundreds of landing craft, traveling in the dark waters the half-mile or so from their mother ships to shore. I was a crew member on an LCM. We landed without incident, then began to shuttle back and forth to our mother ship, loading more cargo for another trip. This lasted for three days and nights. It rained the entire time and was very chilly. We three crew members took turns, trying to get a few

minutes' sleep on a cot right out on the wet, exposed deck. My job was to run along a narrow gunnel to the bow of the boat and manually release the ramp door for the cargo to be unloaded by army personnel in the shallow water of the beach. While we wore bulky "foul weather gear," we still got wet to the bone! In fact when they lowered sandwiches and coffee down to us from the mother ship, we were so cold that we poured the coffee into our *shoes* to warm our feet! It felt so good!

While soldiers were unloading our cargo, a couple of us sailors decided to take a little unauthorized "liberty." So we walked the short distance from the beach into the small village of Wakayama and began mingling with some of the people in the crowded open air markets. It wasn't easy communicating, but we were able to get across a few ideas. I recall how we harassed an old lady, "Why did you bomb Pearl Harbor?" "Why did you start the war?" She was terrified, and it was certainly cruel of us, but we were the cocky "conquerors," so felt we were entitled to be a little "macho" about it. "Tojo, Tojo," she cried. She was telling us, in effect, that the whole Japanese war effort was the work of their warlords. Hideki Tojo was the chief military dictator of Japan at that time, and the man principally responsible for its policy of military aggression.

## **TYPHOON AT SEA**

Following this operation, our ship sailed for Manila, Luzon, Philippines, to pick up units of the 41st Infantry Division (Army) and return them to Japan as occupation forces. The voyage (Oct. 1-7, 1945) was the roughest I had yet encountered. We were in a convoy of 17 ships which attempted sailing "around" a violent typhoon (named *Louise*) that was raging in the East China Sea. I remember seeing ships ahead of us "disappearing" beneath huge swells, only to reappear again. I often wondered if any ships went down in that typhoon.

While loading cargo in Manila Bay, an incident occurred that was probably the most serious threat to my life while in the Navy. Swells out in the Bay were as much as 30 feet, and even though we were docked, the water was very rough. As they were lowering a jeep into my LCM, which was in the water alongside the ship, my job was to release the cables attached to its bumpers as it touched down on the deck. It meant having to hurry and remove the cable while the boat was "high" enough, before the swell permitted it to go "down." Well, as I was trying to do this, the cable caught me under the arm as the boat was going "down" fast. Standing on the narrow gunnel, I was thrown off, almost landing in the water, but grabbed the edge of a bulkhead just in time!



And since I couldn't swim, the accident could easily have resulted in my drowning!

## **LIBERTY IN JAPAN**

After sailing to Subic Bay and Linguyen Gulf in the Philippines, my ship returned to Japan where the 41st Army Infantry Division disembarked at Hiro-Wan, Honshu, Japan on Oct. 22, 1945. Following this the *Electra* sailed east through Japan's Inland Sea, stopping at the seaports of Kure and Kobe. While at one of these ports I observed what would, a few years later, help form my strong aversion to armed warfare. Outside of the city of Kure was a large barracks where the U.S. government had arranged for GIs to hire Japanese prostitutes for sex (in other words, it was a brothel)! A booth, operated by military personnel, was set up for selling "tickets," and Army MPs patrolled and supervised the entire operation! Later on, I was to conclude that, just because something was "authorized" by the U.S. government, *that* did not make it an acceptable practice (whether it was fornication or killing)!

A few days later my ship stopped at Hiroshima, site of the world's first atomic bombing. A number of us sailors were allowed to tour the devastated city in the back of a dump truck . . . a sight I will never forget! It was only 53 days since the bomb had fallen . . . streets in the once thriving city were now flattened, with nothing but debris and rubble everywhere! I was especially struck by seeing bath tubs, sinks and safes amid the rubble on a number of street corners . . . all that had withstood the fiery holocaust. I recall seeing twisted railroad tracks and a gutted structure in the main part of town . . . a building still standing today as a stark reminder of the terrible devastation of atomic warfare! A few persons could be seen wandering aimlessly along the "paths" cleared through the debris, carrying bundles containing all of their worldly goods!

## **BLOWING UP MINES**

By now the Navy was trying to replace sailors who had been in the service since the early part of the war. That meant I was being transferred from ship to ship, allowing men who had experienced several invasions to go home. I spent a few weeks (Oct.-Nov. 1945) on the *U.S.S. LCI (M) 817*, and the *U.S.S. LCI (M) 1088* (Landing Craft Infantry, Medium). This duty involved following minesweepers throughout the Inland Sea, blowing up floating mines that had been "cut loose" by the minesweepers. When we got close enough to a mine, sailors would stand in the bow and fire at the mine with rifles until they

would explode. The “hunters” aboard ship sure enjoyed this duty! Our small ship would shudder violently each time a mine exploded. This duty entitled me to a “Combat Action Ribbon” awarded to all those serving in these danger zones..

## **HOMEWARD BOUND!**

I was then transferred (Nov. 17, 1945) to the *U.S.S. LCS (L) 24* (Landing Craft Support, Large), on which I was to return to the states. We left Japan on Christmas Eve and arrived at Saipan, Marianas, on New Year’s Eve, sailing through very rough seas. I was not able to keep any food down for the entire week. From there we sailed to Eniwetok, Marshall Islands (Jan. 12-13, 1946), then on to Pearl Harbor. From there the trip home is remembered for our dumping overboard along the way thousands of rounds of ammunition (20 mm, 40 mm shells). What a waste! There on the bottom of the Pacific, thousands of dollars worth of ammunition. But it probably would have cost much more than that to unload and store them somewhere. We finally arrived at San Francisco Harbor on Feb. 26, 1946 (having spent seven months overseas). After a few days of liberty, we sailed up the West Coast to Astoria, Oregon, (Mar. 5-8, 1946) where the *LCS (L) 24* was decommissioned and added to the Navy’s “moth ball fleet” at Tongue Point, near Astoria, Oregon. But, before it met with its final resting place, it was towed up the Columbia River to Portland on Mar. 24, 1946. This was one of the most pleasant and relaxing experiences I had while in the Navy. Seeing the lush greenery on both sides of the bank from the River’s vantage point, and the first sight of majestic Mt. Hood upon approaching Portland, were reminiscent of a similar voyage, made in 1782 by British Naval officer, Capt. W. R. Broughton, the man credited with “discovering” and naming Mt. Hood!

# 1946

## PORTLAND, OREGON

### LOVESTRUCK SAILOR

#### **LIBERTY IN PORTLAND**

Upon arriving at Portland, Oregon, I was stationed for a few days in Navy barracks on Swan Island, in the Willamette River, then returned to my ship. I had now traveled some 15,000 miles since leaving Alliance, Ohio, almost a year earlier. It wouldn't be long, however, before I would once again be seeing God's providential hand at work in my life.

Over the next month I spent my "liberty" going to dances and night clubs in Portland. With the war now over, families everywhere were being encouraged to invite returning servicemen into their homes for dinner and an outing. On one such occasion I was invited to dinner by a very nice couple (total strangers) who had a young single daughter. During dinner the parents began to notice signs of my recurring skin disease. I could tell they were uneasy over my friendly gestures toward their daughter, no doubt fearing the possibility that a sailor returning from overseas might be harboring some kind of contagious disease . . . and at worst a venereal infection! While they did take me on an enjoyable outing to Troutdale (15 miles east of Portland), where I got my first glimpse of the beautiful Sandy River, they were definitely uncomfortable with my condition! Just another of the many instances where my skin and scalp diseases would impact my interpersonal relationships.

But this was not the case with Wilma. I met her at a dance and we began going "steady" for the next few weeks. She was not particularly attractive, but she seemed to like me and we enjoyed dancing, nightclubbing and drinking together.

#### **ONLY BLIND DATE!**

Then it happened . . . a set of circumstances that would prove to be life-changing for me! One night Bennie Hummell, a fellow-sailor aboard ship, came back from "liberty" and showed me a small photo of a girl and asked me if I would like to go out with her. He said he had arranged a date with her sister and needed someone to go out with her, making it a double date. I took one look at the photo and said, "Sure!" She was a knockout! It was to be my only blind date (and as it turned out, for the girl also). So Bennie and I headed out on the Greyhound bus

for a rural village named Corbett, 20 miles east of Portland on the scenic, Columbia River Gorge highway. We asked the bus driver to let us off in a wooded area at Mershon Road, a dark, lonely side road. It was April and still chilly. We were both in our Navy dress blue uniforms, but no pea coats! Walking up the blacktop road about a quarter of a mile, we came to a small frame house nestled in several tall, red cedar trees. I tossed my cigar in the front yard as we were welcomed into the house, surprised to find several other couples there also. After being introduced to my “date,” I was handed a box full of wieners, buns, potato chips, soft drinks, etc., and instructed to take it out to the 17-year-old car, a 1929 Model A Ford sedan. So, we all crowded into the car and sped off into the night. About 20 minutes later we pulled up in front, of all things, a *church building*! We made our way into one of its back rooms where there were gathered about 30 or so people. Much to my surprise and chagrin, I found myself in the midweek Bible study and prayer service of the Gresham Church of Christ! I had never been to anything like this before, so didn’t know quite what to expect. Little would I have guessed that I had made a blind date to go to church!

I soon decided that my only choice was to try to make the best of it, so I sat down and looked around. All the people had open Bibles and seemed eager to participate in the religious discussion, led by Bob Day, a youthful San Jose (CA) Bible College student. He was substituting for the regular preacher, Warren Bell (who was in San Jose for the birth of their first child, Bubby). I was very impressed by the fact that most of the people took an active part in the study. It was easy to understand what they were talking about, and I even found it interesting. Well, that wasn’t so bad, but then they all got down on their knees and started praying...out loud! This was a real experience for me! It seemed as though they were talking to Someone right there in the room! It would be difficult to describe the impact that all of this had on me. It was all such a new and different experience. I have always considered it providential!

## **FIRST WIENER ROAST**

When the meeting was over we all piled back into the crowded car and again drove off into the night. We eventually pulled over to the side of the road, then stumbled down a steep bank to a sandy beach of the Sandy River! (It has since been developed into Dabney State Park, only a couple of miles from where the Troutdale Gathering would be held 4 years later). There we proceeded to have a wiener and marshmallow roast . . . my very first. By now there were 10 or 12 of us . . . including Chuck and Dorothy Teeter, my “date’s” sisters, Carol (the other half of

the double date) and Willa (her husband was in the Navy) as well as some singles from the Gresham church. One of the guys had a guitar and everyone joined in heartily singing lively gospel choruses. Eventually my “date” and I strolled away from the rest along the bank of the rushing river. Then, under the chilly, star-studded April sky, we talked; “Where are you from?” “What things do you like?” “What all do you do?” “What do you want out of life?” It was so easy talking with her and I enjoyed the time immensely. She seemed so innocent, sincere and genuine compared to all the other girls I had met. Amid the talking, singing and laughing, everyone seemed to be having a great time. And there was no sex or beer! Again, I was deeply impressed . . . impressed with these newly found friends . . . the first real Christians I ever met. And *especially* impressed with the most beautiful, vivacious young girl I had ever met . . . Bethel! Was it just teenage infatuation (I had just turned 19 weeks earlier), or was this the beginning of *real love*? Time would tell.

## **LOVE OF MY LIFE**

Bethel (Carpenter) Baker, 23, was a divorcee. She had been married for 5½ years and had two boys, Bennie, almost 4, and Terry, 2½. The divorce had only recently become final and was Scripturally justified on the grounds of adultery (she had found letters implicating her husband with another woman during the times he was out of town with his work). Having been alone much of the time during the marriage, she had managed to borrow enough money to purchase a small frame house on five acres so she could be near her parents who lived on the adjoining five acres where she was raised. Her parents, Dewey (an alcoholic, but excellent “carpenter” by trade as well as name), and Rena (a cook at Meier & Frank Dept. Store) had moved there from Indiana when Bethel was two (she was born in Wabash). She was the eldest of eight children (seven girls, one boy). During high school, and after her marriage, she had worked part time in a vegetable processing shed (in Troutdale) and for several farmers in their berry, lettuce, cabbage and daffodil fields around Corbett. She was an outstanding student in school (D.A.R. award) and was elected to Girls’ State in her senior year (and later attended as a counselor). She became a Christian early in life and faithfully attended the Corbett Christian Church, walking the two miles regularly with some of her younger siblings. By 1946 she had begun attending the newly established Gresham Church of Christ with friends (about 15 miles from Corbett). Now being single again, she had also begun roller skating at the Oaks Park rink with her sisters. It was there that Bennie Hummell had met her and her sister Carol in early April of 1946.

After that first “blind date,” I was very interested in getting in touch with Bethel again. Now the phone system in the small village of Corbett in those days had a central switchboard in a private home. So about a week later, when trying to call her and learning she had no phone, I asked the operator to connect me with the house nearest to hers (which turned out to be about 1/8 mile away). When the person answered, I asked him, “Would you mind going next door, please, and asking Bethel to come to the phone? I’ll hold.” So, after waiting about 10 minutes, she came to the phone. “This is Bill,” I said. “Bill *who?*” came the disappointing response. Well, after explaining who I was and that I had been her “date” about a week earlier, she remembered. She was *very* reluctant to allow me to come out again, explaining that all she did was go to church or prayer meeting (an effort to discourage me, since, after all, I *was* a sailor and *not* a Christian!). But I finally talked her into it, so we had several more dates over the next two months (May-June 1946). Besides attending Sunday church services with her, we also went roller skating (I had never gone before, but she was an excellent skater), to Jantzen Beach amusement park and out for Chinese dinners. During this time we had many long, serious talks and grew quite close. But Bethel kept insisting that our relationship remain “platonic” . . . just good friends! This was quite frustrating to me because I was becoming *very* fond of her. I had never *felt* love for any girl, and certainly was never *in* love before. Not until *now!*

### **LIAR, LIAR, PANTS . . .**

An amusing incident occurred in connection with that first “blind date.” It would be funny if it hadn’t involved me in a lie, something I was in the habit of doing a lot of in those days. The night I went out to see Bethel that first time, I had already made a previous date for that very same night with Wilma, my “steady” girl at the time. Well, I never called her to cancel, then proceeded to forget about her after meeting Bethel. But some time later I bumped into her somewhere in Portland and she asked me why I hadn’t shown up for our date. I replied, with my most honest looking face, “Oh, I couldn’t get ‘liberty’ that night. I just stayed aboard ship.” She came back with “Well, then, why did I see you at the Greyhound station getting on a bus that night?” I was caught. That pretty much cured me of lying.

### **HEALTH PROBLEMS WORSEN**

During this period of time I was also stationed briefly back in Astoria, on the coast, so had to hitchhike the 100 plus miles through the

“Tillamook Burn” to Portland several times to see Bethel. Between times, she would write me faithfully. Our “friendship” was growing fast!

But my scalp disease began getting worse again. My pillow began having little piles of hair on it every morning. And, besides my regular eczema, I now started developing several large boils on my face and neck. So, I wasn't dating Bethel much toward the end of June. Then I got word I was to be discharged from the Navy on July 2. However, by now my scalp and skin conditions had gotten so severe that on July 1, 1946, one day before my scheduled discharge, as I was taking my final physical exam before discharge, the doctors decided my condition was serious enough to send me to the U. S. Naval Hospital, at Bremerton, Washington (across Puget Sound from Seattle). Little did I suspect that this would prove to be a lengthy and discouraging ordeal that would sink me to my lowest state of depression ever. But, could it have been a blessing in disguise? Again, only time would tell!

# 1946-1947

## BREMERTON, WASHINGTON

### ANXIOUS PATIENT

#### U. S. NAVAL HOSPITAL

Upon arriving at the Bremerton Naval Hospital, I was immediately placed in a private room on Ward C . . . in complete *isolation*. Since I had returned from Japan only four months earlier, the medical staff wasn't taking any chances. They assumed the worst . . . perhaps I had syphilis or some other venereal disease. Or maybe something they hadn't even discovered yet! More hair was falling out and the boils were huge and extremely infected. Could you blame them? (The "isolation" lasted for only a month or so).

Soon they started giving me a long series of penicillin shots, in the back side *every four hours, day and night for one whole month!* These helped the boils but didn't do anything for the *eczema* or *alopecia areata*. I got so full of holes that eventually when they gave me a shot, some of the fluid would ooze out of the hole next to it! It seems like the Navy doctors were trying everything to cure my skin and scalp diseases. They said maybe it was due to infected tonsils. So they took them out, only to discover that was not the problem. Then they tried using *carbolic acid* on my scalp (quickly neutralizing it with alcohol) in hopes that this would stimulate the hair follicles enough to grow hair. Didn't work. When they started talking about pulling all of my teeth to see if that was the source of the problem, I stoutly refused to let them! The itching connected with my skin disease became so intense at times while there in the hospital that many nights I awakened from sleep rubbing my face violently and almost uncontrollably! At one point hospital personnel even tried tying my arms down to the edge of my bed to keep me from doing more damage to myself. But most mornings I would (Houdini-like) awaken with my arms free. (I had this same experience recur briefly after my marriage). It's no wonder I became despondent!

Little did I know when reporting to the Bremerton Naval Hospital that I would be there for *almost nine long months!*

#### THE LAST LETTER

Bethel wrote me in the hospital but by the middle of July her letters began telling about efforts being made by her ex-husband to get back together. He was putting a lot of pressure on her to get remarried, and of course, she realized the need for someone to be a daddy to Bennie



and Terry. We had developed such an open, sharing relationship that she felt free to ask my advice about what to do. This was a *very* difficult situation for me. I knew that I really loved her, yet I also knew that nothing could *ever* come of our relationship. The obstacles were just too great! There was the age difference (5 years), the two boys . . . and now a couple of diseases that I felt would never be cured. What was I to say to her? Feeling the hopelessness of any possibility that I would ever marry Bethel, and wanting only the best for her, I advised her to go ahead and remarry her ex-husband! I really wanted her to be happy and this seemed to be her only chance for it to ever happen. But my heart was being torn two ways. She thanked me for my “good advice” and then told me she had eventually decided to remarry, even though she said she really didn’t love him enough to marry him. In their long discussions she asked him to agree to a number of changes in their relationship as they started all over again. He insisted on only one condition . . . that she *stops* writing entirely to all male “pen pals,” and that included me. She agreed, and then wrote me one final letter . . . July 19, 1946. That *had* to be one of the saddest days of my entire life!

As the weeks turned into months, my depression turned into despondency! I felt I had no hope of ever getting over my health problems, and that meant never being able to marry. When Mom called me occasionally, I told her that I didn’t plan to come home to Ohio *ever again*. I explained that I was thinking of joining the merchant marine and going back out to sea, if my health were ever to allow it. I could tell she was very hurt by such news, but I didn’t even care.

The prospects for a long hospital stay now seemed certain. I was in a ward with 20 or so patients, all recently returned war veterans. Being still in the military, we had chores to do, of course. My job was to sweep and polish the tile floor with a power buffer every few days. The food wasn’t bad but several of us craved something “better.” So we would call a cab and have the driver stop at a restaurant and pick up some hamburgers, fries, etc., and sneak them up the fire escape late at night, after “lights out.” Then, there was a tavern just outside the hospital gate where we would go to drink big pitchers of beer and eat delicious rib eye steaks! We played cards, listened to the radio and swapped “sea stories” (interesting incidents that happened overseas). I remember once being called into the office of Dr. Watts, my ward doctor . . . he was always trying to cheer me up. On this occasion he suggested that I go on a hospital-sponsored outing with “the guys.” Because of my discouragement over ever having a viable relationship with a woman, I looked him in the eye and said, “Doc, I’m not interested in going out

with *the guys*.” But, later I did agree to one outing . . . a skeet shoot, which was fun. Then, as my condition improved, I took the ferry across Puget Sound one time to attend a large ballroom in Seattle. One night a sailor friend phoned me at the dance hall, urging me to bring a girl with me to a hotel where he had taken his girl. It was a sting operation! The police had put him up to the call, hoping to arrest *both* of us for immoral conduct with girls in a hotel room. But, lucky me! My girl refused to go with me, so the police were pretty disappointed!

As the months slipped by I felt I was simply being “warehoused,” at the hospital, for the doctors had about run out of ideas for helping my condition. Time dragged on and depression grew deeper!

## **THE NEXT LETTER**

Then came a letter! It was dated Nov. 18, 1946 and addressed simply to “Ward C.” After Derwood Posey, the young hospital corpsman read it he showed it to me since it was from Bethel! It was just a short note asking for my forwarding address in Ohio. She had assumed that I had been long since discharged and sent home. I instructed Derwood to write her that I was still in the hospital, but I did so with extremely mixed emotions! “Why would she be trying to get hold of me?” “Had the remarriage gone sour?” “If so, why tell *me* about it?” Whatever little “healing” my broken heart may have experienced over the previous months, it was now shattering all over again!

She replied right away, amazed to learn that I was still in the hospital. Her letter bore the distressing news that a few weeks after her second marriage, her husband abruptly asked for a divorce! My utter shock must have been surpassed only by her total devastation at hearing the news in the first place. No plausible reason had been given to her. But the tone in her letter was conciliatory. She was very apologetic for the sorrow all this had caused me. She wanted to rekindle our correspondence. Because I was so depressed, at first I saw no prospect of writing to her ever again with any positive feelings. When I finally wrote, my caustic letter was full of sarcasm and bitterness. I had already been hurt so much . . . was it about to start all over again?

## **GETTING SERIOUS**

That first letter to Bethel explained briefly that I was still in the hospital, but it did not tell her much about my health problems. She wrote right back and so began a correspondence that involved our writing each other *every day* for the next four months. (I still have all those letters and reread them every so often). This time however, the

expressions of affection were more pronounced on the part of both of us. As we wrote it became more and more clear that we were looking at reestablishing a relationship, only this time it would be more than “platonic.” But several dilemmas were involved. I still hadn’t told her of the extent of my scalp condition (my skin condition was improving by now). And I did not tell her *why* I had to be hospitalized *so long*. I just told her I had a disease the doctors were working on. It was bad enough to admit to myself that I had lost most of my hair . . . let alone telling the one I had grown to love. And, until my appearance situation was improved, I felt I just *could not* see her. She would write suggesting that she make a trip to Bremerton to visit me, which I strongly discouraged. For her part, she also faced a dilemma. I was far from being a Christian and she had alluded several times in her letters that she would not be interested in marriage as long as I was not a Christian. But she *never* gave me an ultimatum . . . get converted or get lost! She was not that kind of person! By now our letters were such that an “understanding” had developed between us. Things looked like they just might work out for us to get together again . . . someday!

## **THE MERRIEST CHRISTMAS**

As Christmas 1946 approached, Bethel went “all out” to make it as enjoyable for me as possible (I had been in the hospital almost six months by then). She sent me a beautifully framed portrait of herself (which I cherished so much that I *still* carry a small copy of it in my billfold), a Bible and even a *live Christmas tree*. She and her brother Bud’s wife Minnie (Bud had just returned from the Navy) had a hilarious time planning and packaging my Christmas box. So, in spite of my health problems, it was the best Christmas I ever had!

By the first part of 1947 our letters were devoted to discussing when I would be discharged from the hospital and what I would do after that. So that led me to wanting to discuss the matter with Dr. Watts. He came up with the suggestion that the Navy provide me with a full hairpiece. At first I wasn’t sure, but then I got excited about the idea. So the paperwork was begun and it was arranged for me to go to Seattle to be measured and fitted at a company that specialized in custom hairpieces. Bethel still didn’t know about this development, but suspected that something was going on!

## **HONORABLE DISCHARGE**

Everything now seemed to be falling into place. With the hairpiece almost ready, my attitude of depression was completely gone ...

replaced by joy, hope and confidence. And my discharge papers were moving through the system. Bethel had been quite insistent that, when I got my terminal leave, I spend some of the time at home in Youngstown. She was very concerned that my parents know, and hopefully approve, of our growing relationship. So early in February I was fitted to my hairpiece, spent two weeks leave in Portland seeing Bethel, then a couple more weeks at home with Mom and Dad, before returning to the Naval Hospital in Bremerton on March 13. Eight days later I was transferred to the Naval Receiving Station at Seattle, where I was honorably discharged from the U. S. Navy on March 21, 1947, a few days short of 2 years since I had enlisted.

I immediately caught the next bus for Portland!

# 1947-1951

## CORBETT, OREGON

### CHANGED PERSON

#### THE GREAT DILEMMA

The portion of my leave spent with Mom and Dad in Youngstown, Ohio did not go well. I had written them about my proposed plans and they were very disapproving. Mom, especially, was quite outspoken about her objections to my courtship with Bethel. Their reasons were obvious and had to do with both Bethel and me: Bethel was divorced; she had two kids; she was much older than I; it meant living in far off Oregon; I was too young to marry; what about college (and Dad's other plans for me)? We had lengthy, rather strained talks about the matter during most of my leave. They finally proposed this *minimum* arrangement: Come home. Live there a year. Get a job. Date other girls. Think over my decision. Then, after that, if I still felt the same about Bethel, I could go ahead and move to Oregon and get married. I viewed this as simply a tactic to break us up. I loved Bethel and wanted to be with her *now*. We had been apart too long already as far as I was concerned. There could be no more delays or diversions that would keep us from fulfilling our dreams. Not even Mom and Dad's objections!

#### ROOMING IN PORTLAND

So following my discharge I moved to Portland to live. I stayed at Bethel's house on Mershon Road for a only few days while looking for a room to rent. Of course, one of Bethel's sisters (usually Margaret or Nolia) also stayed the nights I was there "to avoid the appearance of evil."

In those days it was common for people to rent out one room in their house as a "sleeping room." It afforded no kitchen or private bath room facilities . . . just a bed. This required using the family's bath room and eating all meals "out." So I found such a room to rent in Portland, first in the Council Crest district, near downtown, then in southeast Portland, and finally in the St. John's area of northeast Portland, to be near my work at a plywood factory.

One incident occurred while renting the second room that kept me reminded of my chronic health problems. When sleeping at night I would remove my hairpiece, of course, and place it on the dresser. One night while I was asleep, unbeknownst to me the landlord came into my room quietly to get something from a storage closet and saw me in bed

with *no hair!* The next day I was evicted! As with so many others before, he assumed that I had some terribly contagious disease and didn't want his house, and especially his bedding, contaminated. I suppose he shouldn't be blamed. I just had to get used to such treatment.

## **GETTING A JOB**

At first I worked briefly at the Bridal Veil box factory, some ten miles on east of Corbett on the Columbia River Highway. Then I landed a better job at M and M Plylock Corporation (no, they didn't make chocolate candy), a plywood factory in the St. John's district of northeast Portland. It was the same place where Bethel's brother Bud and brother-in-law Eldon (Willa's husband) worked. They were both recently discharged from the Navy also. The union wages were good (\$1.25 an hour), but the heat, fumes and sawdust eventually caused problems for my skin condition, so I had to quit.

## **1933 MODEL B**

Now that I had a steady job, one of my first concerns was to buy a car. I had never owned one, really didn't know how to drive, and of course, had no driver's license. But Bethel's high school girlfriend Katie (Chamberlain) Roley and her husband John had a 14-year-old 1933 Model B Ford that had sat around most of the war. So I paid them \$200 for it and, with Bethel and the boys aboard, merrily drove it away . . . over the country roads of Corbett, and *past* Bethel's house. Pretty soon smoke began to pour from under the hood. I immediately pulled over and raised the hood. Bethel jumped out, reached under the hood and yanked on the first wires she saw. Well, that took care of the problem . . . but now the car wouldn't start. So we had to walk all the way back to her house, each with a small boy on our shoulders (and her in high heels and not very happy!). I guess I wasn't clear over my "smart alec" days yet! (It was easily fixed the next day . . . faulty wire from the battery).

It proved to be a good old car . . . an updated edition of the Model A. I remember it had a cloth top, which required painting with a "top dressing" periodically to keep it waterproof. Most cars did not have stop lights or turn signals in those days. It also had a one-speed windshield wiper (on driver's side only), manual brakes, operated by cables, and no trunk! I remember the day I bought a trunk, which Eldon and I bolted onto the back with the spare tire mounted on the outside of it . . . a *real* continental kit! Fully restored it would be a valuable collector's item today and worth a lot of money! One winter afternoon, after we were married, we drove to Gresham for groceries. It was very

cold and with no defrosting system, our windows steamed up badly during the 20 minute drive. So I rigged up a “defroster.” It was a *candle* that I mounted on the metal dashboard (stuck there with melted wax). While driving, it flickered against the windshield and nicely kept it completely free of frost. Then after parking the car to go into the store for groceries, we came back to see a big crack all the way down the windshield! While standing still, the flame had just gotten too hot! O well, live and learn!

A few months later *we* decided that Bethel should learn how to drive also. (I had been self-taught only recently myself). So one day she came to town and I picked her up after work to take her home for dinner (as we often did). I was quite tired from working so asked if she wanted to learn to drive that day, explaining it would help me out a lot. So as we approached the edge of town I turned the car over to her, with a few brief instructions. She accepted very reluctantly. All went well until we got to the turn-off on Mershon Road, which was a sharp left turn. By now I had fallen asleep on the passenger side. As she was making the turn, my head flopped over and bumped the door, awaking me with a start! “What’s happening?” I shouted out. Well, that startled her so much that she failed to straighten out the steering wheel and we drove right into someone’s side yard on the left side of the road! I had a hard time convincing her to try again after that. But when she did learn to drive, she became a better driver than I (and would eventually *have* to do much of the driving in the years to come).

## HAPPY COURTSHIP DAYS

By now our courtship was well underway. We spent many precious hours talking about our relationship and the prospects for marriage, including the formidable obstacles that we would face. One thing I made clear to Bethel was that if we married, I would accept her two boys as part of my commitment to her, and that I would raise them as though they were my own biological children. I realized that if we had additional children, there was a real danger of my showing favoritism. So I determined right from the start that I would view *all* our children as *ours* (as a result of this outlook, the term *stepchildren* was *never* used in our household). Of course, when the time came, later on, Bethel explained the situation to the boys. From the beginning I worked hard at developing a good relationship with Bennie and Terry. And Bethel encouraged it by having them call me “Daddy Bill” at first!

I spent as much time as possible with Bethel . . . counting it a top priority for my evenings and weekends. We went to church regularly, of

course. But we also attended other activities in and around Portland . . . a Passion Play, movies, a rodeo, an ice skating show and outings with Willa and Eldon and Carol and Don (her fiancé) . . . picnics on Larch Mountain, and on the Sandy River where we had met, and snow ball fights at Timberline Lodge on Mt. Hood! We also spent many hours sitting in her living room just talking and listening to popular music on the radio. We had our favorites, some of whose lyrics we applied to our own personal relationship. *September Song* had lyrics that spoke of it being a “long, long time from May to December . . . but when you reach September” . . . that was when we were planning our wedding. Another song, *Gal in Calico*, had lyrics, “I met a gal in calico . . . used to be her Sunday beau, till I rode away. Do I want her, do I want her love? Yessiree. Will I win her, will I win her love? Wait and see.” These lines were made to order for us, for Bethel was my gal in calico! Then the song, *Love’s Been Good to Me*, had the line “I met a girl in Portland . . . we used to go acourtin’ upon October hill,” which we changed to “upon old *Corbett Hill*.” Another song that just *fit* us, and that we used to sing to each other, said, “If you were the only girl in the world, and I were the only boy. . . .” We would even write in to radio stations that took music requests and have those songs dedicated to each other, by name, over the air. This was one of the many fun things we did in our courting days. But “our song” was Wayne King’s *Melody of Love*, containing the beautiful reading by Franklyn MacCormack which ended “perhaps, after all, that’s what love means.” When hearing it, even today, we still remember our courting days.

Once we attended a *live* stage production in a Portland theater of the popular, nationally syndicated radio show “Dr. I Q.” They would pick contestants from the audience to answer questions with the offer of “Twenty-five Silver Dollars” for a correct answer. We were sitting in the middle of a row when the man pointed at Bethel and said into the microphone, “Doctor, I have a lady in the center section.” Her question was, “Who was the first president of *all* 48 states?” Bethel pondered a moment, then said, half mumbling, into the microphone, “Well . . . uh . . . it *wasn’t* George Washington.” His exuberant reply, “No, I’m sorry ma’am. It *wasn’t* George Washington, but give that lady a box of Snickers Bars!” So much for Bethel’s moment of fame (O, yes, as a girl of 15 she also shook hands with President Franklin D. Roosevelt once when he came to Oregon in 1937 to dedicate Bonneville Dam). Another enjoyable time we spent together was a bus trip to Yakima, Washington, to visit one of Bethel’s girlfriends, Bonnie Wise, whose husband was a Congregational Church preacher in that city.



## CONVERTED TO CHRIST

From the very first Sunday I arrived in Portland Bethel and I faithfully attended services at the Gresham Church of Christ. The church was very blessed in having Warren Bell as its preacher, for he was one of the very best in the brotherhood at the time. Warren's sermons were intellectually stimulating as well as extremely practical. As I listened and learned, I developed a genuine interest in God, Christ, the Bible and the church. It was on Easter Sunday morning, April 6, 1947 (six days before my 20th birthday) that I went forward to confess Christ and be baptized. Bethel walked up to the front with me for support. My conversion was not attended by flashing lights, thunderous fireworks or even warm fuzzies! But it was a quiet, yet determined, decision to follow Christ and live for Him. (A plaque containing the verse, "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," Isa. 30:15, has hung in our home since those days). And I was a *changed person* . . . no more drinking, no more dancing, no more swearing, no more lying, no more stealing, no more cheating, no more smoking (eventually), and such like! There was *so* much I didn't know at the time, but I knew this was the right thing to do and I was making my decision for the *right reason*, *not* just to please Bethel! Of course, Bethel was very pleased as well, and it now cleared the way for us to plan our marriage.

## ENGAGED TO MARRY

As we began talking about dates for the wedding, one factor was to determine how soon that day would come. It would have to be after the 6-month waiting period was up following her second divorce (according to Oregon law at the time). With the second divorce being granted in January 1947, that meant the earliest date would have to be sometime after July. We had discussed the Scriptural basis for divorce and remarriage at length with Warren, and received assurance from the Bible that, given the circumstances, Bethel had Scriptural grounds for remarrying. So by the late summer of 1947 we began shopping for a ring. The actual engagement took place at the Hi Mac Club (a restaurant in Portland) with Bethel's mother present. We wanted her to be there so picked her up after work at Meier & Frank's and then we all went out to dinner.

I don't think any couple anticipating marriage could have been happier or more in love than we were. Bethel was the first (and only) girl I had ever loved. She is the only woman to whom I have ever spoken those three magical words, "I love you." After our first kiss (in the "Tunnel of Love" ride at Jantzen Beach amusement park!) I have never

kissed another woman. There was never the slightest doubt in my mind that she was the one for me! I don't know exactly when I came to that realization, but it was *before* I entered the Naval Hospital, although I was never able to verbalize it to her then, for reasons already described. The joy and excitement I experienced at the prospect of marrying Bethel cannot be fully expressed. It had been less than a year earlier that I had despaired of ever marrying anyone, much less the one true love of my life. And, to think, now I was engaged to the most beautiful, caring and thoroughly selfless woman I had ever met, and who loved me just as I was. From that time onward Bethel and I both believed that our coming together was providentially guided by God! She had that special capacity for seeing something in me that produced in her heart a lifelong loyalty. To her, my skin condition (which was much improved by then) and my scalp condition (the hairpiece was working out well) were of little consequence to our relationship. She seemed able to see *past* these outward distractions. I am fully convinced that such a quality exists in only one person out of millions! In short, we had a commitment to each other that was to carry us through the most difficult situations and the sometimes stormy days that lay ahead!

## **MARRIED AT LAST!**

Finally, the long awaited day came. We were married on Sept. 27, 1947 at Corbett, Oregon. The very simple wedding was held in the small cabin where Bethel's brother Bud and wife Minnie lived, on top of a high bank overlooking the Sandy River, off Gordon Creek Road (the cabin has since burned down). Warren Bell officiated with Bud and Willa standing up with us. The only others present were Eldon, Minnie, Bethel's mother (Rena), and her sisters (Gertrude, Carol, Margaret, Nolia and Rita). The music was a 78-rpm record player in the bedroom playing, *Because* ("Because God made thee mine I'll cherish thee . . ."). Only one photo was taken of us, but it was such a poor quality snapshot that it's hard to tell who it is. The wedding was a far cry from the elaborate weddings of today, but was very meaningful to this young couple deeply in love. We meant what we said in the vows and though it hasn't always been easy to fulfill them, we fully intended to do so, "till death do us part!"

If there was any sad note to our wedding, it was that my Mom and Dad virtually disowned me over it. There was no wedding gift, or even a card or note of congratulations or acknowledgment that I had gotten married. But that would all change within a few months.

## **HONEYMOON BY BUS**

A few days before the wedding, my old Model B started giving me trouble. A man living across the road, who knew something about cars, offered to work on it. He found that the distributor rotor had worn out and, after much checking, learned that no new parts were available, anywhere! Now that we had our honeymoon trip all planned, what were we to do? Bud kindly offered the use of his 1937 Ford for the trip, but I declined, not wanting to take a chance on something happening to it. Then we got the bright idea of going on our honeymoon to the Oregon Coast by *Greyhound bus*! So after staying the first night at the Heathman Hotel in Portland, we caught the bus for Rockaway, where we got off and spent a couple of days at the beach, sightseeing, and eating out. Then we took the bus again, on south to Depoe Bay and then to Newport, getting off each time and staying a night or two in a motel. Finally we headed inland to Corvallis, where we caught another bus for Portland and home . . . an enjoyable, adventurous one week honeymoon. (Willa and Eldon kept Bennie and Terry, who looked up at the *moon* one night wondering where Mommie and Daddy Bill were!). A funny thing happened on the way back to Portland. A few minutes after leaving the bus station at Corvallis, a car pulled alongside the bus, honking and waving the driver over. When the bus stopped, a man got on and held a woman's purse up in the air, saying, "Whose purse is this?" When no one answered, he walked down the aisle, explaining, "Someone on this bus left this at the Corvallis bus station." Now Bethel and I were sitting clear in the back, on the last row, quite preoccupied with each other, and paid no attention to the man. Finally Bethel looked up, then screamed, "That's mine!" That was the first of a number of times Bethel would leave her purse somewhere during our married life.

## **LITTLE HOUSE ON MERSHON**

We lived in the small house on Mershon Road that Bethel had bought a few years earlier. (She had already had the deed changed over to include both of us). It was surrounded by large red cedar trees, had two small bedrooms, and was heated by a potbellied wood stove in the living room and a wood burning cook stove in the kitchen. From the front yard it had a panoramic view of Mt. Hood and the mountainous woods of Washington state across the Columbia River, only a couple of miles away. It was one-story, with a dirt-floor cellar, which we used only for storing canned goods. But, even before our marriage, Bethel had talked about wanting to move to a different place and get a fresh start. This was partly due to the problems that had developed with her folks

living next door. Her Dad's alcoholism had become a major problem to Bethel's Mom and their children, and the stress, tension and sometimes even violence had spilled over to her house next door. We went so far as to have a realtor find us a nice place in Portland, and even paid \$100 earnest money on it. But for various reasons we backed out at the last minute (losing our \$100), and continued living in the small house on five acres in Corbett for the first four years of our marriage..

## **DISABILITY COMPENSATION**

As I was being discharged from the Navy, there in Seattle, I was encouraged to sign a power of attorney so that when my health condition worsened (it was chronic and incurable), there would be someone to represent my case before the VA (I chose the Red Cross). So when my skin problem flared up again, shortly after discharge, I went to doctors at the VA hospital there in Portland and it was determined that I qualified for 10% disability compensation (\$13.80 per month) beginning May 22, 1947. As my condition improved or worsened, the VA was very good to me in providing a small income to compensate for my limited ability to work. Over the next few years the percentage of monthly disability compensation fluctuated: (Oct. 13, 1947 @ 50%; Feb. 12, 1948 @ 100%, due to being hospitalized; March 6, 1948 @ 80%; July 6, 1949 @ 50%, etc.). And because of my long stay in the Naval Hospital in Bremerton, the compensation was easily deemed *service-connected*, entitling me to free hospitalization, outpatient treatment and medication throughout my lifetime. But being *compensation*, rather than *pension*, this amount was adjustable, according to the degree of my disability, and was even subject to being cut off *entirely* any time my condition improved sufficiently. The way it worked, the worse my condition got, the more disability compensation I received. So, I guess you could say it *paid to itch!* Although my skin and scalp conditions were not actually *incurred* by my time in the Navy, they were judged by the VA to have been seriously *aggravated* by it. On this basis my *service-connected* status was established and so I have been compensated accordingly ever since.

## **PORTLAND VA HOSPITAL**

By the time I was married for only 3½ months, the heat, fumes and sawdust conditions of my plywood factory job caused my skin condition to become so severe again that I had to be hospitalized, this time at the VA Hospital in Portland on Jan. 12, 1948. I spent almost 2 months there receiving treatment. Bethel was very supportive during those days (and ever since on such occasions) and came to see me often,

even though it was some distance from Corbett and she always had to arrange baby sitting for the boys. Actually, what seemed to help my condition most was probably the bed rest, relaxation and a change in environment. Some doctors over the years have even suggested that my condition was somehow connected with stress and nerves.

### **“SON, YOU’RE GOING BLIND”**

Following my brief stay in the VA Hospital in the spring of 1948 I encountered a third health problem that would impact my life and service in a major way over the next 40 years. Shortly after returning home from the Portland VA hospital, I began noticing some difficulty in reading even a short passage in the Bible or newspaper. There seemed to be a haze over everything I looked at, and it was worse in bright sunlight. Thinking I needed glasses, I went to see a VA eye doctor for a checkup. After a thorough examination, including dilating my pupils, the doctor sat me down and said, bluntly, “Son, you’re going blind!” I had, within a few weeks, developed cataracts on both eyes (Right eye, 20/100; Left eye, 20/400). I was stunned, and upon breaking the news to Bethel, we both had a good cry. It was later determined that the cataracts (which were judged to be congenital) had formed rather quickly in connection with the extremely severe outbreak of my skin disease a few months earlier. It was explained to me that since the skin and the lens of an eye share a similar cell structure, when a severe skin outbreak occurs, cataracts on the lens of the eyes often accompany it.

### **THE FAILED FARMER!**

So for the next 2½ years I was unable to hold a regular, full-time job (this did not endear me to Bethel’s Dad, who, despite his other problems, had a strong work ethic). So I busied myself around our five acres, clearing and burning huge growths of blackberry vines that had virtually overrun the place . . . even over growing a hog pen, chicken house, etc. Then I remodeled the old barn on our place, putting in a floor and constructing roosts, nests and brooders for chickens. I also rebuilt the chicken house, outfitting it with nests for laying hens. Then I rebuilt the hog pen, including putting up a new fence around it. Since I had been raised in the city, these were all new experiences for me and learned mostly by the trial and error method. And I was *very naive* about many things that people raised on a farm already knew. For example, when I wanted to raise laying hens, I bought a quantity of pullets and then an *equal* number of roosters, so we could have eggs! After all, I didn’t want any “hanky-panky” going on around there, even among the farm

animals! I also bought 100 baby chicks from a mail order place, but many of them died of chicken disease, since I didn't know how to care for them properly. But we were able to have some laying hens and, besides providing food for our table, we even sold some to Lewis' grocery store in nearby Springdale.

Then I decided to raise "fryers" for selling to a butcher for resale in meat markets. I bought a bunch of baby chicks and raised them for several weeks on the ground. But I was told that you needed fattening crates for the last week or so in order to increase their weight for market. So I got some wooden fattening crates from a farmer in the church and put the 10 to 12-week-old fryers in them to fatten. I reasoned that if chickens could add weight in only one week, then why wouldn't it be better to leave them there *longer*, reasoning that the longer they were in the crates, the fatter they would be when it was time to sell them! Well, after a couple more weeks the man came and we let the chickens out of the crates, only to see them all *fall over*. They couldn't even stand up, due to being deformed from all that time in the cramped quarters of the fattening crates! When the man said, "What do these chickens have?" I said, apologetically, "Uh . . . nothing, they're fine." So, very skeptically he bought a few of the healthier looking ones . . . we had to eat the rest! Before that time I had been thinking of trying to obtain a GI loan from the government to build a large, cement block chicken house and become a chicken farmer, but after a few incidents like this, I decided perhaps I was not cut out for such work!

Another incident had to do with a little "weaner" pig I got from a farmer in the church. We were going to raise it for stocking our meat locker. But all we had to feed it were table scraps and some cabbage leaves discarded from a nearby farmer's field, so it never got very big, dressing out at only 78 pounds! Now the hog pen was at the bottom of the hill, quite a ways below our house. I reasoned that if I shot it in the pen I would have had to carry it all the way up the hill to the house to butcher (my farmer friend came to help me). So I decided to let the hog out of the pen and "walk" it up to the house before shooting it. But, as soon as I let it out, it took off, darting back and forth through the garden and across to the neighbor's field. So I opened fire. Bang! Bang! Missed him. Bang! Winged him on the leg. Bang! Finally brought him down, but not until after a hilarious hog chase that left the poor thing full of holes and pounds lighter from the long chase! It seems I was just not much of a farmer . . . or a hunter in those days!

But the bulk of the work I did on our "place" centered around the huge garden we raised (about a half acre). I used a hand-pushed plow to

prepare and cultivate the ground. Then we grew a wide variety of vegetables . . . pole green beans, potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, peas, pumpkin, squash, spinach, etc. We also raised some strawberries. The ground was very fertile and we didn't even use fertilizer to have bumper crops every year. And Bethel canned and canned, so that we had much of our food needs supplied with a minimal financial outlay.

In time I was also able to get work for a neighbor bulb farmer, Marion Kirkham. I would help dig and haul daffodil and gladioli bulbs in from the fields, then process them in a large barn. I also worked for Walter Ramser, an older man in the Gresham church, who operated large nut orchards (filbert, chestnut, walnut). We used to have long talks about spiritual matters while working and I learned a lot from him about life, and about the Bible. Then I worked for a while for Ed Handy, a man in the church who operated a large rose nursery. I would help dig and haul rose bushes in from the fields and process and pack them for shipping.

So between the farm work I was able to do, the meat and vegetables we were able to raise on our five acres (including Bethel's canning) and the small disability compensation I received from the VA, we eked out a comfortable and happy living. We didn't *have* much, but we didn't *need* much and we didn't *want* much!

## **FIRST BIBLE CAMP**

During the summer of 1948, before I had started working at my farm jobs, Warren encouraged me to go with him and a couple of the youth of the Gresham church (Betty Mills, Joyce Angelo), to a Christian service camp sponsored by the Coos Bay (Oregon) Church of Christ. Camp McKinley, near Coquille, Oregon was my first formal Bible learning opportunity outside of regular church services. I remember it as a very rich experience where I took classes on the Holy Spirit, Cults, etc., (involving elaborate note taking) from Melvin Traxler, Clarence Oxenrider and Roy Shaw. An amusing incident happened when I was mistaken for a teenager by Pauline Graham, a single, camp counselor and Boise Bible College faculty member. While we were eating lunch in the dining hall, she began giving me strict instructions on various chores to do around camp. It tickled the Gresham teenage girls, who knew me only as a married man with two children (but since I was skinny, 21, and wearing a T-shirt, who could blame her for the mistake?).

## EARLY MARRIED LIFE

Despite my recurring health problems during those days we were very happy and contented. I was being accepted into Bethel's family with open arms by her brother Bud (and Minnie), and by all her sisters, Willa (and Eldon), Gertrude (and Marvin), Carol (and Don), as well as by the younger ones (Margaret, Nolia and Rita). Her grandparents, Morgan and Gertrude Carpenter were especially fond of me and we visited them in the Rockwood district of Portland quite regularly. We would take drives up the scenic Columbia River Highway (just a few miles from Corbett) and an occasional trip to the ocean at Canon Beach. I felt somewhat less accepted by Bethel's parents, especially her Dad, whom I felt had some misgivings about me because of my youth, my inability to hold productive employment and especially because of my spiritual commitment (he used to refer to me as a "Bible thumper"). A notable exception to this perception, however, was once during a severe snow storm when Dewey and I hiked, with backpacks, from his house *straight across snow-covered fields and fences*, to get groceries at Springdale. That was a precious experience for me. But I guess I didn't project a very reliable picture of a husband, father or breadwinner. Besides these cordial family ties, we had several very good friends in the Gresham church: Chuck and Dorothy Teeter (who often drove many miles out of their way to take us to church in the beginning), Norm and Mary Hovet and Linn and Echo Harrison. Then there were others, friends of Bethel's living in the Corbett area: John and Katie Roley, Marion and Ethel Kirkham, and others. God truly had blessed us in our marriage, with two fine boys, adequate income to meet our needs and loving, helpful friends and family. I have sometimes wondered how our lives would have turned out had we stayed there in Oregon!

As I gradually adjusted to my restricted eyesight, I was able to read more and even drive some. But driving was difficult, especially on bright sunny days, or at night having to face oncoming headlights. It seemed that whenever dark shadows were cast across the road, it always made it harder for me to see. This circumstance led to my preferring cloudy days all the rest of my life. When driving at night I would often follow other cars (at a safe distance) in order to keep from having to stare into bright, oncoming headlights any longer than possible. Bright light, which constricted my pupils, made it harder to "see around" the cataracts, which were more dense in the center of my eyes.



## GROWING IN CHRIST

Church activities were now beginning to take a bigger role in my life and assuming a greater priority on my time. Besides attending the Gresham church regularly, and all of its evangelistic meetings, Bethel and I also tried to take in meetings being held in area churches as well (Portland, Vancouver, Sweet Home, St. Helens, Cedar Mill, etc.). During such meetings I was able to hear and receive much good teaching, and developed stronger convictions, from the preaching of men like Harold Buckles, Marion McKee, Melvin Traxler, Don DeWelt, Don Jessup, Dale Williamson, Lee Turner, James Matthew Alley, Rodney Reyman, Donald Hunt and others. I began going door-to-door calling with Warren and learned from him how to teach people the gospel and deal with various objectors. I began reading the Bible more, and even made notes on several topics of interest to me. I was asked to bring an occasional five-minute “sermonette” on Sunday mornings before the regular adult class, and later taught a fifth grade Sunday School class. Several of the older men often spoke encouraging words to me over these efforts. I was also able to participate in various other interchurch activities, like helping in a “skid road” mission in downtown Portland once, and helping in the construction of the Minnehaha (Vancouver) church building. Later I was able to have a small part in the construction of Gresham’s new church building on Division St. I used my vacations from work to call door-to-door on behalf of the church, especially in preparation for evangelistic meetings. Some of the most memorable times calling were spent with my good friend Norm Hovet.

## WHO AM I?

A hilarious incident happened one Sunday afternoon while Norm and I were calling door-to-door on strangers. As we approached each house, we would take turns doing the talking. Our practice was to introduce ourselves by name and then our partner. Then we would invite the people to church. On this particular occasion, when it was my turn to talk, I began by saying, “Hello, my name is *Norm Hovet* . . .” I immediately hesitated for a brief second . . . what had I *done*? My mind raced. How could I *possibly* back up and explain, “I mean, *I’m* Bill Paul; *this* is Norm Hovet?” In a split second I thought, “I will probably never see this guy again,” “If I do, he will never remember our names,” “I’ve got to get out of here as quickly as possible.” So, pointing to Norm, I continued, “. . . and *this* is Bill Paul.” I don’t know what happened after that, except that Norm and I were cracking up inside . . . I didn’t dare

look at him. We hurried back to our car and sat there laughing hysterically. This *had* to be the funniest experience of my life.

## **WINTER SNOW STORM**

A memorable event took place right after the Christmas of 1948. It is recalled by Bethel with less than joyful memories. We drove to Portland to attend the Sunday evening service at the Montavilla church because I had arranged with Harold and Imogene Reymen (he was the Montavilla youth leader at that time) to ride with them that night to the annual Conference on Evangelism at San Jose, California (held January, 1949). As we began heading south toward sunny California, Bethel and the children (the boys were 5 and 6½) were making their way back to Corbett in a heavy snow storm that had started while we were in church! Well, the Reymans and I ended up being stuck in deep snow in the middle of the night in the Siskiyou Mountains of northern California with a huge, downed Douglas fir tree fallen across Highway 99. We just sat there all night trying to keep warm in the frigid air, running the car's heater periodically. When we finally got to San Jose, I remember hearing sermons by Dale Williamson, Kenneth Beckman, Elston Knight and others. It was on that occasion that I first met Don DeWelt. "Meanwhile, back at the ranch," Bethel fought her way back to Corbett through the blinding snow storm with two small kids in tow. Then to top that off, the next day she and her mother attempted driving the one mile to Springdale to get groceries (it looked like they would be snowed in for a while), only to get stuck in a snow drift at the corner of Mershon Road and the Columbia River Highway, and had to wade through deep snow drifts for 1/4 mile to get home! She had the next few days to think about the whole situation, so when I finally got home, it was still *quite chilly* in the house as well!

## **THIRD CHILD BORN**

Then on May 19, 1949, a wonderful event happened . . . the birth of our third child, a son we named Timothy Gordon! What a joyful addition to our growing family! And how well he fit in with his two older brothers, as they played together and seemed to enjoy each other! I was just 20½ when becoming a father to Bennie and Terry and only 22 when Timmy was born. Mom flew to Oregon to visit us following Tim's birth, as our relationship with my parents had improved greatly by then.

## **RECONCILIATION WITH PARENTS**

It all started a few months after our marriage when I had suddenly developed cataracts on both eyes. Bethel *had* to be the one to write Mom and Dad all about it, and they *had* to reply if they wanted to know about their son! The first thing Dad said was, “We’ll send him to Mayo Clinic . . . whatever it takes!” Their love for me and concern over my health problems, coupled with the obvious loving care being shown to me by Bethel during that time, worked together to overcome their initial objections to my marriage. From then on a regular, congenial correspondence developed and continued throughout their lives. We were even able to visit them in Ohio on a couple of occasions (far too few) and Mom flew to Iowa when Sheila was just small and to Florida in October 1955, when we were still in our first house there.

## **PREPARING FOR SERVICE**

With my increasing interest in spiritual things about that time I decided to enroll in a Homiletics class being taught by Warren at the Montavilla church building in Portland. I wanted to grow and improve in my ability to serve the Lord and this class promised help in preparing lessons and presenting them better. It was attended by about 15 men from surrounding congregations and was part of a limited training program involving Lee Turner and Archie Word (by the fall of 1952, it became Churches of Christ School of Evangelists). I enjoyed the classes and did real well in them. Following one of the Tuesday evening sessions, as Warren was driving me home, he asked me a very penetrating question, “Bill, if your health would allow it, have you ever thought of being a preacher?” I hadn’t, but that question planted the seed. That was the night Warren stopped by the Word home to pick up some laundry, and when we got to Warren’s house we discovered that a *bra* had been dangling from his trunk all the way home!

## **SPARED FROM FIRE**

Because of its proximity right in the path of the Columbia River Gorge, the Corbett area is famous for its freezing rain in the winter (called “silver thaws”) and for its severe east wind! During the winter of 1950-1951 it snowed so heavily that the east wind produced drifts as deep as 22 *feet* in places! Then, to top that, a “silver thaw” fell, coating the trees and ground with thick ice. With us living in a poorly constructed house, with just a dirt cellar, the cold sometimes froze our water pipes which were exposed along the top of the cellar walls. When built years before, someone had used heavy cardboard between the wood

siding and dirt cellar walls, behind the pipes, to help keep out the cold. One night when the temperature was expected to dip very low (although they didn't have sophisticated weather predicting equipment in those days), we left the kitchen sink water faucet running a little all night. By morning the pipes were frozen, but we had a small dish pan full of water in the sink. So I went to the cellar to try to thaw the pipes. We used rolled up newspaper as torches. As I was holding the paper "torch" up to the pipes for a while, suddenly I saw (with limited eyesight) that the cardboard had caught fire. As it blazed away, I ran upstairs and grabbed the small dish pan of water . . . all the water in the house. I raced back down to the cellar with the sloshing basin in hand and tossed the water toward the flames, making a "sheet" of water that doused the flames enough so I could beat out the rest! With no fire department anywhere nearby, and impassible roads besides, I am sure our house would have burned to the ground, had it not been for that one dish pan of water. How we thanked God! Again, I viewed this as His providence in caring for our little family!

## **DECISION TO PREACH**

In the spring of 1950 plans were being made by the faculty of Midwestern School of Evangelism, a small Bible college in Ottumwa, Iowa, to launch a large-scale preaching rally in the Pacific Northwest. Since Warren had been back to Iowa on several occasions to speak on the Cincinnati, (IA) Rally, he had developed a working relationship with Donald Hunt, Burton Barber and James McMorrow, the three instructors at MSE. So Warren was asked to take charge of local arrangements for what became known as the Troutdale Gathering. It was to be held on a beautiful campground situated on the west bank of the Sandy River in the town of Troutdale, just four miles from our home (and not far from where we had that first wiener roast). I helped Warren in lining up chairs, equipment, song books, etc. The powerful speakers who brought the messages that first year were Donald Hunt, Burton Barber and Archie Word.

The theme of that first Troutdale Gathering, held July 3-9, 1950, was "Soul Winning." And what a timely theme it was, for me especially! As my family and I began attending the week-long meeting I became more and more concerned about lost souls, and especially the ones I personally knew in the community where I lived. So one night, as I was hurrying home from work (I was working briefly at a bakery in Gresham at the time), I stopped at the gas station where I usually traded, and spoke with the young owner, inviting him to the preaching gathering. I had

witnessed to him about spiritual things before but this time it was different. He lived in the back of the station and on this particular occasion invited me to come back and meet his wife. There was another couple there also. As our conversation began to turn to spiritual things . . . the Bible, preaching, Christianity . . . he and his friends started in on me. They began ridiculing me about my stand for Christian things, and laughed about Christ and the Bible. I was stunned. I hardly knew what to say. So I left with a heavy heart and almost in tears. I had never encountered such fierce opposition and didn't know what to make of it. That night at the Gathering the message was by Burton Barber, "What Soul Winning Will Do for Your Spiritual Life." One of his points was, "Soul Winning Will Keep You Humble." Among the things he said was, "the world is not cordial toward Christ, and it cannot be expected to be cordial toward his people." Then he quoted John 15:19 and added, "We have it from Christ that when we, too, deal with the world and its sins, it will hate us also. In fact it is impossible to work as a soul winner and not be despised and persecuted." He then quoted II Tim. 3:12, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Brother Barber then went on to elaborate, "When you go out, Bible-deniers, Christ-rejecters, pleasure-seekers and world pleasers will flatten you out and leave you a pulp. About the time you get doors slammed in your face and get laughed at, cursed and belittled, you will either lose that pride or quit soul winning. But the blessing is yours if you will grit your teeth and keep at the good work. May God grant you the pluck that you need to come through this test." Well, that did it! He was speaking directly to *me*, and to *my* need. By the end of the Gathering I had made the decision that, with God's help, I would become a preacher. I didn't go forward, or even tell Bethel right away, but I felt strongly it was what God wanted me to do. And I was determined, if my health permitted, to study and prepare myself for a life of preaching the gospel the best I could. It would be little over a year before I would enter Bible college to study for the preaching ministry. At first Bethel was a little apprehensive about the idea (because of very negative experiences she had observed while babysitting for preachers at the old Corbett Christian Church), but before long she was wholeheartedly behind me and has continued to be a great support throughout my ministry! (Barber's complete sermon can be read in the Voice of Evangelism, Vol. 5, pages 273-288).

## **BONNEVILLE SECURITY GUARD**

By the fall of 1950 my health had improved enough so that I could look for full-time employment. Most of my hair had grown back

by then (except for a few spots) so that I no longer wore the hairpiece. The Korean War was on and I had heard they were hiring at Bonneville Dam, 20 miles farther east of us on the Columbia River gorge. So I applied and was hired Nov. 10, 1950 as a security guard for \$1.28 an hour. My responsibilities were to check the ID of all persons entering the main gates on both the Oregon and Washington sides, check the ID of those entering the powerhouse and patrol the powerhouse and Bradford Island in search of fires, saboteurs, etc. The prospect of sabotage must have been viewed as a real threat by the government in those days. I wore a badge and uniform but no side arms. (In later years when seeing pictures of me in uniform my grown children called me “Barney Fife”). Bethel drove me down the Corbett Hill to the Columbia River every day, where I met a car pool that took me farther east on a stretch of the newly built interstate I-84 to the Dam. It was a type of Civil Service job, since the Dam was operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and probably would have been quite permanent, with opportunity for advancement. I enjoyed the work very much as it involved good exercise and seemed to have no adverse effects on my health conditions. One disadvantage was that it required working alternate shifts, including Sunday mornings sometimes. By now I was teaching a children’s Sunday School class at church, so this created a problem of my not being able to teach my class consistently. So, faced with the dilemma of giving up my class or giving up my job, Bethel and I began praying fervently about the situation. Right about then they announced that all security personnel were to be assigned *different* days off soon. We prayed all the harder. Upon arriving at work one day, and looking on the bulletin board, I discovered they had moved everyone’s days off *up* one day . . . I would now have Saturday and *Sunday off!* This circumstance of answered prayer proved a great boost to my faith, early in my Christian life.

## **PACIFIST CONVICTIONS EMERGE**

By 1951 my Bible studies had led me to the conviction that involvement in armed warfare was wrong for a Christian (I even wrote a lengthy poem on this subject and later a full-length book). Also, just about then it was announced that all security guards at Bonneville Dam would be required to carry side arms. I grappled with the dilemma this posed. I viewed the bearing of arms as a guard incompatible with my growing conviction against killing. So after much thought and prayer, I decided to resign my position as guard. Upon reporting this to the Personnel Department, I asked if there were any other job openings at the Dam. I was informed there was an opening for a custodian, so took that

job (at 20 cents an hour less) without missing a single day's work! I continued at this job until quitting to enter Bible college in the fall of 1951. My work at Bonneville Dam could have been steady work indefinitely, had I wanted to keep the job. But God had other things in mind for me.

## **PLANS FOR COLLEGE**

About that time Donald Hunt, an instructor at Midwestern School of Evangelism, in Iowa, came to Gresham for an evangelistic meeting, so I took the opportunity of talking with him at length about the prospect of my attending his school in Ottumwa, Iowa. I was interested in what courses were taught, what housing was like in Iowa, job opportunities, etc. I explained to him about my family situation, my health problems, my finances, etc. I wanted to get the full picture and so I sought his judgment as to whether he thought it was realistic for me to consider preaching as a life's work. For once I decided to preach, I had determined that, with God's help, I *would* become a preacher! I didn't view the idea that Bible college would *make* a preacher out of me . . . but it would only help me to achieve that goal *better* and *quicker*!

## **PREPARING TO MOVE**

Our last year in Corbett was a very busy one for Bethel and me. But things were falling into place in a wonderful way. Bethel spent many tireless hours canning, cleaning the house to sell, and sorting and packing our belongings. I was busy looking for a better car, working on a large utility trailer for hauling our household goods, and getting the property ready for sale. Finally after much planning, prayer and perspiration we were ready to make the 1900 mile trip to Ottumwa, Iowa. Bethel had never been out of Oregon (except for a brief trip to Yakima, Washington), so this was a major change in her life. The church had a nice going away party for us. The house had sold to a responsible couple who made monthly payments to us for several years to come (and on which we would depend for our living). Legal permission had been granted by the court to allow Bennie and Terry to be taken out of state (they would spend a month nearly every summer visiting relatives in Oregon). We had sold the 1933 Model B some time before, bought a 1936 Chevrolet (which we later sold to Lee Turner) and had now purchased a 1941 Pontiac, with a sturdy hitch for pulling the heavy trailer. I had finished building the utility trailer, complete with hardwood side racks, at Norm Hovet and Charlie Martsolf's automotive garage in

Gresham (they were brothers in the church). What a wonderful adventure lay ahead of us! How excited we were!

So in early August, 1951, loaded down with all our earthly possessions packed tightly in the sagging utility trailer, and with three excited boys in the back seat of the car, we pulled away from the little house on five acres in Corbett. Waving goodbye tearfully from the middle of Mershon Road were Bethel's three youngest sisters, Margaret, Nolia and Rita. With us launching out into the deep, into uncharted waters, in a rather frail vessel . . . it's a good thing we had a reliable Pilot!



# 1951-1954

## OTTUMWA, IOWA

### EAGER COLLEGIAN

#### TRIP TO IOWA

The journey to Iowa was quite eventful and enjoyable for the whole family. But the long haul up the western slope of the Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon taxed the endurance of our high-mileage, 10-year-old 1941 Pontiac, as we had to stop a while for the motor to cool off. We stayed one night at Pocatello, Idaho (\$8 for all five of us), then headed toward Yellowstone National Park, where we were surprised to find the temperature at 32 degrees . . . in bright sunlight! But the most memorable event in Yellowstone was when we stopped to look at some black bears along the road. I got out of the car to take pictures, only to see through the viewfinder that one of them was ambling over to our car. He jumped up and put his paws on the open window sill, and Bennie, Terry and Tim were eating crackers in the back seat! Terrified that the bear would reach in, I rushed over and with *one* motion jumped in, turned the key, pressed the starter, released the brake, put it in gear, and stepped on the gas! The boys were pretty scared at the time, but proudly showed off the muddy paw prints when we got to Iowa (and we had pictures to remember the incident by). The rest of the trip was less eventful and we arrived in Ottumwa on a hot, humid August day. After looking around for a few days we found an older house to buy just three blocks from Midwestern School of Evangelism's administration building. We used money from the sale of our Corbett house as down payment.

#### A NARROW MISS

One of the first activities we attended was the Centerville Rally, a large-scale gathering held in a huge circus tent some 45 miles southwest of Ottumwa. The speakers were Warren Bell, Melvin Traxler and Ottis Platt. Along with other incoming students I was asked to help set up the tent, pitched on the Appanoose County Fairgrounds. I remember the circumstances so well. Three of us were driving tent stakes with 9-pound sledge hammers, swinging in rotation. Being the smallest of the three, I had just stepped out of my turn to rest when the head of the guy's hammer directly across from me flew off and landed right where I had been standing! Once again, the guardian angels were at work.

## **ENROLLED IN COLLEGE**

Enrollment day at MSE in late August 1951 was a time of excited anticipation for all of us (it was the largest number ever enrolled, more than 120). My classes that first year were: Old Testament History, Bible Geography and Homiletics (James McMorro); Life of Christ (Donald Hunt) and Essentials of Effective Speaking (Burton Barber). School was exciting and I looked forward to every class session. My typical week's schedule while in Bible college was: (Tuesday-Friday mornings, Prayer 7:00-7:30 AM; Four classes, 8:00 AM-12:00 Noon; Part-time work, 1:00 PM-5:30 PM (sometimes 6:00 PM); Tuesday night public prayer service; Thursday night preaching service (at which all students were required to attend); Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights, study time, 7:30 PM until sometimes past midnight; Saturday for work and additional study and Sunday traveling to my preaching point. I usually teamed up with other students for study (especially Greek) at various homes (Eddie DeVries, Paul Crist, Herb Steen, etc.). Occasionally our study sessions lasted until the wee hours of the morning as we discussed deep and far-reaching theological questions, such as, "What all should a candidate be told to repent of before baptizing him?" I thoroughly enjoyed study, learning and class sessions, and sometimes even did more than was required for class assignments. At home I used a tiny room off our bedroom for a study. Once I stayed up all night studying for an extensive Life of Christ exam the next day . . . never even took off my clothes . . . just went straight to school when 7:00 AM came! All in all, my days spent at MSE were a wonderful experience and came to a close all too soon!

## **VISIT TO YOUNGSTOWN**

One of the highlights of that first year in school was the automobile trip back to Ohio to see my parents during the Christmas, 1951 break from classes. I had been back only twice since joining the Navy more than six years earlier. And, while Mom had met Bethel in May, 1949, after Tim was born, Dad had yet to meet her. But I had no doubt that he would love her, especially when he was able to see our love for each other. It was also the first time for him to meet the boys. I was not disappointed. We had a lovely visit and I cherish that occasion, since I was to see Dad alive only two more times in my life. But the 600-mile trip was rather scary. We drove on solid ice much of the way (Bethel driving) and on one occasion, as we gingerly pulled into a gas station to fill up, we slowly skidded right into the gas pump. No damage, but it was a very tense trip.

## **PART-TIME JOBS**

I held several different part-time jobs throughout my college years: Preparing purchase orders in a chicken hatchery office (.50 an hour); Cleaning and stocking shelves in department stores (.65 an hour); Mowing and weeding yards (including upkeep of the girls' dorm grounds); Building stone walls in front of people's yards (with Raymond Lyon). The busy school schedule, hard secular work and long hours of study, all took their toll on my health. I had to be hospitalized for a severe outbreak of my skin disease *twice* during my 3½ years in college. The first time was for two weeks at the VA Hospital at Des Moines, Iowa, near the end of the 1951-1952 school year; the second was near the close of the 1953-1954 school year. In both cases my semester grades in all courses were adjusted downward because of class sessions I had to miss. I remember, following one of those hospitalizations, we were having a tough time meeting our bills (with no part-time work income). One day brother Hunt came to our door with a couple of large sacks full of groceries. Another time the school secretary gave me an envelope one morning containing a \$10 bill . . . from an anonymous, fellow-student! It was this type of love and camaraderie that helped make our school years so pleasantly memorable!

## **STUDENT PREACHER**

From my very first year in school I began preaching wherever and as often as I could. I did well in Homiletics, so was eager to get out and preach. Besides, this was strongly emphasized by the faculty in chapel sermons and most of the other students were traveling from 10 to 200 miles to preach every week. My first sermon preached after going to school was at Kirkville, Iowa, a few miles from Ottumwa, on December 9, 1951. (I had preached two sermons while still living in Oregon, at the Gresham church). I preached 22 messages in 1952, 80 in 1953 and 101 in 1954, at 21 different places; 15 in southern Iowa and 6 in northern Missouri. The ingenious way we were able to get in to preach at various churches was to travel with another student to his preaching point, then ask the members there if they knew of any church nearby that needed a preacher. This usually led to a couple of good prospects. Then the following Sunday I would drive to that church (usually a small, rural congregation), getting there before anyone else arrived, and then asking the "main man" if I could preach that morning. Often they would welcome the opportunity, and sometimes this led to becoming their "regular preacher" for some months afterward. Many of these churches were woefully untaught and quite worldly. On one cold, winter Sunday

morning at a church in northern Missouri, the few men of the church (usually all farmers) had gathered around the potbellied stove in the building *to smoke!* At another place, the lady who fixed the Lord's Supper emblems didn't show up for church that Sunday, so they just did *without it!* At one place my car got stuck in *reverse* gear, so I had to stay overnight in the home of one of the members. The next morning I had to drive down the highway *backwards* for a number of miles to a garage in the next small town to get it fixed. I suppose there are people in those parts who still tell about seeing a car driving backwards down the road. But we were always invited to dinner and *sometimes* received enough money to pay our gas and meal expenses. (I averaged \$13.95 a Sunday for 1953, \$10.33 for 1954.). But income for preaching was *never* an issue with any of us students in those days, even after we got out of school and started preaching somewhere. If a church could not support us, we would get a "regular" job and work up to forty hours a week, while continuing to preach. Commitment to Christ, to the Lord's work and to evangelism were our primary concerns, not money. (Sadly, this attitude is rarely seen among young, aspiring preachers today!).

For a brief period I was preaching at *two* places every Sunday . . . during the Sunday School hour at the one, then hurrying to preach during the regular preaching hour at the other. The churches were about 10 miles apart on country roads, so I had to hurry to make it between services. One Sunday, as I was rushing (speeding?) to the second place I misjudged the upcoming "T" intersection, and was going too fast to stop. By the time my brakes got the car stopped, I was clear across the intersection . . . thankful to God that no car had been traveling the other way!

## **KIDS!**

During those very busy college days, little time was spent with my family other than the long drives to and from preaching points every Sunday, attending local church services and area meetings and rallies. But shortly after arriving in Ottumwa we decided to all go out for dinner one evening to celebrate our anniversary, and wanted to include the three boys. Tim was not yet 2½ and very excited about the prospect of eating in a *restaurant*, a rare practice for our family in those lean days. So, as we were dressing for the occasion, Tim called out to a friend, through the open bedroom window, "Hey, Jimmy, we're going to eat in a *restroom* tonight!" (We had stopped at plenty of those on our trip from Oregon). Another of Tim's "antics" was when we attended a revival meeting held by Marion McKee at a nearby town, Iconium. Tim was standing on the

pew between Bethel and me, and as McKee raised his voice to make a dramatic point, he asked a rhetorical question which required an obvious “Yes” answer. Just then, Tim looked at McKee and shouted out, “No!” Well, that brought down the house, with brother McKee finding it very difficult to continue his sermon.

Years later Tim graduated from Rocky Mountain College of Christ in Denver, and went on to establish a successful painting contracting company. He continues to use his keen sense of humor and art of story telling to great advantage in preaching occasionally and working with youth in camps and rallies each year.

## **AND MORE KIDS!**

Two more children were born during the 3½ years I spent in Bible college in Iowa. Sheila Sue (our girl, finally!) was born Aug. 29, 1952. Her middle name was after her two great-grandmothers (*Susie*). Having three boys already, we were really hoping for a girl this time (that was before the days when ultrasound could determine a child’s sex before birth). But it turned out to be the most difficult birth for Bethel, because her “water broke” some time before Sheila was born. Her doctor had known how much we wanted a girl, so in the delivery room when the baby was born, he held her up, exclaiming, “I got you a girl!” Yeah, right! Like he had anything to do with it! This was also before hospital policy allowed an expectant father even to go near the delivery room. After the traditional “pacing” in the waiting room for a long time, I recall “sneaking” down the hall to the delivery room door and trying to peek in the window! Well, a nurse saw me and rushed over to tell me I wasn’t allowed there and to go back to the waiting room! Sheila grew up to be a cute little girl and a very beautiful woman. I used to take her places with me, even to work at the newspaper office in Orlando, to “show her off!” I have always felt that special father/daughter relationship with *Sister Sue*, as I called her when she was little. Her special concern for her mother, especially in recent years, has also been a great blessing to us.

Then, on May 28, 1954 our fourth son was born, William John. It was Bethel’s suggestion to name him after me, and my idea to give him a middle name after his grandfather and great-grandfather Paul. (Billy carried on the name in his son, Jacob *John*). As a toddler, Billy was a “towhead,” and from his earliest years was a very rambunctious child! Being only seven months old when we left Iowa, he grew up in Florida. It seems as a child and teenager he was always in some kind of trouble, but when growing into manhood became a very responsible person, eventually learning the finish carpenter trade and developing his

own successful interior trim company. Also being an astute businessman, Billy has been a great blessing to Bethel and me in handling a number of our business affairs.

## **SEEING EYE TO EYE**

One incident that occurred shortly after enrolling in school seemed quite insignificant at the time, but may have proven to have had a lifelong impact on my interpersonal relationships. By then my skin disease had improved somewhat, but my scalp condition had worsened significantly. The bald spots on the sides of my head had enlarged so that I had hair mostly on the top (a little like the “Mohawk” haircuts of decades later). I recall very vividly one day standing in the administration building speaking with one of MSE’s respected faculty members. As we talked, instead of him looking at my face, he kept glancing up to my head, obviously distracted by the unsightly appearance caused by my scalp disease. This must have had a profound effect on me for I have never forgotten how I felt as he did this. Of course, he meant no harm, but from that time onward I began noticing how difficult it was for me to look people straight in the eye when we talked. That puzzled me for years, until in January, 1997 when I read an article by Bob Greene, fitness trainer for Oprah Winfrey. He pointed out why many people with a noticeable problem in their appearance had serious difficulty looking people in the eye. He said, “The feeling of embarrassment about their predicament is so great that they often avoid looking me in the eye.” I have often wondered how much this habit ever affected my interpersonal relationships, if at all!

## **TEACHING BIBLE CAMP**

A highlight of the summer of 1952 was the week I spent teaching a class on “The Plan of Salvation” at Camp Diagonal in southwestern Iowa. This was my first opportunity to serve in a Christian youth camp (I would later teach at or manage camps in Florida, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Minnesota, Colorado and Washington). Throughout my ministry I have sensed an affinity with young people and this is confirmed by the sizable number who have been influenced to enter a lifetime of Christian service under my leadership.

## **CALL THE COPS!**

During the summer months of 1953, while faculty member Burton Barber was away in gospel meetings, I was asked to replace him as preacher of the Ottumwa church, which met at the MSE

administration building at that time. The congregation was small (30 or so) and made up mostly of those students who were not yet out preaching or teaching on Sundays. But one local family consisted of Goldie Pierson and her granddaughter Carolyn Pontello. One night Goldie called me, frantically stammering that her adult son Roy had just escaped from the Wapello County Jail and was at her house, drunk! She wanted me to come immediately and do what I could. So fellow-student Frank Campbell and I rushed over, not knowing what to expect. We were finally able to convince Roy to let us drive him around Ottumwa, stopping at several places for coffee, until after midnight. (We were trying to sober him up). During that time we kept urging him to turn himself in, but he stoutly refused, even threatening violence if we tried to make him. Finally Roy called his brother and asked us to drive him over there. As we pulled up to the house, a police car swerved in front of us and two burly detectives jumped out, grabbed Roy, and handcuffed him. I was pretty shaken up as I stammered, “Officer, Uh . . . I’m . . . We’re just Bible college students. Uh . . . We were trying to get him to turn himself in . . . (Gulp) . . .” The detective replied, calmly, “We know all about it. His mother called us.” Roy was taken back to jail that night, but since he was the sole source of financial support for Goldie, I decided to go to the sheriff’s office the next day to see what I could arrange for his eventual release. He told me that he never made a decision in such cases until after thinking it over a few days. He showed me a huge book, containing Roy’s long criminal record . . . car theft, petty larceny, assault and battery, etc. So, Roy had to serve out the rest of his original sentence. But I was led to think about how his situation compared with ours . . . only God forgave us for our long record of offenses, because of Jesus. The happy ending to the story is that some years later, after we moved away, Roy became a Christian and served the Lord faithfully until he died. (Goldie’s granddaughter, Carolyn, later became an elder’s wife in Council Bluffs, Iowa).

On another occasion Goldie called me to rush over to her house because her son-in-law, Farrell, was wielding a butcher knife and threatening them with it. So I kissed Bethel “goodbye” and hurried off into the uncertain night! When I got there, no Farrell was to be found! It turned out to be only a small knife and Farrell was hiding in a closet. Sometimes the very presence of a preacher can cool off a rather volatile situation.

## **“GET OFF MY PROPERTY!”**

By August, 1953, as I began my third year of Bible college, I was asked to be the preacher at a very small congregation (20+) at Promise City, Iowa, a tiny village about 60 miles southwest of Ottumwa. Its building was quite large, having been built by the Disciples of Christ in previous days when the church was sizable. Our whole family drove down every Sunday morning, usually taking with us a single girl, who played the piano and taught children. I preached morning and evening, and spent most afternoons calling on church members or trying to make new contacts. Things went well until one Sunday when I preached a fiery sermon on “movie going.” One of the newer families, that had apparently been attending the movies, got up and walked out right in the middle of the sermon, obviously displeased! The man’s employer, Franklin Matsler, who had won him to the Lord, was also quite displeased with me. A few weeks later, after my family had returned from a trip to Florida (to consider moving there to preach), I had a letter from the church waiting for me, explaining that my services were no longer desired. In other words, after having preached there for eleven months, I had been fired! So the next day I drove to Promise City to speak with brother Matsler about the matter. After a heated discussion, in which he told me, “You missed your calling. You never should have been a preacher!” it appeared he was about to hit me. So I took off my glasses and said, “If you want to hit me, go ahead, I won’t fight with you!” I’m sure that did nothing to cool off the situation, for he then pushed me into my car and ordered me off his property! I cried most of the way home, wondering if he might have been right. A week later a meeting was called at the office of MSE to resolve the situation. Besides brother Matsler and me, it was also attended by Donald Hunt, a faculty member, and Dale Williamson, a visiting preacher. We discussed my ministry at Promise City and *that sermon* in particular. As I was going over my sermon notes, explaining point by point, suddenly brother Matsler lunged toward me, grabbed the notes, crumpled them up and threw them on the floor. Of course, that ended the discussion, and the meeting. Upon leaving the meeting, I was so discouraged over the whole situation that I seriously considered dropping out of school and forgetting about becoming a preacher. It was Dale who reasoned with me. He called my attention to several ways in which I had already been used of God, including winning several people to Christ since coming to school. He urged me to go on serving the Lord as best I could. Well, it turned out that I continued my schooling and went on to have a ministry that spanned five decades! I hasten to record, happily, that eleven years later,



at a Centerville Rally, brother Matsler and I were fully reconciled. In fact, he and his good wife later visited us in Florida where we took them around to see all the sights and he even preached for me in the Orlando Church. He passed away a few years later and I look forward to renewing fellowship with him in heaven!

## **PREACH IN FLORIDA?**

One day, during the spring semester of 1954, as I walked into brother Hunt's Greek class at MSE, I was approached by a fellow student, Lee Cooper, "Bill, how would you like to go to Florida to preach?" It seems someone in the newly formed congregation at Orlando had contacted Lee about moving there to lead the work. But Lee's desire was to head north, not south. He had been converted in Alaska and had thought of returning there to labor. (As it turned out he went to Montana upon graduation). When I indicated I would consider it, I soon began receiving correspondence from Emery Drake, a member of the Orlando church. This led to my whole family making a brief trip to Orlando in July 1954, where I preached four days and held lengthy discussions with the men about doctrinal and ministry matters. It was on this same trip to Florida that we swung through Ohio for a quick visit with Mom and Dad (our second one). After returning to Iowa I received word that the church wanted us to come. I had gotten unsolicited, positive recommendations from Malburt Prater (a preacher whom we had met on our trip from Oregon to Iowa), Burl Shoemake (a preacher I had met in Oregon) and Jim Beck (a fellow student). All three of these men were known and respected by several families of the Orlando church. The only "catch" was that they wanted us to make the move *right away!* The church had been going for about two years and had not yet had a resident preacher. A few internal problems were developing, so they were anxious to get a trained man on the field. Now I still had one more year of school before graduation, but because of their strong insistence that we move there as soon as possible, I agreed to finish my last semester by correspondence and then make the move during the Christmas break in December, 1954. I graduated with the class of 1955 (B.S.L.) in absentia (again!), and then went on to earn the B.Th. (1977) and the M.S.L. (1978) from MSE for additional studies.

## **BOGUS!**

By the fall of 1954 I was not preaching anywhere regularly (having been terminated from Promise City in July). By September the small church in Abingdon, Iowa (15-20 members), about 20 miles east of

Ottumwa, contacted me about preaching there. (Since the tiny town had once been the location of a counterfeit money operation, it had earned the dubious nickname *Bogus*). By this time I was already planning to move to Florida in December, but agreed to go to Abingdon on an interim basis for my final three months in the area. One cold, Sunday morning, when I arrived at Abingdon to preach, I was informed that the unsaved brother-in-law of the only man in the congregation had committed suicide in a house just down the block from the church building! And they wanted me to conduct the funeral! (It would have been my first). The poor man had lain down in bed and propped a shotgun against the bed, then pulled the trigger, splattering his brains all over the ceiling! I had to go ahead with the service while brother Davis went to clean up the place. As it turned out, they got someone else to do the funeral.

This is the same church where the communion emblems were passed by two *women* every Sunday! Brother Davis, the only man in the church gave the communion talk, and then the ladies passed the trays. That wasn't so bad, but one of the ladies got up one Sunday and announced that we were going to take up an impromptu love offering for the lady who cleaned the building every week. The little old cleaning lady spoke up, meekly, "No, that's not necessary. I don't mind doing the cleaning for nothing. I'm just glad to do it." But Eula insisted, so began passing the collection plate. Although I was glad to contribute money, somehow I didn't feel good about this lady "running the church." After all, *I* was supposed to be the preacher!

Then from December 5 through 12, 1954 I conducted an eight-day evangelistic meeting to close out my ministry there before we moved to Florida. (This would be the first of 12 such meetings that I would conduct over the years). Perhaps the best thing to come out of that meeting was that I arranged for a newly arrived Bible college student to lead the singing each night and, along with his wife, to bring special music before each service . . . Lafe and Anita Culver. Lafe became their next preacher and went on to have a very fruitful ministry at Abingdon over the next several years.

## **FLORIDA BOUND!**

So, once again we started out, pulling my homemade utility trailer behind our newly acquired, three-year-old 1951 DeSoto. It was packed to the hilt with our belongings, which by this time included a growing number of books I had accumulated while in college. Since Iowa weather is traditionally not too pleasant near the end of December,

we headed out *on ice*! The trip was safe and pleasant, however, and we arrived in sunny Orlando, Florida, the day before Christmas, 1954. This was to be our home and a bittersweet ministry for the next 12½ years.

# 1954-1967

## ORLANDO, FLORIDA

### STRUGGLING PREACHER

#### FIRST CHURCH

We were greeted on December 24, 1954 by a warm welcome from the small, 27-member Union Park Church of Christ that met at 1919 Harrell Road, Orlando, Florida. (Union Park was the name of the unincorporated village nearby). They had agreed to support us with \$25 a week, but no additional benefits. We were able to supplement this amount with a small, fluctuating disability compensation check and \$15 a week child support payment for Bennie and Terry. The church had rented for us a small two-bedroom, cement block house in a semi-rural area just east of the church building, with no heating system whatever. We paid \$50 a month for it and lived there the first year. We were now in our first located ministry! We loved the climate, the scenery and the people, and were happy to have a place to fulfill our desire to serve the Lord! By now our "little" family had grown: Bennie (12), Terry (11), Tim (5), and now included our long awaited daughter, Sheila Sue (2) and my (and Dad's) namesake, William John (7 months).

#### AN ACTIVE MINISTRY

I soon busied myself with a very full schedule of ministry activities. I preached Sunday morning and evening; taught the midweek Bible study; spent many afternoons calling door-to-door in the community; led the youth group (regular weekly meetings and special training classes); often took the youth group to sing at rest homes on Sunday afternoons; taught special Homiletics classes for the men; conducted filmstrip teaching appointments in the evenings (I began using the Jule Miller series in 1957) and edited, printed and mailed out a bimonthly publication. Over the years to come I would also conduct periodic training classes for calling and song leading. Also I did much calling on prospects in preparation for the yearly (and sometimes more often) evangelistic meetings conducted by well-known preachers. For the record they were: *Burl Shoemake* (June 19-July 3, 1955); *James Brown* (Dec. 13, 1955-Jan.1, 1956); *Lee Turner* (June 1957); *Burton Barber* (July 23-Aug. 6, 1958); *Eddie DeVries* (Oct. 11-Nov. 1, 1959); *Eddie DeVries* (Oct. 16-Nov. 6, 1960); *Bob Chambers* (Apr. 23-May 7, 1961); *Lafe Culver* (Dec. 17-24, 1962); *Bill Herndon* (Nov. 4-18, 1962); *Donald Hunt* (May 23-June 5, 1963); *Eddie DeVries* (Nov. 3-17, 1963); *Don*

*Pinon* (Apr. 19-May 3, 1964); *Eddie DeVries* (May 23-June 5, 1965) and *James Gibbons* (May 22-June 2, 1966). I usually led all the song services for such meetings, called every afternoon with the visiting preacher and then conducted follow-up teaching appointments in homes with the new contacts for several months following the meeting.

## WRITING CAREER BEGINS

Because Florida was so distant from the majority of congregations in our fellowship in those days (most were in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest), it was suggested to me by Dale Williamson, then the preacher in Lexington, NE, that I mail out a newsletter to keep people informed of the Florida work. It would be called News and Truths (“News” of the congregation and “Truths” in the form of articles by various writers). The first issue (February 1955) was mimeographed by Dale in Nebraska and sent to me to mail out from Orlando to about 150 friends and acquaintances all across the country. By the second issue I had acquired my own mimeograph machine and so my publication ministry, which would become a significant part of my lifelong work, was off and running. (News and Truths was the fourth such paper published by our fellowship at that time). The paper was to “move” with me to three more states over the next 26 years, change its name and format, add other personnel and increase to more than 7000 circulation, including a number of foreign countries, before being discontinued in 1981 due to excessive postal costs and the increasing demands on my time! Commercially printed (eventually) and sent out with a Second Class postal permit, this bimonthly publication served to encourage many to visit Florida for rallies and camps, and helped build for me a broader base of friendships among the preachers whom I solicited as writers. These contacts also led to my being invited to preach in meetings, camps and rallies throughout the country over the years.

With the beginning of News and Truths in February, 1955, my literary career was launched. In July 1963 I published my first booklet (1,000 copies), a 16-page work dealing with Biblical teaching on clothing and cosmetics for women, titled *Feminine Adornment as Taught in the New Testament*. I designed the cover and had the booklet offset printed by the same company that was then producing News and Truths. The booklet became the definitive position on the subject within our fellowship in those days, perhaps succeeding an earlier treatment of the topic by Burton Barber, the 1952 booklet *The Christian Lady and the Use of Makeup*.

By the early 60s there was much national fervor being roused over the threat of Communism. Books and even church periodicals contained articles pointing out imminent dangers to our American way of life by the encroaching signs of socialism in our society. I attended all of the anti-Communism speakers who came to Orlando and soon got caught up in championing the conservative causes being articulated by Barry Goldwater, ("Mr. Conservative"), the 1964 Republican presidential candidate. It was about then that the book, *None Dare Call It Treason*, by John Stormer, began circulating. Feeling this book was an invaluable asset in alerting people to the dangers of Communism, I began to run ads in college and university campus newspapers all over the country, offering a free copy to every student who wrote me. The first mail response I received contained requests for 75 copies! In all I distributed more than 3,600 free copies all over America! The project, called "Books for Students," was personally financed by me and several other individuals who shared these same convictions (no church money was ever used). I even wrote to prominent political figures, seeking their endorsement of the book (I have personal letters from J. Edgar Hoover, Strom Thurmond, John Tower, and others).

In 1965 I began focusing greater attention on reaching people in the immediate vicinity of the Union Park church building. I began a mimeographed publication, The Mailbox Minister, mailing out free copies to some 1600 homes in the area. Among other services of the church, it offered a free Bible correspondence course, and within a few months I was sending out such courses to dozens of families and conducting a class on how to follow-up on these contacts.

My second attempt at writing books was the publication of *Telling on God* (February 1967), a 95-page devotional booklet containing 49 personal testimonies of the goodness of God. These were written mostly by personal friends who had responded to an appeal placed in News and Truths. I rewrote each testimony before compiling them into this popular booklet, which was used by some in their daily devotional time. Again, I utilized my interest in commercial art by designing the cover.

Other items of Christian literature I wrote and sent out, mostly to readers of News and Truths, were: *Outline of Contents of the Old Testament*, *Outline of Contents of the New Testament*, *The Three States of Man*, etc. I also sent out many tracts and books written by others, including excellent study notes written by Bethel, *The Christian Girl and Courtship* and *The Christian Wife*.

## LOSING MY DAD

The first parent of either Bethel's or mine to pass away was my Dad. (Bethel's mother died at age 61 and her father at 72, both of heart disease). One spring evening in 1955, during a midweek prayer meeting at the Union Park church, someone came into the building during our prayer time, to inform me that Dad had had a stroke and I was to call home. (They had tracked me down by calling another "Church of Christ" in Orlando, since we had no phone). I immediately called Ohio from a member's house across the street from the church building and found out Dad's condition was serious, but not critical at that moment. I was led to believe that he would not make it, however. I remember so vividly the emotions I felt that night as I walked out on the front lawn of Chet Mullins' home and looked up at the sky. I have never been an emotional person and very rarely cry. But that night I was losing my father, and I cried! In reality, he "died" that very night *in my heart*, even though it would be another month or so before he actually passed away. So I caught the next plane for Ohio and found Dad barely able to move about and had the characteristic partial paralysis on one side and was completely unable to speak! This was a very difficult time for me, as I was frustrated at not being able to communicate with him. But he was still lucid so I made what amounted to the only real attempt to speak to him about Christ, "Dad, do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" I will never forget the sad look on his face as he shook his head . . . no! I returned to Florida in a few days only to be called back to Ohio a month later as he lay dying in the hospital. The terse telegram from Margaret said "Dad critical at Southside Hospital. Lung collapsed. Come as soon as possible." Mom and I were there when he took his last breath at 8:45 PM . . . his lungs collapsing from cancer . . . on June 10, 1955. I was asked to conduct the funeral, my first, a few days later at Alliance, where he was buried. Surprisingly, it was not too difficult for me, since I had already come to grips with losing Dad at the young age of 53 there in Orlando over a month earlier.

## LIVING DANGEROUSLY

For a couple that was raised in Oregon and Ohio, Florida was quite an eye-opener for Bethel and me! Besides the obvious differences . . . warm winter climate, palm trees, orange groves, sandy soil and the generally laid-back lifestyle, there were some real *surprises*! One of the first things we were warned about was the snakes! There are only four kinds of poisonous snakes in the continental United States, and *all four* live in Florida . . . Diamondback rattlesnake, Cottonmouth water

moccasin, Copperhead and Coral! We were strongly cautioned *always* to watch where we walked, especially at night! One Wednesday night, during midweek prayer service, Bethel killed a deadly poisonous Coral snake in the breezeway at the church building, right in front of the restroom door! (That lady is absolutely fearless!). Another time Bennie and Terry tracked and killed a Diamondback rattler which measured *over six feet*, with its head cut off! (They regret to this day being forbidden by their mother from going after an even *bigger one!*). Then Bennie heard that a person could obtain a special license (free) to trap *alligators!* He worked at a grocery store and was able to get discarded meat, with which he baited traps that he tied to thick brush at the edge of a nearby lake. He would go to check his gator traps every day, until one day he discovered the brush all beaten down and the traps gone! That was the big one that got away! Another time when I was working on the church building with some other men, one of them pointed to the back of my T-shirt, and shouted, “Look, a *scorpion!*” Of course, I got the shirt off fast, and never did get stung by the two-inch long critter! At one Sunday service a *skunk* walked right into the church building, through the open front door! It ambled over and parked itself in a bookshelf where we kept our song books. Two of the braver men cautiously crept over to the bookshelf and slowly carried it to the front door, shelf side out. Our friendly skunk ambled on back to the palmetto brush, with nary a scent! After a few experiences like these, it’s hardly worth mentioning the fire ants (bit the kids a few times), the huge palmetto bugs (zipped through the air in our first house when turning on the lights after coming home from church), the gnats (which I occasionally swallowed while preaching) and the spiders (which always terrified Sheila when finding one on her bedroom wall)! About the only other strange creatures that “entertained” us without producing dread or fear were the large gopher turtles and chameleons. The turtles were about a foot in diameter and lived in holes they dug in the sandy soil (which snakes loved to occupy also). When the kids were small, they loved riding on their backs! They tied strings to the tails of the chameleons (actually they were “swifts” or “skinks”) and “wore” them on their clothes, “delighting” all the girls at school! O, yes, Bethel once bought a six-inch-long baby alligator for the boys (for \$1) from some guys who were in the practice of capturing them. It proved to be a barrel of fun!

## **OLD “MR. WHISKERS”**

Called “Mr. Whiskers” by the kids, he was a “bum” I picked up somewhere and brought home. (I had done this on several occasions



during our days in Bible college). He was a very shy, homeless man with a long beard and only the clothes on his back. We told him he could sleep in our utility trailer (it had a cover on it by now) in the back yard in exchange for spading our garden. But one of the first things he needed was a bath. So we filled the tub and sent him into the bathroom. He was in there for a long time, but we could not hear any noise, like water splashing, or anything. Finally, I called in “What are you doing in there?” He mumbled something, so I called back, “Rub soap all over yourself . . . then rinse it off!” Apparently, he didn’t even know how to take a bath. Finally, I opened the bathroom door and there he stood, in the tub, clothes still on! After that it was “barber shop” time. I sat him in a chair and began cutting off his long beard. Things went well as I snipped off chunks of whiskers, until he hollered, “Ouch!” It seems I got a little too close with the scissors. Next Bethel offered to do his laundry while I let him wear some of my clothes. It was while going through his pants pockets (containing loose tobacco, gum wrappers, a few pennies, etc.) that I came across his Social Security card . . . which read “Sherman.” So after Bethel washed his pants (which turned out to be wool) and he put them on, we all howled . . . they came half way up to his knees! What a sight the poor old guy was! When Sunday came, of course we took him to church with us. When the Lord’s Supper emblems were passed, he must have thought it was a continental breakfast, for he gobbled down *the whole piece* of loaf on the tray passed to him! Well, we put up with the guy for a week or so more, then decided he had to go. He didn’t seem to know how to use a shovel and just stood around. So I told him I would take him back to town, but he didn’t want that (apparently he had been ushered to the city limits by the police). Then I told him I would buy him a bus ticket for Gainesville. But on the way he insisted, “The Lord told me you were supposed to send me to Jacksonville!” That did it. I told him that the Lord had said no such thing, and that I was sending him to Gainesville, period! (being a lot closer, the ticket would be cheaper). When we got to the bus station, I had to literally push him up the steps into the bus. Then I told the driver, “Don’t let this guy off until you get to Gainesville!” That was the last we ever saw of poor old “Mr. Whiskers!”

## **REFUNDING THE RENT**

It seems we were always being bombarded with people wanting a “handout” in those days . . . and ours seems to have been “out” quite often. One day a whole family of strangers, traveling in a broken down old car, came along wanting food and/or money, as usual. But this time

the problem was complicated by the small children (two or three of them) all having chicken pox as well! The kids were sucking on a pop bottle, which somehow failed to impress us with the family's frugality. They had come from Hershey, PA and were looking for a place to stay, food and a job, in that order. They had found a large, empty house and asked if we could help them with the rent until the man got a job and could pay us back. So we paid for one month's rent (\$40 in cash), which they gave to the landlord and moved in with their few belongings. (This was "our" money since the church had no benevolent fund for meeting such needs). We also gave them some money for food, urging them to buy bread and lunch meat with it, *not* pop or candy! The plan was for me to return the next day and take the man around looking for work. But when I got to the rental house the next day, the family was gone! When I enquired from the landlord next door, he said, "O, they said they needed to head back home to Pennsylvania and asked for their rent money back! So I gave it to them!" Over the years to follow, it has proved very difficult *not* to grow increasingly more cynical toward the countless number of people who have sought us out for help. But, I always reasoned that, even if the people rip you off, Jesus taught us that God takes account of our sincere effort and views it as an expression of genuine concern for the needy.

## **CHURCH CONFLICTS DEVELOP**

Shortly after arriving at the Union Park church, I detected that all was not well between some of the families of the congregation. Several of the men had been doing all of the preaching since the founding of the church two years earlier, and that had led to problems. The issues were not clearly defined, but seemed to revolve around leadership styles and stands taken on matters of worldliness, fellowship, denominationalism, etc. The strong, sometimes negative preaching some of the men had heard at rallies in Indiana and Iowa had set the tone for their own preaching style. And with so few people (approximately 25), there was never much doubt about who was being targeted by a particular sermon. This was partly why they were so insistent that I come without delay.

By early 1956 an older preacher, H. N. Solliday, stopped by the church to preach, on his way back from a short term mission trip to Nassau, Bahamas. That Sunday night a very heated argument between several of the men had erupted in the church parking lot, and was easily seen and heard by everyone present. Brother Solliday remarked years later that he had questioned whether the small congregation would survive through such an ordeal. Of course, it was frustrating to me as I

pondered what to do or say that would remedy the volatile situation. But I *knew* I had to do *something*! Since preaching, instead of personal counseling, was the accepted method for dealing with problems and problem people in those days, I determined I would bring a message in an attempt to settle the conflict. The next Sunday's sermon was titled, "Ye Are Yet Carnal!" from I Corinthians 3:3. Well, it was one of the fieriest sermons I have ever preached, and in spite of being young (29), overzealous and very inexperienced, the Lord used the message. *All three men* of the congregation came forward and reconciled their differences! While the basic problem did not entirely disappear, the church survived the crisis and was able to keep going all these years since. Praise the Lord!

### **“FOREIGN MISSIONARY”**

While still living in Oregon I had met a preacher named Floyd Hughes, who was now was serving two congregations in Nassau, Bahamas. Since the Bahamas Islands, then a British-governed territory, were only 50 miles off the Florida Coast, it was common in those days for American “missionaries” from Caribbean countries to stop by Orlando to preach, shop, and enjoy fellowship with the Union Park church when they were in the states. When Floyd and his family stopped by in the summer of 1955, it renewed our acquaintance and opened the way for me to be invited for a meeting in Nassau the following year. The 11-day meeting (July 5-15, 1956) was a rich experience, and would instill in me a lifelong concern for foreign evangelism. I preached at both the Grantstown and Coconut Grove churches, as well as conducting street meetings drawing several hundred persons. The congregations were both very small and were made up entirely of blacks. One morning during the song service at Grantstown a shabbily-dressed man walked in and sat down on a curved, wooden pew near the back. He must have been drunk for he soon created such a disturbance that a couple of the men ushered him out, but not before he left a puddle of kerosene on the pew that had spilled from a bottle in his pocket. Just then a very nicely dressed young woman came in and made her way toward that *same* pew and was about to sit down! The song leader saw what was about to happen, so thinking quickly, asked the congregation to all stand, while someone then rushed over to catch the lady before she sat down in the puddle of kerosene. A close call, indeed. Then, one night following the service at Grantstown, while Floyd was transporting people home in his “carry-all” van, I was standing on the front steps waiting for him to return. About then, another drunk man staggered up the steps, looking

like he wanted to enter the church building. I quickly told him, “Services are over for the evening, come back tomorrow night.” But he was very insistent and tried to walk past me into the building, mumbling something I couldn’t understand. So I instinctively reached up my hands to restrain him, but he pushed forward all the more. Pretty soon we were doing a “tango” on the church steps . . . when it hit me! So, I let go of his wrists as he staggered on into the building and placed a shilling into the offering box, then left! It seems that the Anglican Church in the Bahamas had somehow instilled a “pay your way” religion into the masses, without succeeding in getting them to really understand the commitment required by the gospel.

Then on October 17, 1957, we received the tragic news that Floyd had died suddenly from a strep throat infection that had affected his heart. He was only 38. Bethel and I immediately flew to Nassau, she, to console Floyd’s grieving wife Alice, and I, to carry on the preaching responsibilities of the two congregations. I conducted the funeral on October 19, 1957 at the Grantstown church building, which was packed, including even a couple of Anglican ministers. After the long, slow motorcade to the cemetery, which included several hearses, we found a large crowd gathered at the tent-covered grave site. In stark contrast, the very next day I was called upon to conduct the funeral of an 8-month-old baby girl of one of the black ladies of the Grantstown church, sister Mott. The only ones present besides myself, were the baby’s mother, an older sister and a male friend who drove the car used for transporting the tiny casket to the cemetery. The child looked like a doll in the open casket, but I noticed water droplets beginning to trickle down its little face . . . the body had been chilled only, not embalmed. A few flies began circling! After placing the tiny casket into his car’s trunk, the male friend raced through the narrow streets, honking his horn to avoid hitting someone! When we arrived at the burial site, it turned out to be a large rocky field. After spreading out to look for the pre-dug grave, one of us finally found the shallow, three-foot-deep hole in the ground! When the male friend and I tried to place the casket into the hole, it wouldn’t fit. So we dug around the edges with sticks until it finally fit the hole. After a Scripture reading and prayer of committal, we all began covering it up with dirt. Looking around, I picked a small wild flower, which I placed on the grave!

I remained in Nassau for three weeks before Gordon Thompson came over from Puerto Rico to relieve me. In the succeeding months I made extensive efforts to find someone to move to the Bahamas to carry on the work. I corresponded with almost a dozen preachers throughout

the country trying to recruit a replacement for Floyd. This effort earned me the derogatory nickname “bishop” from certain elements on the island who wanted to retain control of the work. Finally, Ed McSpadden agreed to go, and was even making preparations, when his efforts were ultimately thwarted by ministers of the Christian Church in the states. When I made a third trip to Nassau in 1960 to discuss the matter with Alice, it was mutually agreed that McSpadden’s going would probably prove disruptive, so several Christian Church preachers eventually moved there to carry on the work.

### **“THIS OLE HOUSE”**

By the summer of 1956 we learned of a house for rent, on ten acres, that seemed too good of a deal to pass up. It was located on a dirt (sand) road (Millinockett Lane) nearer the church building, but in an area with very few homes nearby. (On an adjoining acreage, about half a mile away in a secluded pine woods, was an unpainted cement block building where a Ku Klux Klan group met, using the “front” name, “The Seventh Club!”). Our house was a very old, termite-eaten, single-story, frame structure that stood up off the ground on cement blocks so you could see under it. The old couple who had lived there had to go to a nursing home, so their children rented it to us for only \$25 a month (half what we had been paying)! Of course it was very rundown and needed a lot of work, especially painting. But the spacious “yard” covered with scrub palmetto brush and live oak trees (hanging with Spanish moss) appealed to the kids, so we decided to move. The three years we lived there were among the most adventurous of our entire married life, and the kids just loved it! The three school boys had to walk almost a mile down the sand road to catch their bus. It meant a daily trek which included crossing a small bridge over a creek, with the prospect of snakes and even alligators! It was scary but just the kind of thing Bennie, Terry and Tim thrived on. It was right across the road where they later killed their six-foot rattlesnake, with the help of a hermit-like neighbor named “Newt.” (No, he was not the Speaker of the House). The poor man’s lower jaw had been partially removed because of cancer (he was an avid tobacco chewer).

This old house had only three bedrooms, and one was very tiny (about 6’X9’) where Sheila slept. The biggest bedroom had two beds, a large double bed where Bennie and Terry slept, and a single bed where Tim and Billy slept, *their heads at each end!* One night while Bethel and I were out on a Bible study, Bennie and Terry were wrestling on the bed, something they were very fond of doing. Only this night their scuffle led to one leg of the bed breaking through the termite-eaten floorboards!

What were they to do? Whatever it was, they had to do *something* before Mom and Dad got home! So one of them crawled way back under the house in the pitch dark, and with the other holding a flashlight, dragged pieces of cement block and bricks with him and stacked them up even with the place where the bed leg went through the floor. Bethel and I never learned of their ingenuity until several years later when they “confessed.” (And, fortunately, they didn’t encounter any snakes under the house!).

The kitchen had apparently been “added on” at some point because it was a low, sloping, shed-type roof that leaked when it rained, which was nearly every afternoon during the summer monsoon season. But Bethel knew right where the leaks were, so quickly placed pans at the seven appropriate spots to catch the drips. The floorboards in our bedroom had cracks between them, so you could sometimes see a blade of grass trying to make its way into the house. I used to kid her that we didn’t have to vacuum the bedroom floor, we just mowed it!

Our water came from a shallow (32’ deep) well beside the back steps. It was quite orangish-colored at times (tannic acid), especially when coming from the hot water heater. It turned your fingernails reddish-brown and smelled like rotten eggs (and tasted worse). Once when Lee Turner was with us for a three-week gospel meeting (June 1957), he remarked that, when taking a bath, you had to soap up, rinse off, then flap your arms in the water and jump out before the tannic acid could “close in on you.” But that was not the only water problem we had in that house. It seems the pump, which was located against the house right outside the back door, had a defective solenoid switch, so that when the water was running, invariably the pressure decreased until the flow would slow down to a trickle and finally stop. Now this became very aggravating, especially when you were sitting in the bath tub, all soaped up! But we had learned that if you smacked the side of the pump casing a good one, the motor would kick in and begin humming away, pumping water once again! So, a common sound from the bathroom, intended for whoever was near enough to hear it, was the shout, “Hiiiiiiiit the puuuuump!” What a surprised look we got from visiting preachers when we explained this procedure to them!

Speaking of visiting preachers, we had another hilarious experience while Lee was with us for that meeting. On rest day I usually took the preacher around the area to show him the sights. This always included a trip to Cape Canaveral and the Atlantic ocean beach (Cocoa Beach). So Lee and I spent a day enjoying the surf, the sights, the salty smell and the sea shells. Several days after this outing brother Turner

informed us of a strange odor he was noticing in the small bedroom he was occupying. Of course, this was very embarrassing to Bethel and me. So we checked the plumbing, the refrigerator, the trash cans, inspected all of our shoes, searched for rotten fruit and even looked for a dead animal in the yard. No luck! The next morning poor Lee reluctantly had to tell us the odor was worse! What were we to do? So Lee and I went out and dug down to see if the septic tank lid may have become dislodged, or if it had overflowed. It wasn't that either! And there were still a number of days left in the meeting. By now we had determined that the smell had to be coming from *Lee's bedroom!* Poor Lee! Poor us! Finally, I looked under his bed, and there it was . . . a coffee can half full of once *living* seashells Lee had collected when we were down at the beach!

The main thing Bennie, Terry, Tim, Sheila and Billy loved about this place was all the outdoor space in which they could run, play, explore, raise a garden and . . . keep chickens! So I put up some chicken wire and we got a few baby chicks. (No, I wasn't returning to my chicken farming days!). We also obtained a strange little creature from "Newt" next door. He raised chickens, turkeys and guinea hens, and I think this critter was a cross between two of those three animals, if that's possible (he called it a "turken"). Anyway, "George" as the kids named him, was kind of cute in a gross sort of way, with his long, scraggly neck . . . with no feathers on it! And when he got his neck caught in the fence one time, it left him all the more disfigured, including a distorted croaking cackle! But he became a dearly loved pet of the kids. In fact, he even became "part of the family." When we went into the back door of the house, "George" hopped in along behind us before we could close the screen door. What was I to do? Either keep him *out* all the time, or figure out a way to avoid an "accident" *in* the house. So I rigged up a little diaper for him to wear. The funniest thing was watching him shaking his legs, first one, then the other . . . trying to rid himself of this strange (but necessary) "outfit!"

The kids enjoyed this place so much that they were actually sad when, in 1959, we moved into a brand new home in a nice subdivision.

## **BITING THE HAND . . .**

Bethel's health was not the best in those days. She was doing a great job caring for our growing family and coping with less than ideal living conditions. Her doctor told her she needed hemorrhoid surgery. But we had no medical insurance or savings, so that meant taking out a loan (the total cost was to be about \$350) and pay it back as best we

could. Along about then I received a phone call from Bob Ruby, a 16-year-old boy whom I had baptized several years earlier while still a student in Bible college. He was at the Orlando Greyhound bus station, with his 15-year-old “wife,” and wanted me to pick him up. So we kept them for a week or so, while he “tried” to look for work. One evening at the supper table we were talking about the \$350 we had borrowed and banked, and Bethel’s upcoming operation in a few more weeks. Then I was called away unexpectedly to Lyerly, Georgia to conduct the funeral for Foye Kitchings, a lady who had once been a part of the Union Park church. While I was gone, Bethel drove Bob around looking for work every day. On one such occasion she stopped at a phone booth to make a call, leaving Bob and his “wife” in the car. Later when letting him out of the car he told her she didn’t need to pick them up that evening as they would find a way home for supper. So Bethel urged them to write a postcard to tell their parents where they were, but when opening her purse to give them some change for a postcard to write home, she noticed all of her change was gone! She just *knew* she had change that morning because she saw it when giving the children lunch money for school. After she got home and thought it over, she looked in our checkbook and sure enough, two blank checks were *missing*! (I *never* used checks without informing Bethel). The next morning she was waiting at the front door of our bank when it opened, and stopped payment on the stolen checks! Bob and his “wife” had planned to leave and not come back that day (they were even wearing two sets of clothing). A few weeks later our bank received back two checks with my name *forged* on them! When I reported this to a Justice of the Peace in Orlando, he bawled me out, “What kind of a preacher are you . . . wanting to have someone arrested?” Some months later we heard the police caught up with Bob somewhere in Wyoming. He had a long string of forgeries to his discredit!

## **LAST CHILD BORN**

By the spring of 1958 Bethel was expecting our sixth child, whom we named Daniel Warren, born October 11, 1958. (His middle name was in honor of Warren Bell, the preacher who baptized me). I recall the night he was born, going out in front of the Orange Memorial Hospital and looking east (toward Cape Canaveral, 50 miles away) to watch the orange fireball of one of the early manned space flight missiles piercing the night sky.

Dan was only nine years old when we moved from Florida to Gering, Nebraska, ten when we moved to North Platte, Nebraska and



twelve when we moved to Denver. I'm sure all these moves during his formative years proved detrimental to his early development. That, along with being the last of six children, no doubt contributed to the direction his life took in his teen years and following.

In about 1962, Bethel seventh pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage. In a way I think that was fortunate, since we had our hands full with our five boys and a girl!

## **WORK FOR NEWSPAPER**

Just before Dan was born I was receiving \$35 a week from the church, so with his birth we just needed more income to live on as our family was now quite large, even by 50s' standards. I worked for a few months as a door-to-door office equipment salesman, selling typewriters and adding machines. But this job was so time-consuming and brought such little income, I decided to look elsewhere. So I landed a part-time job for Orlando's only newspaper, the Orlando Sentinel-Star, driving their Volkswagen van, picking up mail, news photos, stock market reports and running errands for the publisher. I began in August 1958 working three 10-hour days, Monday through Wednesday. This was an ideal arrangement for it left me Thursday through Sunday for church work. I enjoyed the work, driving only in the daytime and along well-known city streets, and it worked out well for about four years, when the church increased my income to \$50 a week and Bennie had left for college, and eventually to live in Oregon. (An extra blessing of this job was meeting and converting a fellow-employee Don Spencer, who later attended Bible college and became a preacher).

## **BRAND NEW HOME**

We had to leave the old house on Millinockett Lane because the owners wanted to move back in, so looked into using my GI loan privileges for purchasing a house again. That was at the height of the housing boom Orlando was experiencing as a result of the space program at Cape Canaveral, only 50 miles away. We found a beautiful, brand new, three-bedroom, cement block house in a subdivision called Monterey Homes. It was on a lovely landscaped corner lot and had half a dozen tall Southern pine trees. For \$97 closing costs and \$70 a month payments, we moved in the summer of 1959. Even though the kids were pretty disappointed over leaving the large acreage, they eventually adjusted, since it afforded a new school, new friends, opportunity for bicycle riding and generally more comfortable quarters. For Bethel and me the amenities were welcome conveniences, all new kitchen

appliances, two bathrooms (one in our master bedroom), laundry room, covered car port and virtually no upkeep! It also afforded me an “office” in the *corner of the living room!* While this arrangement provided little quiet or privacy for study, it did allow me to be “at home” a good share of the time! We were able to live there until leaving Florida eight years later, in 1967.

But with “city life” came different kinds of hazards. On Tim’s 16th birthday (May 19, 1965), and shortly before Billy’s 11th (May 28), Billy was riding his bike down the block, when he was suddenly struck by something that knocked him to the street. A nurse friend, living on the same street, rushed him and Bethel to a hospital emergency room. When I got there, I was horrified to see a *three-inch wire* protruding straight out of his face, just below his right eye! It turned out to be a thick, rusty piece of chain link fence that had been picked up by a rotary power lawnmower and “boomeranged” into Billy’s face as he rode by a house! To make things worse, the wire was shaped in a right angle, with the “invisible” three-inch portion (containing a “hook” on it) lodged *inside his face*, across his sinus cavity toward his nose! At the hospital I was standing outside the operating room behind a group of surgeons who were examining Billy’s X-ray, mounted on a lighted screen. Several of them were shaking their heads and mumbling something about the seriousness of the problem. When I identified myself as the boy’s father, they immediately changed their tone to one of optimism . . . one of them even saying, “The way it went in is the same way we’ll take it out.” The operation was a success, with the surgeon having to “unwind” the wire from the muscle below his eye. Of course, Billy still has “floaters” (blood specks) in that eye to this day. When I went to talk to the man operating the mower, he denied that it had come from his yard (which had a chain link fence around it). But eventually his homeowner’s insurance settled for \$1200, which we had to use to live on. (I have always regretted that we were not able to put the money aside for Billy). We were so thankful to God that the wire had not entered 3/4 of an inch higher, for then it would have surely destroyed that eye!

## **VA HOSPITAL**

It had now been almost six years since I had spent time in a hospital for my chronic skin disease (1954 in Des Moines while in Bible College). But my busy schedule of ministry activities, extra hours spent in secular work and the stresses connected with residual problems in the church combined to produce an acute outbreak of my eczema again. (I had begun to suspect that certain tropical vegetation, excessive sunshine

and high humidity all may have contributed, but there is no medical evidence to sustain that suspicion. In recent years some doctors have suggested it may be related to an auto-immune deficiency. But who really knows?). As the condition worsened, the itching and restlessness required that I take powerful sedatives in order to get any relief. Many nights it was 4 AM before the pills “kicked in” enough for me to get to sleep. But then I wasn’t able to get up until almost noon, when the day was half over. This routine was very demoralizing, not to mention that I got very little done in the Lord’s work during those times. I spent many hours reading books in the middle of the night during those days. So on April 21, 1960, I entered the Bay Pines VA Hospital, near St. Petersburg, Florida, over 100 miles from Orlando. I was there 17 days receiving a relatively new medication, ACTH (a form of cortisone). After only a few injections the itching, redness, and “weeping” began to disappear dramatically and with it the sleeplessness! But the downside of the medication was that, as soon as it was discontinued, my eczema came roaring back, with a vengeance! So they had to taper off the injections, giving me reduced amounts of it until I was clear off. When my condition began to worsen again, I was usually able to keep it under control with the use of cortisone creams and ointments. (In recent years I have taken prednisone tablets when needed, another form of cortisone, which is very effective in keeping any recurrence from becoming too severe).

Bethel was very faithful in coming to see me at Bay Pines, even bringing the kids sometimes, especially on Saturdays when they were out of school. And the hospital grounds, surrounding picturesque Boca Ciega Bay, were beautifully landscaped, and afforded a pleasant visit, sometimes even including a picnic on the shore of the Bay. This would be the first of four times I had to be hospitalized during my 12½ year Florida ministry.

## **CAMP ITHIEL**

Since our fellowship had been emphasizing summer youth camps for many years, I began looking for a site suitable for such a camp for children of the Union Park church. So one day I took my 11-year-old son Timmy and drove to Lake Aurora Christian Assembly, near Lake Wales, Florida, a camp operated by Christian Churches of the state. The camp was 65-70 miles from Orlando and the facilities unimpressive, so I continued looking for a closer campsite. (By 1994, Tim was asked to be the morning chapel speaker at Lake Aurora, which was then utilizing much improved facilities).

I finally located a site just 8 miles west of Orlando, near Gotha, Florida. It was situated on 20 acres, with a large lake for swimming, boating and baptisms and had rustic, but usable, barracks, dining hall, church building and outdoor pavilions suitable for a youth camp. The first Camp Ithiel (the word means "God is with me") was held June 12-17, 1961 with 18 campers, mostly from Union Park. I served as camp manager for the next six years, with the grounds also later being used for a family camp. Besides the young men of the local church, who had become preachers, over 40 men from northern states were eventually utilized as part of the camp faculty over the years (they often brought some of their youth with them). Camp Ithiel continued as an important ministry to youth some years after I left Florida. It was discontinued in 1982.

## **BAY PINES REVISITED**

The winter of 1962 found me back at the Bay Pines VA Hospital with another flare-up of my eczema (January 21-28). It seems that wintertime was when my condition was at its worst. Also, by now the cataracts on my eyes, acquired 15 years earlier in Oregon, had become more advanced and were making study and preaching much more difficult. I had to have lighting that was just right in order to prepare and read my sermon notes and to lead songs. I also had to use a large magnifying glass for much of my research work. I quit my job as Volkswagen driver for the Sentinel-Star and had Bethel do most of the driving when I made calls. So between the three conditions, skin, scalp and eyes, it seems I was always having something to cope with. A special blessing from God, however, was that the VA readily acknowledged the service-connected nature of the problems, so provided ever-increasing disability compensation during successive years. This has all helped greatly in meeting our family's financial needs through the years.

## **FIRST EYE OPERATION**

For several previous years I had been exploring the possibility of having something done about my eye problem. I could now see only light with my left eye; my right eye being considerably better but still subnormal. So when I learned that a surgical procedure which removed the lens capsule and replaced it with a hard contact lens was a viable remedy for cataracts, I began looking for someone to do it. (This was long before intraocular lens implants were being utilized). The first place I considered, of course, was the VA because there would be no cost. So I

visited a VA eye doctor in St. Petersburg who told me that an operation on my left eye was needed right away since there was a danger that the muscle of that eye could become weakened from lack of use. Wanting a “second opinion” I also went to the Naval Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida where two Navy eye specialists told me they were reluctant to perform the surgery because of an “absorption” process that had begun. I then saw an ophthalmologist at the Bay Pines VA Hospital, but was quickly turned off by his gruff and cocky manner. Even though he agreed to perform the surgery, I wasn’t about to let a guy with an attitude like that operate on *my* eyes! Next I went to a private ophthalmologist there in Orlando who, after giving me a thorough examination, spoke optimistically, “I would love to get my hands on that cataract!” He said the operation had a 95% chance of being successful. I was encouraged. But since he was a private physician, my VA eligibility would not cover the cost (\$300 for the surgeon, \$200 for the hospital and \$125 for the contact lens). And since we didn’t have that kind of money (and no insurance) we just had to wait and pray for the Lord’s leading, which would not be long in coming!

Then one day in 1963 I was talking on the phone to the state Vocational Rehabilitation counselor about possible assistance for “Skip” Mullins, a young handicapped boy of the Union Park church. In the course of our conversation I had an occasion to testify how the Lord had blessed me with the ability to become a preacher in spite of cataracts on both eyes and other disabilities. He seemed unusually impressed and asked me several questions relating to my eye problem, the size of my family, amount of income, etc. He then surprised me by asking if I would mind coming into his office to talk further about the matter. I didn’t know what all this meant but felt it may be the leading of God I had been looking for. So I went in, answered more questions, filled out some forms and in a few weeks heard back from the counselor that the State of Florida Vocational Rehabilitation Department had authorized Dr. Ferguson to perform the surgery completely *at their expense!* It could be done right there in Orlando and at my convenience. So the operation was performed on July 24, 1963, at the Holiday Hospital and ten days later I was home and healing. In eight more weeks I was fitted to a hard contact lens, giving me 20/15 vision in that eye! A few months later I was able to drive at night, in a drizzling rain, in the heart of New York City, on a six-lane highway . . . with no trouble at all! I had been given a new lease on life, and ministry, thank the Lord!

## **FLORIDA CAMP RALLY**

Because the Union Park church was so isolated from most of the congregations of our fellowship, and because it loved strong Bible preaching and craved good Christian fellowship, I decided that a preaching rally would help meet those needs. The concept of having it in the winter, when those from northern states could get away from harsh weather for a few days of sunshine, seemed like a workable idea. With Christmas break in schools everywhere, it seemed that would be an ideal time for the rally. And since the grounds at Camp Ithiel were quite accommodating, complete with a sizable dining hall, a church building and suitable sleeping quarters, it was decided to hold the rally there and call it the *Florida Camp Rally*. The first one was held December 25-27, 1964, with speakers Lafe Culver, Eddie DeVries and Donald Hunt delivering powerful messages on the theme "Effective Evangelism." All of these men had previously held successful evangelistic meetings at Union Park. It was attended by one hundred nine persons from nine states, and viewed as being so successful by the Union Park church that it continues to be held at this writing (over 32 years later). (Beginning in 1968 the Rally was moved to the Harrell Road church building and called *Florida Midwinter Rally*).

## **BAY PINES, AGAIN!**

By now the cycle of my skin disease worsening, then spending a session in the hospital, then improving, only to get worse again was becoming more frequent. On February 26, 1965, I was back at Bay Pines for a two-week stay. I tried to put up with the itching, unsightly appearance and sleeplessness until it became just too much to stand. It got so that when Bethel drove me to the VA hospital, I would take my tooth brush and other personal effects because as soon as the doctor took one look at me, I was immediately admitted.

After returning home, the final "blow" came when I had to return to the hospital again *that same year* (Dec. 1-10, 1965). That made *four* hospitalizations within *six* years! As in each previous case the cortisone healed up my skin and gave me wonderful relief, almost miraculously! But the treatment often involved conflicting medications. The cortisone, while healing my skin lesions, also made me extremely hyper. The nervousness it caused made me unable to sleep at night so they also gave me an injection or oral medication that usually knocked me out! Sometimes I would fall asleep right away only to awaken in the middle of the night quite disoriented. During that hospitalization I remember one time waking up about 3 o'clock in the morning and, feeling hyper, began

wandering around through the halls of the large VA hospital. Finally an orderly saw me looking somewhat dazed and asked where I was going. “Upstairs!” I replied. Looking quite surprised he said excitedly, “Wait here,” while he rushed to get a nurse. You see, I was *already* on the *top floor*!

Accompanying this nervous hyper condition was an extreme sensitivity to sound, sight and touch. For example, if someone were to slap me on the back, even lightly, it created a sensation somewhat like an electric shock. It was like needles pricking me all over my back. Loud noises would do the same thing. Even when I observed something that startled me, it caused this sensation. One day as I ventured out alone to drive myself on a call (Bethel usually did all the driving by now), I approached an intersection just as another car was coming fast from my right. It startled me so much I had to pull over and stop, and finally turn around and slowly proceed back home, without being able to make the call.

I now had to face reality. My ministry was probably over! I just could not keep up this routine and still do an effective job as a supported evangelist. I think it was about then that I began thinking of offering my resignation to the church. I didn’t know what I would do for a living, or where I would go, but I knew I just couldn’t go on this way any longer!

## **THE FAST TRACK**

But the most frustrating thing about my situation was that I was already involved in so much that I just *couldn’t let go*! So as 1966 arrived I found myself maintaining a busier than ever schedule of preaching at Union Park, planning and managing Camp Ithiel and Florida Camp Rally, editing News and Truths, preaching on the January Gathering in Ottumwa (Jan. 25-28) and driving to Oklahoma to teach at Boiling Springs Camp Aug. 14-20. But I was still convinced that I needed to encourage the church to begin looking for another preacher at Union Park. As 1966 was coming to a close, I could never have guessed the opportunity that would be offered to me before the end of the year!

## **PLACES PREACHED**

Over the course of my 12½ years in Florida I had the privilege of traveling to several churches, camps and rallies to preach and teach. According to my record book they were: *Bahamas* (meeting), July 5-15, 1956; Oct. 20-Nov. 5, 1957; *Elizabethtown, NC* (meeting), July 4-10, 1960; *Bladen Lakes (NC) Family Camp*, July 3-7, 1961; *Charleston, SC*, April 27-28, 1962; *Bladen Lakes (NC) Family Camp*, July 2-5, 1962;

*Newland Church of Christ, Warsaw, VA, July 8, 1962; Rittman, OH, July 11, 1962; Smith Hill Church of Christ, Portsmouth, OH, July 15, 1962; Northboro, MA (rally), Nov. 26-27, 1964; Elmira, NY, Nov. 29, 1964; Galax, VA (meeting), April 22-25, 1965; Yellville, AR, Aug. 22, 1965; Hamburg, IA, Aug. 29, 1965; January Gathering, Ottumwa, IA, Jan. 25-28, 1966; Mark, IA, Jan. 30, 1966; Promise City, IA, Jan. 30, 1966; Boiling Springs Camp, OK, Aug. 14-20, 1966; Gering, NE (meeting), Feb. 21-Mar.2, 1967.* Although I received several invitations to preach meetings over the years (12 during my lifetime), I never felt I was very good at it. I recall on several occasions distinctly thinking, "Why didn't they get so-and-so to hold this meeting? I'm really not as capable as he would be." I viewed myself as more of a teacher than a motivator or exhorter. But, I always did my best and a few people were converted along the way.

## **THE BEAR SCARE**

An amusing incident occurred while on a trip up north to teach in a camp at Bladen Lakes, North Carolina in 1962. I was invited to preach at a country church near Portsmouth, Ohio, for an old, eccentric preacher named John Ditty. I had preached that morning and during the evening service, as John was introducing me again, he opened his Bible and read from II Kings 2:23-24: "Then he [Elisha] went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, 'Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!' When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number."

John paused, and then said something like, "You boys back there better take heed to the Word of God."

Apparently some young boys had been making fun of my bald head during the morning service. Of course, I will never know how many others found my lack of hair an occasion for such ridicule.

## **REMEMBERING FLORIDA DAYS**

Before leaving this section, there are a number of random incidents which I still remember from my Florida days, some with considerable amusement, others with sorrow and even regret. Here are some of the most memorable.

I *remember* Terry's exceptional ability playing football for Colonial High; he was an excellent running back. I went to see only one of his games, but working at the newspaper, I was able to obtain nice



8”X10” glossy prints taken of him in action. One time a game was being played on a church night, so Terry brought his football clothes to church, changed immediately after the service ended, then was rushed to the field in time to help his team win. I have always regretted not going to more of his games, and if I had it to do over again I would certainly make a greater effort to see more of them!

I *remember* when Bennie and Terry used to go out to the Little Econlockhatchee River to fish and chop down cypress knees. These were the roots of the cypress tree which protruded up through the water in remote swamps (there were gators and water moccasins there, also). They would boil them until the bark peeled off easily, then paint or varnish them to sell in gift shops. Terry got us one that we kept for a magazine rack in the living room. It was a unique, oval-shaped knee that became “home” to a tiny mouse on one occasion. What fun we all had trying to swat it with brooms when it surprised us by jumping out and scurrying across the floor!

I *remember* Sheila’s first (and last?) solo, sung at Camp Ithiel when she was 8 or 10. Reading from a hymnal, she got through about one or two lines of “This Is My Father’s World,” when a flash bulb went off! She looked up and just “froze,” unable to continue, yet just kept standing there! I still remember the petrified look on her face! I remember another time when Bethel was having a birthday and all the kids would buy her a small present (a hot pad, an oven mitt, dish cloth, etc.). They were making a big thing over it and were all wound up. Just then Helen Stoltz, a lady from the church came to the door for some reason. Sheila greeted her, excitedly, “It’s Mom’s birthday, what did you bring her?” Of course, poor Helen didn’t know what to say. After she left Bethel told Sheila sternly, “If she brings me a gift, you’re going to get it!” Well, Helen *did* bring Bethel a set of bowls, but I don’t remember what happened to Sheila, except that she was pretty miserable the rest of the day!

I *remember* one of the few long car trips we took as a family. It was up the east coast to a rally in New England and we were driving a 1961 Rambler station wagon, with the kids crowded in the back seat and cargo area. Now that old car’s headlights had a bad habit of going out suddenly, without warning, when driving at night (it must have been a short in the wiring). And that can get scary! On this particular night, when we were returning from the rally, Bethel was driving on a desolate stretch of I-75 and I was in the passenger seat. Suddenly *the lights went out!* Of course Bethel began applying the brakes and tried pulling over on the shoulder carefully, but where *was* the shoulder? In the pitch dark I

opened the door to look down for the pavement or dirt. Now the car was still moving a few miles an hour so I shouted to Bethel, "Stop the car!" So she did, just as my head was in the doorway! Bang! Ouch! I began mumbling something like, "I didn't mean *that* quickly," so she let up on the brake. When I glanced down at the ground again, it looked like we were really traveling, so I shouted again, "Stop, Stop!" Bang! (again). Ouch! (again). After a couple more tries and a couple more bumps, we finally got stopped safely, but not before the kids were howling with laughter in the back seat. Now I was yelling, "Stop," again, but this time at the kids! I was not a happy camper that night.

I *remember* the conversion of Irvin Wise, a strapping young man I baptized into Christ in 1959. After extensive home Bible studies with him and his wife, Glenna (using the Jule Miller filmstrips), I pressed Irvin for a decision to obey the gospel. He seemed ready and wanted to be Christian and since he had no questions or objections, I encouraged him to be baptized that very night. But Irvin hesitated, saying he needed to wait a while longer! I wasn't able to detect any valid reason for his delay so we parted after setting up another study appointment. When I returned the next week Irvin acted glad to see me and very soon into the study indicated his desire to be baptized that night. So he was. It was not until several years later when we were visiting that Irvin shared with me the reason for his delay that first night. It seems he had beaten up his brother-in-law a few weeks earlier and wanted the opportunity to go over and apologize to him before he felt he could be baptized. Coming from a Catholic background, perhaps his concept of "penance" was still uppermost in his mind. While we might disagree with Irvin's theology, we certainly could not fault him for his conscientious desire to repent!

I *remember* an incident that happened when Eddie DeVries was with us for one of his four evangelistic meetings. One afternoon when Eddie and I were out calling and Bethel was also away getting groceries, Eddie's good wife Betty was home alone, relaxing in our swivel rocker. It was late afternoon and one of our high school boys was due home any minute. Betty had just dozed off when she was awakened by someone coming in the back door. Startled, she tried jumping up, when the swivel rocker tipped clear over backwards! So there was Betty, wearing a dress, with her bare legs thrashing wildly in the air when *Bethel* walked in! She finally was able to crawl out of the chair, but not before nearly dying from embarrassment! It was over 35 years later when visiting with Eddie and Betty in Colorado about that incident that we laughed our hardest! Memories! Ah, they're so wonderful! They allow us to enjoy all over again some of those special moments in life.

## ASSESSING FIRST MINISTRY

It is probably impossible for any person to *accurately* assess his own efforts in terms of successes and failures. There is likely to be a great deal of personal bias and selective memory that enters into such an attempt. But here is the way *I* see my ministry in Florida (1954-1967). The reader may view it differently.

First the negative: The Union Park church never got larger than about 60 persons. I could easily use my recurring health problems as a convenient excuse for this lack of growth, but there were probably several other factors that played as big a part.

A lack of wisdom and sensible judgment in regard to methods of dealing with people no doubt influenced my inability to reach (or keep) more people.

There was also an unwarranted rigidity in beliefs and practices that undoubtedly turned off a number of visitors and would-be converts. This attitude was displayed, not only by me, but by other leaders and members of the congregation, all of whom, however, were doing the best they knew how with what they had! It was probably their methods, not their motives that were counterproductive.

While it's no justification for the smallness of the church, still the *vast majority* of congregations in our fellowship in those days, for whatever reasons, were under 100, with many being under 50!

Along with these attitudes went an exclusivism that I practiced in regard to fellowship. By that I mean, I tended to be somewhat skeptical of people from the Independent Christian Churches. When individuals from such congregations visited Union Park, they often sensed that we were *outside* of the larger fellowship of Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, and they were *right!* I held an unspoken concept that *any* degree of association was equivalent to full endorsement of something wrong, whether consciously or unconsciously. This viewpoint no doubt scared off some good people who might otherwise have placed fellowship with us. I lamented this situation, but in those early days, I was not fully able to see how to remedy it. Some notable exceptions did occur, however. I had an amiable relationship with such Florida Christian Church preachers as Morris Butler Book, Oren Whitten, Bill Mayfield, Bob Shannon and a few others. But such "fellowship" was rather limited, since I never asked them to preach or otherwise participate at Union Park.

Now to the positive side (I guess it is natural that I would think there were more positive than negative things). Perhaps the greatest asset of the church in Union Park was its vibrant, evangelistic youth group.

The number of young people who went on to serve the Lord in some important capacity was one of the most significant factors to come out of that ministry. Eight men went into full time preaching ministries (Gerald Stoltz, Art Deys, Don Spencer, Terry Paul, Stuart Fitzgerald, Richard Geringswald, Roger Deys and Chester Mullins). Two others have done some preaching, served on camps and rallies or become elders, (Tim Paul and Eddie Fitzgerald). Four girls also went to Bible college, Camary (Hawkins) Bracht, Rita (Brinson) Stephens, Bonnie (Stoltz) Fitzgerald and Linda (Mullins) Paul, the latter two becoming preachers' wives. Several other young people have gone on to establish fine Christian homes and have raised godly families.

Whatever the problems that existed in the early days of the Union Park church (and a split was certainly threatening then), the church was able to overcome them and today (over 45 years later) continues as a faithful and productive church. (To this day I am pleased that I have never been part of a church split).

The church also reached out in several concerted attempts at establishing other congregations. The most lasting efforts are the Elmira (NY) Church of Christ and the Combee Road Church of Christ (Lakeland, FL). Even though as many as six other such efforts failed to result in permanent congregations, it demonstrated a genuine desire to see the Lord's church expand.

From a small one room building on limited space, the church was able to expand its facilities into an attractive building, complete with classrooms, on a sizable corner lot (and is planning an enlargement of its quarters at the present time).

The Midwinter Rally, begun in 1964, continues to draw people from several states for a time of spiritual refreshment and challenge (33 years later).

The congregation made a significant contribution, both financially and with personnel, to the work of foreign evangelism, notably in the Bahamas Islands and Puerto Rico.

The youth camp established by the church (Camp Ithiel, begun in 1961) went on to minister to scores of youth for the next 20 years, accomplishing untold good during the formative years of young people from a number of states.

The literature ministry begun in 1955 (with News and Truths) has expanded over the years to include the writing of numerous tracts, booklets, study notes, booklets and books, which have enjoyed a circulation worldwide. (News and Truths was resurrected in the 90s with Leon Bracht as editor!).

While none of the foregoing were spectacular accomplishments, my ministry with the little church on Harrell Road has left its mark on many lives, and hopefully its true assessment by God in eternity will be a favorable one!

## **INVITATION TO RELOCATE**

By the fall of 1966 I was busy making preparations for the third Florida Camp Rally, to be held Dec. 23-25, 1966, with the speakers being Eddie DeVries, Don Jessup and Don Pinon. I had informed the men of the church by now that I would no longer be their preacher, but would remain at Union Park until they got someone to replace me. They seemed reluctant to accept my decision, even suggesting that they could fill in preaching for me when I was too ill or had to be hospitalized. This was a comforting gesture, but I felt strongly that it would not be in the best interests of the church. Bethel and I had prayed about what to do and this seemed to be the best (and only) option I had.

Then one day during the December rally, while having lunch in the dining hall, I was visiting with Don Pinon, the preacher at Gering, NE at the time. In the course of the conversation he asked the usual “preacher talk” question, “How are things going at Union Park?” I explained that my health had not been well for the past several years and that I had resigned my ministry with Union Park. He seemed surprised, and yet in a strange way also mildly elated. He then told me that the Gering church had for some time been talking about beginning a preacher training program and in their discussions my name had come up as the person they most wanted to have come and help teach in it. But they never contacted me because of the feeling that I would probably want to remain in Florida and therefore not be interested. With the announcement that I had just resigned from Union Park in mind, Don proceeded to propose that I move to Gering, NE and help him start a Bible college. (Several years earlier Donald Hunt told me that he had considered asking me to serve on the faculty of Midwestern School of Evangelism after Richard Ellis left, but never contacted me because he knew I was having so many health problems!).

I was more than surprised at the invitation. Don went on to explain that the church there would continue to support me with my present income (\$50 a week) for teaching a schedule of classes. I could move News and Truths to Nebraska and continue mailing it out from there. He also indicated that I would need to work at establishing a new congregation somewhere near Gering. This latter condition I immediately rejected. I felt that, since my health had not been up to

leading a church in Florida, surely I would not be able to teach Bible college classes and then do all of the calling, teaching and preaching it would take to begin a new church! Don conceded this point and then suggested that I come to Gering the following spring to conduct an evangelistic meeting and discuss the matter further with the men there. So I held the meeting at Gering Feb. 21-Mar. 2, 1967, and discussed the whole situation with the church, which led to plans for me to make the move that summer. This seemed like the providential leading of God, except that I was rather apprehensive about the prospect of how my health would hold up in the harsh, dry Nebraska winters. As it turned out my skin condition, while far from being cured, became manageable and I was to enjoy relative freedom from any severe outbreak for the next twenty years (until 1986)! And, even better, between cortisone pills (prednisone) and cortisone creams I was able to avoid being hospitalized for my skin disease, even to the present time! For this I continually praise the Lord!

Meanwhile, I discussed with Union Park the prospects for a preacher to replace me. My suggestion was to get someone with experience, yet young enough to have an extended ministry in Orlando. As it turned out, Stuart Fitzgerald, one of the fine young men of the congregation who had just graduated from MSE, was contacted and agreed to move back to Orlando to preach at Union Park until someone else was arranged for. (Stuart's original desire had been to work with Gerald Stoltz in starting a new congregation at Sanford, a few miles north of Orlando).

So the summer of 1967 found my family making plans for our third big move. While I was in Gering for the meeting, I was able to survey the situation for housing. I came back and told Bethel we would likely have to rent an older home again. (We got only \$300 for our house in Orlando because of there being so many empty houses available with no down payment). We then arranged for a U-Haul truck (my homemade utility trailer was now gone). After the Union Park church had a nice going away party for us and I preached my final sermon on July 16, "What Would I Say If This Were My Last Message to this Congregation?" we headed out for Gering, NE, with mixed feelings, on July 18, 1967. A new adventure awaited us, but we were not able to predict the stresses that the next year would bring. And it's a good thing!

## **MY GREAT FAMILY**

A lot of changes took place during the 12½ years we lived in Florida. Of course, we all grew older (and hopefully wiser) and were no

doubt impacted both for the good and bad by the many experiences we had in Florida (previously described). Here is a brief update on the situation of my family when we moved.

Bethel had had many difficult days, caring for me and our six children. Keeping them quiet each school morning while I was still in bed trying to get a “night’s” sleep was no small chore! Doing most of the driving on our out-of-state trips, including seeing to the kid’s needs, was also a big order. Then having to cope with the irritability that accompanied my skin condition earns her a “medal of honor” in my book, but in those days she probably wasn’t given the opportunity to know this (because I was less able to convey it). Problems with the kids undoubtedly disturbed much of the peace and serenity she so direly needed and richly deserved. During those years she also had two operations, which took their toll on her as well (hemorrhoids and gall bladder). Teaching children’s and young girls’ classes, along with the heavy responsibility of being a “happy-faced,” positive, preacher’s wife all affected her both physically and emotionally.

Bennie graduated in 1960 and then went to MSE that fall, staying only a short time. A series of unpleasant and unfortunate circumstances, mostly not his fault, happened at school during the three months he was there which led to his moving out to Portland, OR, where he got work in the heating/air conditioning insulation trade and eventually married Leann Schutt. In 1965 he and his family made a trip back to Florida for an enjoyable visit.

Terry graduated in 1961 and, along with Linda Mullins, attended MSE that fall. They got married May 28, 1962. Terry and Linda eventually moved back to Florida where Terry worked with the Union Park young people and helped in the church planting effort being done by Rex James (February 1965). Shortly afterward he was invited by Eddie DeVries to serve as youth director with the Hamburg, IA church where Eddie was preaching and later to help with the training program (Hamburg College of Christ) that was being conducted there. He later graduated from MSE in May 1967.

Tim had some spiritual struggles while at home which resulted in his moving to Hamburg, IA to live with Terry when he was 16 (in 1965). This was a sad time for Bethel and me. But he did much better in Hamburg and went on to graduate from high school there before going to MSE for a couple of years. He later married Marilyn Agenter, then graduated from Rocky Mountain College of Christ, in Denver (April 19, 1972).

Sheila was 15, and still at home, when we made the move. She had grown into a very beautiful young lady by then. When she was young, she wore long, golden curls, and as she grew older she developed a happy, pleasant disposition. She once had an opportunity to participate in a school beauty pageant, but her mother and I wouldn't permit her because we felt it was placing too much emphasis on physical beauty over the spiritual. (But, like her mother, she ended up having both!).

Billy was . . . well, he was *all boy*! Now 13, he had been quite rambunctious during those formative years, getting into minor trouble from time to time. But his aggressiveness, once matured, harnessed and focused in manhood, was to be channeled into more constructive pursuits in the years to come.

Dan was just 8 when we moved. Perhaps the most compliant of all our children, he also, being the "baby," probably received the least attention from me, especially in his teen years. To what extent this had a bearing on the course of his adult life, I can only guess!

All in all, the Florida years were good years, in spite of problems we had to face. I think everyone in our family recalls them with fond memories.



# 1967-1968

## GERING, NEBRASKA

### COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR

#### GOING OUT WEST

Before leaving Florida we had arranged for Tim to come from Iowa to help me drive the large U-Haul truck full of our belongings, while Bethel would drive our 1963 Rambler, with Sheila, Billy, Dan and Donna Brown, a single young lady. Because of the long distance, we decided not to try to travel together. Donna had come to Florida with the Hugh Tiptons, a family from Indiana that had moved down when the Rex James' came to start a new church at Forest City, near Orlando. When the James' and Tiptons returned to Indiana, Donna moved in with us. Plans now were for her to live with us in Nebraska also, paying us rent to help meet what we expected to be higher living costs. She had agreed to share the driving with Bethel on the trip, but little did we know when leaving Florida *how much* help she would be! By the time we had traveled a couple of days, Bethel began experiencing extreme discomfort from what turned out to be a bladder infection! It got so severe that she had to stop at a hospital on the way for medication before we could continue the journey. Both vehicles eventually arrived in Gering, NE near the end of July 1967.

#### FINDING A HOUSE

We had pretty much resigned ourselves to having to rent instead of buying a house.. But after looking for a few days, we weren't able to find anything suitable for a family of three children, plus a single woman. We finally were directed to a house for sale a short distance from the church building. It turned out to be a very lovely three-bedroom home, expertly constructed by a German craftsman who had recently moved out to a smaller place. The price was \$16,200, and requiring a down payment of \$2,000. This was certainly reasonable, but we just didn't have any money. So, in a meeting of the Gering church men, where various factors concerning our working relationship with the church were discussed, I informed them of the house we had found. There was an immediate and unanimous offer by the church to lend us the down payment. While we were not overly eager for such an arrangement that might appear to be imposing upon the church, it seemed to be the only possibility for getting a place very soon. So we agreed. But when Don Pinon, the preacher, learned of the offer, he spoke to me about

the matter, expressing his reluctance for me to accept money from the church. I was a little puzzled for he had been in the meeting when the suggestion was made, but said nothing against it. This was to be a hint of the differences that were to develop between Don and me over the next several months.

So, I immediately informed the church that we could not accept their kind offer, for I certainly did not want to create a conflict situation with Don. Upon learning of my refusal to accept the church's loan, one of the older, retired men of the congregation, who was reasonably well off financially, came to me with the offer of a personal loan, but we felt strongly that we should decline it also. Finally we were able to get a loan for the down payment from Don Heese, the preacher at the Arvada (Denver), Colorado church. So we moved into the lovely house at 715 "J" St. and soon paid Don back for his generous loan of the down payment.

## **A LITTLE TOWN**

Gering was a small town (population 2,500), situated on the North Platte River, which adjoined the larger city of Scottsbluff (population 15,000) situated in the "panhandle" of western Nebraska. The principal industry of the area was sugar beet farming, with a thriving processing plant in Scottsbluff employing several of the church men. There was also a Swift Meat Packing plant in the area, so the economy was good. That area of western Nebraska is very dry and arid, with numerous rolling hills covered with sagebrush and rugged bluffs. Its most prominent physical feature, visible from our house, was the monolithic *Scotts Bluff*, a high butte that served as a landmark for those traveling the Oregon Trail in the mid-1800s. In fact, right along side the Scotts Bluff National Monument can be seen ten-foot deep "ruts" made by the many covered wagons which traversed the Trail a century before! Though rather desolate, the area is beautiful and picturesque, reminiscent of the breathtaking scenery I had seen in numerous western movies as a child.

This was the first time we had lived in such a small town since leaving Corbett, OR 16 years earlier, and it took a while getting used to. Everyone knew everyone else (and their business), it seemed. The Gering church (known as the 7th and Q Church of Christ, because of its location), was very active and growing. Don's soul-winning skills were almost legendary and his diligence in lining up and conducting home Bible studies were probably unsurpassed in our fellowship in those days! I counted it a privilege to be able to work with him in starting a Bible

college! The people in the congregation were well-taught, zealous and very loving. Besides a good Sunday morning attendance (approx. 150), there were excellent Sunday evening services and exciting Wednesday night prayer meetings. It was a church with a mission, and that included training preachers. What a privilege to be part of that worthy endeavor!

## **BIBLE COLLEGE INSTRUCTOR**

The month of August 1967 found Don and me spending many tedious hours discussing and making plans for the new Bible training program. We determined that it would be coeducational, with a strong emphasis on men becoming preachers and ladies teaching women's and children's classes, but with everyone becoming soul-winners! We worked up a four-year curriculum to be taught four mornings a week at the 7th and Q church, Don taking Tuesday and Wednesday and me taking Thursday and Friday. (Don had a corridor built between the church building and the large basement of the parsonage, located next door. Classes were held here until a few years later when a beautiful new addition was constructed). During the next three years when I taught in the training program, my courses were: Prison Epistles, Biblical Introduction, Acts, Old Testament History, Divine Church, Christian Evidences, Romans, Cults, and Galatians/Thessalonians. Following the morning prayer service each day Don and I alternated bringing the weekly Chapel sermon.

It became my responsibility to design and write most of the material for our first school catalog (the same format was used for several more years), which Don printed on the church's offset printing press (also used for printing Don's monthly publication The Gospel Guide and my News and Truths). At my suggestion the school was named *The Church of Christ Bible Training School* and opened for classes in the fall of 1967.

The student body consisted of 20-30 eager students who seemed intent on preparing for effective ministries for the Lord. Some were married members of the 7th and Q church, but a good number were single young men, aspiring to become preachers. Most were from the local church but eventually prospective students moved in from a wide area to take classes. I was given a small office in the baptistry dressing room, where I spent many hours preparing for my classes, grading papers and composing class notes. I really enjoyed teaching and felt more "in my element" in the classroom than in the pulpit! Truly God had blessed in opening up this opportunity for me to become a Bible college instructor. And He provided adequate health for doing it as well. For, in

spite of the severe pressures I came under that first year in Gering, my health problems remained at a minimum!

I also filled in for Don by preaching on his radio broadcast on a number of occasions. Don's program, aired over the Scottsbluff station KNEB, was delivered "live" via a special phone hookup in Don's office. I had preached on the radio only once before (Wilmington, NC), but this was my first effort at doing it live (it's a unique experience). Later I would also have my own radio broadcast in Douglas, WY (KWIV). I also preached on KJLT once in North Platte, NE

While at Gering I held my first "Bible Display." This was a two-day event, featuring my growing Bible collection displayed on several tables in the 7th and Q church building, to which the public was invited. The local newspaper gave it extensive coverage, including two large photos (Scottsbluff Daily Star-Herald, Friday, January 19, 1968). I later had similar displays in North Platte, NE (North Platte Telegraph, Family Weekend, June 7, 1968), Denver, CO, Hayward, CA and Seattle, WA.

## **OREGON TRAIL PREACHER!**

For our first six months in Gering my family met with the 7th and Q church. Don had asked me to teach the large Sunday morning adult class (Book of Acts) during that time, but that was to last only a month or so. I also spent considerable time calling door-to-door trying to line up home Bible studies. But since Don's original proposal called for my starting a new church in the area (which I felt I couldn't accept), efforts were soon made to locate an existing church within driving distance where I could preach. Don became aware of a very small congregation in Douglas, Wyoming, some 130 miles west of Gering, where Harold Ellwanger had ministered for several years. Since Harold was planning to go elsewhere, Don told me of the situation so I got in touch with Harold. Upon his recommendation I was able to begin what would amount to a six-month ministry with the Church of Christ at Douglas, WY. So, on Feb. 4, 1968 I began making the long drive there (following the Oregon Trail) every Sunday to preach.

Besides preaching Sunday morning and evening and calling in the afternoon, part of my responsibility at Douglas included conducting a weekly radio broadcast, which aired early Sunday mornings over Douglas station KWIV. The way it usually worked was for me to go to the radio station on Sunday afternoon and tape a sermon which would then be broadcast the following Sunday morning. Sometimes these sessions were a little scary for me, because preparing a radio broadcast involves very close timing! I remember on one occasion seeing the

station engineer wandering off to get a cup of coffee during a taped commercial. I recall getting a little nervous that he would not get back in time to introduce the next program. But he always did. Something that made this radio ministry unusually interesting for me was to be able to turn on the car radio while driving to Douglas (around 7 AM) and hear myself preach over the air!

During the Douglas ministry I usually took several students from our training program with me every Sunday (Bethel and the children normally stayed in Gering and attended 7th and Q). The two students who accompanied me most often were John Snogren and Carroll Hagedon. They helped with the driving, led songs and called door-to-door in the afternoons. Even though the day was long, there were also fun times for all of us . . . stopping to read the names of early, Oregon Trail pioneers on *Register Rock* . . . eating Bethel's delicious cookies in the car . . . stopping for burgers and shakes late at night on the way home!

Probably the amount of good done by my six-month, part-time ministry in Douglas (Feb. 4, 1968 - Aug. 4, 1968) was very limited. But I did baptize one young boy, Calvin Griffitts, in the *very* chilly headwaters of the North Platte River (in April) while I was there. He went on to Bible college and had a preaching ministry for a while.

## **MOST PREACHING OPPORTUNITIES**

Besides teaching college classes, doing radio work and preaching chapel messages at Gering, and preaching in Douglas (pulpit and radio), I had the opportunity to minister in a number of other places during the year I lived at Gering. According to my record book, I also spoke at the following places (churches, rallies, camps, etc.): *Arvada, CO* (meeting), Aug. 9-20, 1967; *Hutchinson, KS* (rally), Nov. 23, 1967; *Lexington, NE*, April 23, 1968; *Hamburg, IA*, May 5, 1968; *Ogalala, NE* (youth banquet), May 11, 1968; *Ft. Morgan, CO*, May 30, 1968; *North Platte, NE*, June 9, July 7, 1968; *Camp Gering, NE*, June 1968; *Colorado Springs, CO* (rally), July 4, 1968.

During the year 1968 I preached more sermons than at any other period of my ministry, 134!

## **CONTROVERSY AND CONFLICT**

The next chapter of my life, regrettably, was not a very happy one. Shortly after moving to Gering, I detected in Don a man with a tremendous drive for winning souls and building a strong, faithful church. Though a truly "driven" man, Don also had a weakness that

would prove detrimental to our relationship. As my preaching and teaching in Gering began to gain a degree of respect from members of the 7th and Q church, as well as from the college students, one or two people came to me with various concerns about the church and about Don's role in particular. I immediately realized this as a potential source for problems. In the absence of elders, the primary leadership in the Gering church fell to Don. And his leadership style required that he retain a tight rein on both the church members and students. He also had an uncanny ability of keeping abreast of what was happening in nearly everyone's life. Of course, this was good in the sense that he was able to head off possible trouble in the church, but bad in the sense that it opened him up to the charge of being a "controlling" person. So, when someone came to me with a complaint, Don was quick to get wind of it. I *always* encouraged the person to talk to Don about the matter, but some felt too intimidated to do so. Now I loved Don, and still do, but the situation was becoming a growing source of stress between us. Don was *sure* I was out to undermine his ministry and "take over the church!" But he was sadly mistaken, and no amount of denial on my part could convince him otherwise. We never exchanged any cross words, but certainly did have a "sharp contention" over the matter (Acts 15:39). By the time I had been in Gering about six months, this issue was creating such tension for us, and our spouses, that both of our ministries were being negatively affected by it. On one occasion Don and I discussed this matter in his office for *over seven hours*, yet without successfully resolving the issue.

It was about then that Don suggested that I move away from Gering, so as to alleviate the problem of being perceived as trying to supplant his leadership in the church there. So, Don contacted Dan McKee, the preacher at North Platte, NE, some 175 miles east of Gering, about the possibility of my moving there to become the preacher, with Dan staying on as my associate. While initially a little reluctant, Dan agreed to our discussing the arrangement. While Bethel and I were not very excited about making another move so soon, this seemed to be the best solution for all concerned. So, I went to North Platte in July 1968 to discuss the possibility with Dan. (Of course, the issues between Don and me were not divulged). The result was that my family made the short move to North Platte, NE in August 1968 to work with the 10th and Willow Street Church of Christ.

While the disagreement between Don and me was certainly severe, we both made a concerted effort to keep it from affecting the church or the training program negatively. We also determined that it

would not result in a breach in our fellowship, for part of the agreement was for me to continue teaching in *The Church of Christ Bible Training School*. So, the church *paid my plane fare* to fly a Frontier Airlines' prop-jet (Convair 580) every week from North Platte to Scottsbluff for the next school year to teach my regular schedule of classes (Don picked me up at the airport). I was given comfortable sleeping quarters and all my meals by a couple of the Gering church families for two days each week for an entire school year! Thus, a potentially explosive problem was averted and Don and I have enjoyed a cordial relationship (though miles apart) over the past thirty years!

## **MANY GOOD MEMORIES**

Even though our year in Gering had its stressful times, there were also a number of good things that happened which created a wealth of wonderful memories. For these I thank the Lord!

We made many new friends among the devoted members of the 7th and Q church and the surrounding area. We remember the good fellowship and loving relationship we had with Frank and Jeanine Hall, Marvin Oliver, Glen, Terri and John Snogren, Ray Depler, Gary and Barbara Richards, Gary Nichols, the Lester Wegners and many others. Some of these became lifelong friendships which we continue to cherish.

My ability to serve the Lord was greatly enhanced, especially in the areas of incentives and techniques for soul-winning. The teaching and example of Don, together with the evangelism workshops conducted by the Gering church added much to my zeal and effectiveness.

I experienced a newfound sense of fulfillment from teaching Bible college classes. It had been a dream of mine while still in Florida to help train young men for the ministry. I was able to do this only in a very limited way before being invited to teach in the Gering college program. Much of the study and preparation for classes I did while in Gering has served me well in succeeding years, when I later taught Bible college classes also in Denver and Seattle.

While I hadn't had a lot of time to test the effects of the weather and stress on my skin condition, I was very pleased to have experienced reasonable freedom from any severe outbreak of my eczema. And since there was no VA Hospital closer than Cheyenne, Wyoming, the VA permitted a private dermatologist in Scottsbluff to care for my skin condition.

The small town atmosphere, while taking a little while getting used to, became very appealing, especially to Bethel. Everything was close by . . . church building, grocery stores, schools, etc.

An unexpected blessing was the accelerated bonding that developed in Bethel's and my marriage. It seems that the conflict with Don, which often involved Bethel in phone conversations, helped to bring us closer together. We *needed* each other more at times like this!

For years in Florida I had lamented my isolation from fellow preachers I knew across the country. Now, with so many churches within driving distance, I was happy to get to see and work with men like Don Heese, Gary Flom, Dale Williamson, Victor Knowles, Eddie DeVries, Larry Tyree and others.

While we certainly enjoyed the lush beauty of the Florida landscape, we found the rugged prairie, sagebrush, picturesque bluffs and Oregon Trail remnants of western Nebraska beautiful in a new and different way. And having a daily view of *Scotts Bluff* from our front window was a special bonus!

And lastly, one special memory of an outing with two of my sons still living at home, Billy (14) and Danny (9) is fondly cherished. Since I was teaching Christian Evidences in college about that time, my interest in fossils was heightened, especially because Nebraska is the site of numerous fossil beds which I think date back to the Flood of Noah. So one day I took Billy and Danny on an "expedition" in search of whatever we might find. We hiked to the foot of *Scotts Bluff* and examined closely the wagon train "ruts" left by travelers on the Oregon Trail. Then we fanned out to the rugged hills immediately surrounding the Trail. As we came across a 20-foot ravine, one of us spotted a huge jagged bone protruding from near the top of the bank, about a foot below the surface. About six inches of it was sticking out, bleached white from the sun. So, we began looking around the bottom of the ravine and, lo, we found *another* piece of bleached bone. The boys were really excited! Upon closer examination, it turned out to be *the other half* of the 14-inch long bone. The two pieces fit together perfectly! Being so close to the Oregon Trail, I surmised that it could be one of three possibilities: 1) The bone of an ox that had pulled one of the Conestoga wagons; 2) The bone of a cow, since huge cattle drives had traveled through that same area years before; 3) The bone of a buffalo, since the whole area was covered by hundreds of thousands of buffalo in the 19th century. So I sent the pieces of bone to the anthropology department of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and received a letter back authenticating it as the lower leg bone of a cow! We named it *Hesperabos Billpaulii* (in anthropological technolanguage that means "Western Cow discovered by Bill Paul"). We glued the two pieces together and mounted it in a trophy case that Billy made for it, complete with a plastic display window and appropriate sign. It



really spiced up my college Evidences class, who got a big laugh out of it! It also afforded me one of the few, precious, fun times I was able to have with my kids!

# 1968-1970

## NORTH PLATTE, NEBRASKA

### TRAVELING EVANGELIST

#### THE TINIEST CHURCH

The Church of Christ at 10th and Willow Streets in North Platte, NE was comprised of four elderly ladies in their 70s-80s, the McKee family (three small children) and a young married couple on government assistance. With my family added the total attendance came to only 15! The older frame church building was in a poor state of repair so after arriving I began doing a few small jobs to help improve its appearance and safety. The wooden front steps were quite dilapidated so as I set about to repair them I found buried behind the old boards a unique, square-shaped glass bottle. After cleaning off years of dirt I discovered it was an empty bottle of *embalming fluid*, complete with legible foil label! I had suspected that this might be a dead church, but I wasn't prepared for this!

With the sale of our Gering house for a good price we had enough for a small down payment on a three bedroom, two-story frame house on a quiet dead-end street on the south side of town (623 South Maple St.). It was a warm, comfortable home with a detached garage (with basketball hoop) and sizable back yard (where we kept Billy's dog, Husky).

North Platte, located at the juncture of the North Platte River flowing from Wyoming and the South Platte River flowing from Colorado, was large enough to afford shopping convenience (population 20,000), yet with a small town flavor. Bethel often remarks how much she enjoyed living there.

#### AN ACTIVE MINISTRY

Following the turmoil of the previous year in Gering we found the relative tranquility of life in North Platte quite refreshing! With the church so small it required less of my time ministering to the personal needs of the members, but considerably more time and effort in calling and conducting home Bible studies if the church were ever to grow. And working with Dan McKee was a real joy as we got along very well. He was a great asset to the work, especially since I had to be away so much of the time.

Dividing my time between preaching and calling in North Platte and teaching two days of Bible college in Gering every week (besides

writing for, editing and mailing out News and Truths) soon produced a very hectic work schedule. After preaching on Sundays (often both times) I spent much of Monday and Tuesday working on my two college classes. (At first I also had to prepare a sermon tape for my Douglas radio broadcast, which I continued until Sept. 22, 1968). Wednesday was spent preparing for the midweek Bible study and prayer service which was held in the home of one of the ladies. But then the routine became rather unusual. Following the midweek service, with my packed suitcase in hand, Bethel would rush me to the North Platte airport in time to catch the 9:20 PM plane for Scottsbluff, which arrived in Scottsbluff about 9:00 PM! You see, I flew from the Central time zone to the Mountain time zone, and since the flight took only about 40 minutes, I got there about 20 minutes *before I left!* Then Don picked me up at the airport and whisked me off to the Frank Halls or Lester Wegners, where I went right to bed. I then taught classes Thursday and Friday mornings, spending the afternoons in study, grading papers and preparing for the next day. Whew! On Friday evenings I caught the plane again for North Platte, where Bethel and the kids picked me up about 9:30 PM. This system worked well for the 1968-1969 school year but by the following year Frontier had changed its prices and schedules so that for the 1969-1970 school year I had to drive the 175 miles each way every week!

While at North Platte, I was able to finish a book titled *A Christian View of Armed Warfare* (1969), which was published by Scripture Supply House in Portland, Oregon. It grew out of my earlier studies of the war issue, when I still lived in Oregon. In 1956 brother H. N. Solliday, upon learning of the material I first brought in a series of sermons in Florida, had urged me to put it out in book form. It received a wide circulation during the Vietnam war years, being the most thorough treatment of the subject in our fellowship.

I was still active, on a personal level not involving the church, in conservative political causes well into the 70s. I arranged for Dr. Billy James Hargis, founder of the Christian Crusade, to speak on an anti-Communist rally on May 7, 1970 at the Holiday Inn in North Platte, which gained considerable publicity in the local media.

## **Y.E.A.R.N.**

These years were the height of the “Hippie” movement when drugs were in popular vogue among young people everywhere. Having teenagers myself, I decided I needed to try to do something to help curb this growing problem in our society, and in the process reach some young people for Christ. So when I learned that the government provided

the free use of anti-drug films geared for youth, I decided to set up film showings in town and invite kids to come. I arranged with the largest clothing store in town to have free use of a large meeting room above its store right in the heart of downtown North Platte. Then the local Vocational-Technical college in town was kind enough to lend me a 16 mm. movie projector each week. All I needed now were the kids to attend the weekly Saturday night movies. So I personally paid for weekly newspaper ads inviting teenagers to a free movie, giving the title, time and place. But I needed a catchy name for the program if I expected to get their attention. So, corny as it may sound now, I came up with Y.E.A.R.N. (acronym for “Youth Engaged in Activities of a Responsible Nature”). A good number of kids came to the films over the months to follow and I was even able to give personal counsel to a few of them before the program had to be discontinued. I guess I finally realized that I didn’t need another activity to occupy my time!

## **MY GROWING FAMILY**

By the summer of 1970, Bennie (28), married with several children, was living and working in Portland, OR; Terry (26), also married with children, was working with Eddie DeVries in the Hamburg, IA church, helping with the youth and training program there and traveling and preaching with *The New Creations*, a gospel singing group; Tim (20), in school at MSE, had recently married Marilyn Agenter (Oct. 18, 1969); Sheila (17), was soon to marry John Snogren, a Bible college student in Gering (July 18, 1970); Billy (16) was still at home and struggling with the terrible teens, trying to find himself; Danny (11), the docile child, was in the 5th grade, having had to take 3rd grade over when we moved to Nebraska (Florida schools were behind those in Nebraska). Our children still at home were *starving* for Christian fellowship. The tiny North Platte church had no youth group; in fact, it hardly had any youth!

Billy began keeping company with worldly kids at school and at a teen hangout where the current pop music was featured. However, we knew little of his activities except that he liked to be away a lot. But one night I learned that he was going to a teen dance so Bethel and I hurried down to the hall to see if I could intercept him. He had gotten there a few minutes before me and when I inquired, everyone told me he wasn’t there. As I made my way through the crowded dance floor looking for him (to the jeers of the kids), he “escaped” out the back door! After I got home, he arrived a short time later. This energy and ingenuity of Billy’s, once channeled into more constructive endeavors, eventually resulted in

his becoming a very successful businessman. While I probably didn't handle every situation with our kids in the wisest way, I really tried and I think they realized that I really cared!

## **DISCOURAGING DAYS**

I was now finding it very difficult to keep very positive about my ministry. The tiny church was not growing as I wanted and I felt responsible. My preaching had little fire in it because there was little fire in me! Problems with the kids at home and the stresses of a very busy schedule of traveling, studying and teaching were taking their toll. While Dan McKee and I were doing our best to line up Bible studies with people, it seems there was little fruit to show for it. It must have been evident to others that there was general discouragement in North Platte, for when I invited Archie Word to drive over from Gering, where he then lived and taught in the training program, to preach one Sunday, his message was on . . . "Discouragement!"

As far as my health was concerned, the presence of a few bald spots on my scalp had now progressed to a few scattered hair spots! Once when I was conducting a home Bible study with a lady and her small children (using the Jule Miller filmstrips), one of the children crawled up behind me on the back of the couch to get a closer look at my head. I tried to ignore him and go on with the study while the poor lady was becoming increasingly embarrassed. Finally, when the child was directly behind me on the back of the couch, he blurted out, "What happened to your hair?" Now the mother was *really* embarrassed. I'm sure over the years that many people have wondered the same thing that little kid did, only were too reluctant to ask. So I had to develop a few "quips" to ease their (and my) embarrassment. Sometimes I would say, smilingly, "O, it got shot off in the war!"

About that time one of the elderly ladies of the church learned of a Christian family that was planning to move to Maxwell, Nebraska, a small town about 15 miles east of North Platte. The man was a school teacher moving there to take a job in that small town which had no Church of Christ. So, I quickly got in touch with them, which resulted in Larry and Carol Whittington and their four children soon beginning to attend the 10th and Willow church. This was a real boost to the church (and to me), right when I needed it! This fine family eventually moved with us to Denver and later to Portland, where they have become one of the most dedicated families, first at the Duke St. church and now at the Crossroads church.

## THE LONG COMMUTE

When flying back and forth to Gering every week ceased to be an option, the only way left was for me to drive. The 175-mile trip was on Interstate 80 for 75 miles, as far as Ogalala, Nebraska, with the remaining 100 miles being on State Highway 26, a long desolate stretch of sagebrush strewn prairie with very few towns.

I normally headed out of North Platte after the Wednesday night prayer service, arriving in Gering by midnight or later, depending on the weather. (I had my own key to get into the home where I was staying). One winter night it was snowing heavily when I left North Platte. And the farther I drove, the heavier and wetter the snow became. At times my windshield wiper could barely turn, trying to move the snow. This night it covered my headlights with such thick snow that they were not able to illuminate the highway and I had to get out frequently to clean them off. Once the snow got so heavy that I couldn't distinguish where the road was. Just then a huge 18-wheeler roared past me. What a blessing! I speeded up and just drove in his tracks the rest of the way!

But it was a very beautiful, scenic and historic section of highway . . . when you could see it! Along the way were several of the most significant sites on the old Oregon Trail . . . Ash Hollow pioneer cemetery, Courthouse Rock, Jailhouse Rock (No, it did not feature Elvis!) and Chimney Rock. Once as I was driving home from Gering late one Friday night, a huge elk jumped out in front of my Rambler as I neared Chimney Rock. It was such a pitch black night that I never even saw what happened to the animal after hitting it with my right front fender. If it wasn't killed, I'm sure it got a terrible headache out of the ordeal. So I limped along the next 20 miles, with one headlight, until coming to Bridgeport, where I got the local police to issue me a temporary permit, allowing me to drive the rest of the way home with only one headlight!

On the weekends when I was scheduled to show one of the anti-drug films at North Platte, I usually started out from Gering early enough on Friday so I could get home in time to call the Voc-Tech college before they closed. One Friday I arrived home about 5:00 PM, just busted! Bethel was away cleaning house for a doctor, one of the few times she had part-time work to help with our finances. So I hurried into the house to phone the Voc-Tech. As the girl answered the phone, I said, "This is Bill Paul. I'm calling to reserve the . . . uh . . . uh . . . uh." I just couldn't think, and I couldn't speak! There was a long silence. She finally spoke up, "The movie projector?" "Yes, Yes," I answered, "the projector." That was scary! My mind had fried from the long drive! I didn't know how

much longer I was going to be able to keep up that schedule. As it turned out, after that year, I was never to teach in the Gering training program again!

## **PLACES PREACHED**

Somehow I was able to work in preaching and teaching at several camps, rallies and retreats during the two years I spent in North Platte from Aug. 11, 1968 until Aug. 27, 1970. My records show them to be: *Creston, IA*, Aug. 25, 1968; *Hamburg, IA*, Aug. 25, Dec. 22, 1968, Apr. 6, 1969; *Glenhaven, CO* (retreat), Sept. 14, 1968; *Lexington, NE*, Dec. 29, 1968, Mar. 23, Aug. 31, 1969; *Loveland, CO* (youth retreat), May 3, 1969; *Camp O’Cedar, NE*, July 21-24, 1969; *Carson City, NV*, July 27, 1969; *Loveland, CO* (youth retreat), May 9, 1970; *Camp Gering, NE*, June 24, 1970; *Camp O’Cedar, NE*, July 24, 1970.

## **INVITED TO COLORADO**

By the summer of 1970 two other competent men had been added to the faculty of *The Church of Christ Bible Training School* in Gering, Archie Word and Gary Flom. In the meantime Don Heese had resigned from the Arvada, CO (Denver) church and, after an interim ministry by Clarence Schaffner, they eventually called Eddie DeVries from Hamburg, IA to lead the work. But Eddie had also developed a college training program while in Hamburg, so decided to move the program with him to Denver and start a new college, to be called *Rocky Mountain College of Christ*. Most of the student body consisted of Terry’s singing group, *The New Creations* (including Tim), so that meant Terry and Tim would be moving to Colorado also. Now Terry had known of my discouragement with the North Platte work, problems with my children and also that I had been teaching in the Gering training program for the previous three years, so suggested that I move to Denver and participate in the new college there. Eddie DeVries also urged me to make the move, describing the prospects for accomplishing much good in that city. Shortly afterward I received a call from Ken Miles, an elder of the Arvada church with a formal invitation to relocate to Denver to teach in the new college. Part of the arrangement was that I was also to become associate preacher with Don Heese in The Church in Southwest Denver, which Don had started the previous year. I was also to bring News and Truths with me to Denver (including its mailing list and equipment), add Eddie DeVries and Don Heese as associate editors, change its name to Impact for Christ and utilize it for publicizing the new school and other activities of the two (and later three) churches in

Denver. Some have been a little confused over the exact arrangements that were made involving my original role in Denver. I was *never* a part of the Arvada church but only on the faculty of the new college (for which I was given a small income from Arvada). From the very beginning I was preaching and working, along with Don, with the already established Southwest Denver church. And Impact was essentially still my publication, even though it was now to assume a broader function and with additional personnel.

So, I conferred with Don Pinon about making the shift from Gering to Denver. I didn't feel so bad about leaving the Gering program because they now had Word and Flom and would soon acquire David Wegner and Victor Knowles to help with the 1970-1971 school year. (And in subsequent years would also have Gary Nichols, Jerry Smith and others).

In August 1970 we moved to Arvada, CO (a northwest suburb of the Denver metro area), bought an older home and settled in to begin teaching in *Rocky Mountain College of Christ* and assisting with the calling and preaching at The Church in Southwest Denver.

So, once again I would be working closely with others, including my sons Terry and Tim and several men whom I had known and come to greatly respect and esteem over the years, Ken Miles (since Oregon days), Eddie DeVries (since college days) and Don Heese (since 1967 when I held a meeting for him at Arvada). Sadly, the next few years would find some of us having strong differences which affected the harmony of our fellowship and the extent of our cooperation.



# 1970-1978

## DENVER, COLORADO

### BUSY MINISTER

#### SOUTHWEST DENVER CHURCH

My work in Denver initially consisted of three major areas of service: 1) Preaching and calling on behalf of The Church in Southwest Denver; 2) Teaching classes in *Rocky Mountain College of Christ* in Arvada, and 3) Overseeing a publication ministry, consisting of editing Impact, writing books and tracts, and managing a walk-in bookstore.

The Church in Southwest Denver met in a rather dreary Masonic Lodge building in the southwest sector of Denver (4625 Morrison Road). We were able to use it only on Sundays, and had to set up chairs each time. The work was started in December 1969 by Don Heese, with the help of David Solliday. Don had been very active in church planting work in the Denver area since moving there in the late 50s, having had a major role in starting what became The Church at 59th and Vance (as the Arvada church, located at 7401 W. 59th Ave., was called). My role as Associate Minister was to preach and call under Don's leadership. This relationship was the beginning of a lifelong cooperative fellowship which involved church building, Bible training programs, publication work and a "love" we both shared for many years, Bible collecting. Don and I held many similarly conservative convictions and grew to be very close friends. By the fall of 1970, Don asked me to begin a midweek home Bible study and prayer service with a few Christian families living in the Montbello/Aurora area (a northeastern suburb of the Denver metropolitan area). In time Don left the Southwest Denver Church leadership to me so he could begin to develop these families into a new work, The Church in Aurora (first Sunday service Feb. 13, 1972). By October 1, 1972, the Southwest Denver Church had purchased a modest church building, with seating for 120 and five classrooms, at 9805 West Wesley Ave., in the suburb of Lakewood (farther southwest). By the first of March 1973, when Aurora was going well, Don began driving to Beulah, Colorado (130 miles south of Denver, near Pueblo), to start another new church, leaving the leadership of The Church in Aurora to Chester Mullins, a senior in *Rocky Mountain College of Christ*. When Chester left, Terry began laboring with the Aurora church on a "temporary" basis in the fall of 1973 (he was to spend over 30 years preaching there)! By the fall of 1974 Don had returned to Southwest Denver (the Beulah work was never established permanently) and

became associated with me again, helping with the preaching and calling. Sometime in the late 1970s, Don again left Southwest to start a new church in Southeast Denver. By now Steve Heese, Don's son, had graduated from Christian Leadership College (the Southwest Denver church's training program) and was serving as my associate in Southwest.

## **ROCKY MOUNTAIN COLLEGE OF CHRIST**

On Sept. 8, 1970 the new school, called *Rocky Mountain College of Christ*, began night classes in the building of The Church at 59th and Vance, Arvada. (By the second year all classes were held in the mornings). The original faculty consisted of four men, Eddie DeVries (preacher at Arvada), Don Heese (preacher at Southwest), Terry Paul (Eddie's associate at Arvada) and me (Don's associate at Southwest), and two women, Jan Miles and Marilyn Vanderhoofven. (Later Gary Flom, John Snogren and Chester Mullins would be added to the faculty). The school was under the direction of the Arvada elders, Ken Miles and Franklin Martin. The student body, consisting at first primarily of students transferring from the Hamburg (IA) College of Christ, numbered 21 (Sept. 1970), 29 (Sept. 1971), and 37 (Sept. 1972). Over the five years I taught at *RMCC*, my classes were: Old Testament Prophets, Homiletics, Minor Prophets, Prison Epistles, Christian Evidences, History and Doctrine of Cults, Restoration Movement History and World Religions. I was given an office at the Arvada building (we lived only a few blocks away) since the Southwest Church was renting only an auditorium the first two years I was in Denver. At first I was also given a small income from the Arvada church to supplement the limited support given me by Southwest (\$400 per month in 1970; \$700 per month in 1978). Later I purchased a 16-foot camper trailer and remodeled it for a study, parking it in a driveway behind my Arvada house!

*RMCC* graduated the following students during the next few years, most of whom went on to preaching ministries: Tim Paul, April 19, 1972; Chester Mullins, Jan. 9, 1973; Dennis DeVries, June 5, 1974; and Kerry Decker, 1975. (Also Ken Sampert and possibly Clyde Grammon). Tim moved to Monterey, LA Aug. 20, 1973 to lead the church's bus ministry and children's church. Chester Mullins preached at the Aurora church for a couple of years, then eventually went to preach at the Newland Church of Christ in Warsaw, Virginia. Dennis DeVries has played an important management role at Nationwide Roundup and also served as an elder. Kerry Decker went on to preach at Hayward, CA

for over 13 years, and then became preaching minister at the Pathway Christian Church, Riverside, CA.

## **PUBLICATION WORK ACCELERATES**

For the first year or so I used a room in the Arvada church building to do the layout and paste up of Impact and another room for a growing retail bookstore, for use by the students and members of the churches. By now Impact was being published by the Arvada church and mailed out, at no charge, on a bimonthly schedule, to over 2,000 addresses throughout the nation and overseas. (By 1972 the number was over 3,500; by 1976 it was 5,600). The costs were jointly met by the Arvada church, contributions of readers and the sale of Christian literature from the bookstore. The role of Eddie DeVries and Don Heese, as Associate Editors, consisted primarily of providing advice on its name and format in the beginning and then writing articles after that.

As a larger successor to News and Truths, Impact now began to take on a much nicer layout, making use of color ink on its masthead and clip art, and was commercially printed. Since the sale of Christian literature was a major source of income for financing the no subscription publication, I began running “Impact Book Reviews,” at first a single column, then eventually a full page insert. As people ordered books, the margin of profit helped pay for paper, ink, plates, printing equipment, postage, etc. In time, through the generosity of the Southwest congregation and Don Heese, we were able to acquire (Jan. 1976) a large Multilith 1250-LW offset printing press, on which Don printed the paper after burning the plates.

The “Happenings” column carried news of the three cooperating churches (Arvada, Southwest and Aurora) as well as area activities such as camps, rallies, retreats, etc., held as far north as Gering, NE and as far south as Colorado Springs. It also reported news of *The New Creations* singing group and the preaching activities of area evangelists. A feature utilized during 1974-1975 was an insert called, Love-Vu, prepared by Gary Flom, then of Loveland, CO. Regular columns later appeared by Archie Word (1975) and Paul Crist (1976).

Between 1973 and 1975 I wrote and published a series of small tracts for use in witnessing (They were patterned after a similar series by C. S. Lovett): *Here's a Tip for You*; *Going to Church Can Be Dangerous*; *Bills, Bills, Bills*; *Where Are You Going?*; *The Man Who Was Told to Stop Praying*; and *How To Get Rid of People Who Bug You About Religion*. I also compiled a chart of Acts 2:38 from 72 translations (revised editions later contained 81, and then 108 translations). My

fourth book, *The Two By Twos: Who Are They? What Do They Believe?* (about a little known cult) came out in 1977. The type was set, the plates burned, and the entire booklet was printed, bound and trimmed as a class assignment by students of my college class on Printing and Publications. (It was later reprinted and marketed by Religion Analysis Service, 5693 Geneva Ave. N., Oakdale, MN 55128).

## **HAIR, AGAIN!**

Shortly after arriving in Denver, someone (I don't recall who) suggested that I get a hairpiece to improve my appearance. It was now over twenty years since I had worn one, and I remembered it as something rather stiff, uncomfortable and not very natural looking. Since that time, however, hair styles had changed radically, so that longer hair (especially in the back) was now in vogue. In view of being judged as service-connected for my scalp condition by the VA, I decided to speak to doctors about the possibility the next time I was at the VA Hospital there in Denver. Surprisingly, they were quite positive about the idea, so I began the process of obtaining authorization for one to be custom-made and fitted for me. When approval was granted they sent me to Artistic Hairgoods, a small Denver company specializing in custom hairpieces. The proprietor was a pleasant and competent lady, Lucille Policy, who took great pride in doing the finest job possible. So by the first part of 1971, I was wearing a very nice, natural-looking hairpiece, made with a soft, comfortable nylon lining, from *real* Italian hair. The price, \$1400, was paid for by the VA. And because of sun, perspiration and scalp oils, my hairpiece would "wear out" with daily use, so the VA kindly furnished me with a new one every two years since!

I remember well the first day I wore it. A young lady bumped into me in the stairway of the Arvada church building and her mouth dropped open . . . she couldn't even speak. But many funny incidents have occurred over the years since wearing my hairpiece. The first one happened in Ottumwa, Iowa, about a month after I got it, during the annual January Gathering on which I appeared as a speaker that year. There were several hundred in attendance, most of whom had known me for many years . . . without hair! So, what was I do to relax the audience? My opening remarks were something like, "Well, since moving to Denver a few months ago, I have developed a stronger conviction against this *topless* business!" That about brought down the house and occasionally I still have people who were there remind me of those remarks. Also, once in a while, I will have someone look at me a few minutes then say, "Is that your *real hair*?" For the answer I now give

them, I am indebted to the master of one-liner quips, Vic Knowles. I simply look down at their feet and ask, curiously, “Are those your *real shoes*?” (Sometimes, I’ve said, “Well, it’s *real* hair, and it belongs to *me!*”)

Everyone who had known me, without exception, has expressed their overwhelming approval at my being able now to appear more “normal.” It has done wonders for my self-esteem and I’m sure has enhanced my ministry. An amusing bonus has been that most people now guess my age to be years, sometimes even decades, younger than I really am! But maybe I’m due for such an assessment, especially after what one lady said to me in Orlando right after I moved there in 1955. I was calling door-to-door when I came to the home of an older lady. She invited me in to visit, so in the course of our conversation, I mentioned that it was my birthday and asked her if she could guess my age! She looked at me for a moment, glancing at my bald head, then said, “Sixty-five?” I was just 28! According to her calculations, I would be about *107* now! Yes, having real hair again has been a real blessing!

## **CONVERTING A HIPPIE!**

One of the most memorable conversions of my Denver ministry was that of Kerry Decker, which took place a few months after we arrived. He was a 16-year-old “Hippie” type, complete with long, bushy hair, who pumped gas where I traded. We got to be on friendly terms, so one day I said to him, “Do you ever read the Bible very much?” “Sometimes,” came his reply. My next question, intended to lead him to accept my eventual invitation to have a Bible study, was “Do you understand it very well?” When he responded that he understood some of it, I then went on to ask him, “Would you like to get together for a Bible study?” When he indicated that he would, I asked, “How about Friday night?” (Years later Kerry told me that when he agreed to the study, he never expected that I would press him for an exact *time*, much less so *soon!*). When I suggested that it be at his house, or mine, he declined both options. I was hesitant to suggest my office at the church building, for I felt sure he would be intimidated by that setting. But, surprisingly, he agreed. So, I arranged for my son Tim, who was 22, to be at the study also, feeling Kerry and Tim would relate better. We waited, and waited, but Kerry didn’t show up. Finally, in he walked and we began our “study.” (Later he told me that he had driven around the block on his motorcycle several times, trying to decide whether or not to come in). It was more of a “stump the preacher” session, but all of his questions were very sincere. Later studies were held in my home, after a delicious meal

cooked by my dear wife. Kerry was eventually baptized on Jan. 19, 1971 and immediately enrolled in *RMCC*. He was one of the most intellectually brilliant young men I had ever met, but over the next few years suffered considerably from flashbacks resulting from the LSD he had been taking before we met him. I was also very happy to perform his wedding a few years later to a lovely Christian girl from Hayward, California, Janice Munsell. Kerry then went on to have a long and successful preaching ministry in California.

## **WALK-INS WELCOME!**

That same year (1971) saw another interesting conversion. I was teaching a middle-aged man and his nephew, using the Jule Miller filmstrips, but by about the third study their interest level had become quite marginal. Then one night, as the uncle was taking his usual doze during the study, I heard the back door open and some muffled conversation out in the kitchen. The uncle awakened long enough to call something to the people out there, so I went ahead with the filmstrip showing for a few more minutes. Finally, realizing the awkwardness of people being in another room of the house, and knowing they must have been wondering what was going on, I called out, “Whoever you are out there, come on in. We’re just having a Bible study.” So in walks a nice young couple, Doug Dix and his fiancée Philomena Guinn, who immediately began showing real interest in the things I was presenting. That brief encounter led to a filmstrip study at their place and I eventually baptized, then married them. They later moved to a large farm in northeastern Colorado and continue to faithfully serve the Lord, with Doug eventually becoming an elder in the church. It shows that you never know how a Bible study contact will eventually work out. God’s providence was no doubt at work in allowing us to meet that sincere couple and to help them find Christ.

## **NATIONWIDE YOUTH ROUNDUP**

In the summer of 1971 Eddie DeVries asked me and several men from the Arvada church to meet with him to discuss plans for developing a mountain encampment for high school and college age young people. Eddie had been dreaming of such a gathering for a number of years and now that he was in Denver, felt this was the time to bring it into being. Frankly, I was not very enthusiastic about the idea, simply because I couldn’t see how a gathering of this type could possibly be held in a remote, mountainous outdoors, with no eating or sleeping facilities! I had been accustomed to managing youth camps, which were always held at

established campgrounds, even if the accommodations were quite rustic at times. To his credit, Eddie could visualize a gathering where people would flock together in tents, campers and recreational vehicles, cooking their meals over an open fire, and sometimes even sleeping under the stars! And *Nationwide Youth Rally* (as it was initially called) became just that!

My responsibilities that first year (1972), when NYR was held in a high, mountain meadow in the Geneva Basin, southwest of Denver, involved conducting a class exposing the fallacies of evolution (complete with slides), leading attendees on an exciting tour of Ghost Towns in the Colorado Rockies and running advertisements in Impact, to encourage attendance. My participation would last only the first couple of years, however, mainly because of differences that arose between Eddie, myself and others over several issues that were emerging in our fellowship at that time. More about that later.

## **HARBOR LIGHT CENTER**

With so few churches in the area with which we had fellowship, in the spring of 1972 opportunities for students in *RMCC* to obtain preaching experience were very limited. While they eventually helped out with preaching, music, youth work, etc., at Arvada, Southwest and Aurora, at this time we needed a situation where they could participate in the Lord's work by means of "hands on" involvement. They would not only be doing something worthwhile, but would also gain valuable experience in the process. Since early in my Christian life, while still living in Oregon, I had had the opportunity to help out with a "skid road" mission in downtown Portland, I felt this type of ministry filled a genuine need. So, I began looking for just such an opportunity for our students of *RMCC*. The Salvation Army organization was conducting such a mission, called *Harbor Light Center*, in a rundown section of downtown Denver, so I checked into the possibility of how we might help out. It was a typical rescue mission operation, which offered free meals, limited sleeping quarters and counseling for 70 to 90 homeless and derelict men each night, provided they were willing to first sit through a sermon! So, I arranged for several of our students (Tim Paul and Kerry Decker, initially) to lead the songs, bring special music and preach a message each Monday night. We were given complete freedom to work with any responses to the invitation and follow up with them by incorporating them into one of our churches for spiritual nurturing. Girl students were sometimes used for playing the piano and singing special numbers. While the results of this effort were limited (Bud Clausen, a

truck driver, was converted, however, and remained in Denver a while) the students gained valuable experience ministering to real people with serious needs and had to cope with some very stressful situations at times. We continued this ministry every Monday night for a year or so.

## **FREE BIBLE COURSES**

By 1972, when I was leading in the work of The Church in Southwest Denver, I realized that I needed to try something else in order to get more contacts for the Lord. Our newly-acquired church building in Southwest Denver was located just beyond the main populated area of southwest metropolitan Denver, so it had very low visibility to drive-by traffic. And worse, the building was situated on a large semi-rural lot between a dead-end dirt road on one side and a sparsely traveled dirt road on the other. I put up a small “arrow” sign on the nearest arterial but someone took it down the very next day! So I designed and built a larger, plywood sign and erected it on our property next to the driveway. The sign was uniquely-shaped, like a huge open Bible with wooden letters spelling out, “The Church in Southwest Denver.” Then beneath these appeared the words, “Church of God,” “Church of Christ,” “Body of Christ,” etc. (reminiscent of Archie Word’s sign in front of his Portland church building years earlier). But this did little to draw attention to our meeting place, for few people ever drove by that way to see it!

It was about then that I got the idea of placing small cardboard boxes containing return-postage-paid cards offering a free Bible course throughout the southwest sector of Denver. I obtained permission from doctors’ and dentists’ offices, insurance offices, beauty parlors, barber shops, convenience stores and anywhere else where people might see them and pick up a card. All they had to do was to fill out their address and drop it in the mail and I had a very good prospect for conversion. I soon developed a “route” which I covered every few weeks, replenishing the cards taken from the 50 or so businesses where boxes were placed. I usually spent a day or two a week working this outreach ministry and kept careful records of the number of cards taken and returned and how many Bible courses were requested. But my ultimate purpose was to make personal contact with the people, so I always took the *first* lesson in person and then offered the people the opportunity of seeing the Bible filmstrips in a “live” showing in their home in addition to receiving the Bible course booklets. This method proved quite effective in securing a number of good contacts and led to several conversions over the next couple of years. I guess I have tried to utilize some form of literature in evangelism throughout my ministry.



## **BETHEL'S NAMESAKE**

Not long after Philomena and Doug Dix became Christians, her sister Judy Guinn (a Catholic), came from Kentucky to stay with them. Even though single, she readily made it known to the church that she was expecting a child. The Southwest Denver church was very supportive and loving and soon she obeyed the gospel wholeheartedly, turning herself completely over to the Lord. From the beginning Judy had made a very solid decision to give the baby up for adoption, but *only* to a Christian couple. After a little research we learned that she could not initiate this herself because the state of Colorado required the state to place such babies in homes. We knew of a Christian couple in Minnesota who had longed for a child for several years. Their "home state" was Iowa, so they contacted a lawyer there. Arrangements were made for Bethel to go with Judy to Hamburg, IA where they stayed with Betty and Chet Mullins (the parents of Terry's wife Linda), who made them very comfortable. After discussing the matter with the lawyer and judge who would handle the adoption arrangements, they settled in for many days of waiting, walking and reading. Bedtimes were filled with earnest prayer and flowing tears as Judy began to doubt her decision to give up her unborn child. After almost two weeks of emotion-packed days of anxious waiting and wondering, there was still no word from the lawyers or the judge. So, Bethel called the judge one morning, only to hear him say that he could not take the case, and that Judy would have to go to a different Iowa town, where the adoptive couple's lawyer lived! Bethel's reply was, "We don't intend to go *anywhere* else" and hung up the phone! Then she and Judy began hugging, singing, dancing and crying . . . they felt this to be a clear answer to the many prayers about the matter! She would keep her baby!

So, after "hitching" a ride back to Denver with the Jim Winder family, who were visiting Hamburg at the time, they arrived home safely, tired and emotionally drained, yet confident that the Lord's will had been done! Judy gave birth to her baby the very next day, with Bethel coaching the delivery of her namesake, a beautiful baby girl named Beth! Judy later returned to Kentucky and eventually married Beth's father.

Only recently Bethel received a letter with pictures of a black-haired beauty, the Homecoming Queen of her school . . . the baby that was almost given away!

## **TOO NUDE!**

One of the Bible college courses I have taught through the years is The History and Doctrine of Cults. I not only like to read numerous

books on the subject, but have also tried to learn as much as possible about the various religions first hand. It was July 4, 1972 that a little known cult, *The Rainbow Family of Living Light*, met in a large encampment high in the Rockies near Granby, Colorado. It was extensively advertised in the newspaper as being a “Hippie” group that had caused quite a “stir” at other such “gatherings” throughout the country. Besides their mystical, eastern religion beliefs, they were especially known for their rock music, drugs and nudity! Their exact meeting place was identified as a high meadow near Strawberry Lake, and thousands were expected to attend. So, because I wanted to become better acquainted with this group and its teaching, and have first hand material for an article for Impact, I decided to make a trip up to their encampment, equipped with a portable cassette recorder for obtaining an interview with its leader if possible! But, not knowing what to expect, and for personal moral support, I asked Kerry Decker to accompany me. Unfortunately (for me), he had a previous commitment (it being the Fourth of July), so I determined to go alone! I got up early on the 4th and drove up to Granby, where I learned that vans were available at a staging area called “the parking lot,” to shuttle people to the “top” (the actual place of their meeting). As I arrived at “the parking lot” it was a virtual sea of old vans and busses, with “Hippies” toting backpacks and guitars milling all around. These were the “shuttle vans” I had heard about, so after inquiring, I learned that all one had to do was to ask when the next one was leaving for “the top” and hitch a ride. So, I piled into a beat-up old VW van (no seats), along with about a dozen other young men and women. We were now on our way in the packed, smoke-filled van, with me sitting on the floor gripping my cassette recorder. Then the thought came to me, “What am I doing here?” I certainly didn’t fit in with the rest and the way they were eyeing me, I’m sure they wondered the same thing! I glanced around and saw they were passing around a “joint.” When it came to me, I just hunched down a little more and shook my head, probably with a slight grimace! After a bumpy, half hour ride we finally got there, only it wasn’t “the top!” We pulled over to the side of the road, beside a pristine mountain lake (Lake Granby) and everyone piled out. After gathering up their gear, they all began hiking up a very steep trail, through trees and brush. I asked where we were going and was told that the “happening” was going on up above, so I began trudging behind them. It was steep and dusty and the time was getting away. (I had planned to attend a Rally in Colorado Springs the next day and had the fleeting thought that I could get stuck up here with no shuttle van to take me back to my car!). I was also getting very tired (not

expecting this much hiking, I didn't have the proper clothes or boots). After about half an hour, I met several of the cult members coming down the trail. "How much farther?" I asked. "You're about half way," came their reply! Groan! As I sat down to rest, some more of them came stumbling by me on the narrow trail . . . including one gal who was *topless*! That did it! I immediately headed back down to the road, found one of their leaders and sat with him by the beautiful lake while taping his answers to a series of questions I had prepared about the group. I finally made it back home late that night, better informed but also very tired, sore and filthy! The only redeeming value of the trip is that I have played that informative tape for all of my Cults classes since.

## **CONFRONTING ATHEIST O'HAIR**

In 1972 I attended a lecture in Denver by Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the infamous atheist credited with helping to get prayer removed from the public school classroom. She was quite flamboyant, sarcastic and very outspoken in her castigation of the Biblical view of creation. At the close of her long, rambling speech, delivered in front of a large public assembly, she invited questions from the audience. When I raised my hand, she surprised me by requesting that I come to the platform to speak through the microphone. My question to her was, "Mrs. O'Hair, if evolution is true, then where is the evidence of a single intermediate life form?" With a smirking flourish, she shot back, "You're evidence of it!" and asked me to take my seat. I got her address and began a correspondence over the next year regarding accepting her challenge to debate the subject of Creation/Evolution. She wrote back that since I was such an unknown nobody, she wouldn't waste her time or money. She said I only wanted the debate in order to cash in on her notoriety and get my name in the newspaper! Nothing further ever became of the exchange. (Note: In the mid-1990s she mysteriously disappeared, and was eventually declared murdered by her son William in 1999).

## **TREMONT BIBLE CAMP**

Ever since that first camp I attended (Camp McKinley, near Coquille, Oregon) in 1948, I had held strong feelings that youth camps were an important ministry for reaching and keeping young people. The six years I spent managing Camp Ithiel in Florida only confirmed that conviction. So, by the summer of 1972 I began thinking of starting one for the children of the Denver churches. NYR was geared mainly to older teens and college age young people, and really did not minister to the special needs of children as young as 10 to 13. One day Bethel and I set

out driving in the mountains west of Denver looking for sites for possible use as a Bible camp when we came across a sign reading, “Camp Tremont” (a name meaning “tree mountain”). The grounds were both beautiful and very accommodating so plans were initiated for the first Tremont Bible Camp, which was held July 9-14, 1973. I served as camp manager for the next six years, with able assistance from such dedicated youth workers as Steve Heese, Tom Heese, Kerry Decker, Dennis DeVries, Chester Mullins, Clyde Grammon, John Snogren, Linda Jamison, David Solliday, Shirley Whitver, Terry Paul, Tim Paul, Billy Paul and numerous others, mostly students of our college. There were 43 in attendance that first year with the number increasing in subsequent years.

Some of the memorable features of Tremont Bible Camp that no doubt endeared themselves to both campers and faculty alike from those early years were: the “Galilean service” where Terry spoke while standing in a boat out in the lake; the annual climb up to the summit of 11,200 foot Mt. Thorodin; the breathtaking, panoramic view of the snow-capped continental divide of the Rockies (even in July); the late night baptisms in the small lake in the center of camp; the dramatic “skits” held in the rustic chapel (who could forget David Knowles’ reckless reenactment of Jehu riding his chariot, or Billy Paul’s gruesome (and risky) portrayal of the hanging of Haman?); Tremont (Good) Times, the daily newspaper containing juicy editorial comments about camp life; contests between “tribes” in which the winners were decided by the total points acquired on the basis of cleanliness, Bible drills, memory verses, skits, etc., etc., etc. Perhaps, I suppose, the era of Bible camps has passed its heyday. What a shame!

Later Southwest Denver also sponsored an innovative retreat called “Concentration Camp” (begun Jan. 20-23, 1978). Among other things one year it featured a dinner meal where everyone was totally chagrined to discover that all they were served to eat was a cup of water and a piece of dried bread. (a few of the bigger eaters failed to appreciate the point Steve Heese was trying to get across!)

## **SALES PITCH EVANGELISM**

We all get many phone calls soliciting us to buy something, from policemen trying to persuade us to purchase circus tickets to someone wanting us to change long distance carriers. Sometimes the caller offers us an incentive if we will only look at their product. One evening I received a phone call from a young man asking if we would allow him to tell us about his product (I don’t remember what it was). He promised

that, if we did, he would give us a free set of steak knives! So, I decided to turn the tables on him! I said, “Yes, I’ll let you show me your product *if* you agree to let me show you a series of Bible study filmstrips.” Well, that’s usually all it takes to rid yourself of a salesman. But, in this case the guy agreed. So, after a series of Bible studies, Mike and Peggy Kaiser were immersed into Christ April 11, 1973, and continued in the church for a time.

On one occasion we invited them over to have supper with us, planning to have the Bible study afterward. I went to pick them up and as we were driving home, I stopped at a gas station to call Bethel to let her know about when we would be there. I was going to be only a minute, so parked the car right out in front of the station window while I went in to use the phone . . . and left the motor running. I didn’t think anything about doing that because I thought the couple would remain in the car. But, they got out and went into the gas station to buy a candy bar. Just as I was hanging up the phone I glanced out the window, horrified to see my car slowing rolling backwards, finally stopping after crashing into a steel drum at the end of the pump island. I noticed a policeman parked at the curb so called him over to report what happened. After carefully searching in his police manual, he finally cited me for leaving a vehicle while the motor was running. But before I had to report to the magistrate to pay my fine, I got to thinking about the situation. So, in court, I asked him if it was against the law to leave your car running in the driveway of your own house. Saying he didn’t know, he advised me to see the city attorney. When I did, he withdrew the charge, saying the citation would have been valid only on *public* property, not on private! Now I know why people have occasionally told me that I should have been a lawyer!

## **EATING KRISHNA PIE**

During a quarter when I was teaching my Cults class in our training program Christian Leadership College, I learned of a local Hare Krishna temple in Denver so decided to take my class (about 6-8 students) to visit it in order to see first hand what idolatry was all about. I called to make the arrangement, and upon arriving, their saffron-robed monk was very gracious in showing us all around the temple. The bluish statues of their god Krishna were in evidence everywhere. Especially interesting was an elaborate stage filled with all kinds of worship paraphernalia, including a doll-sized replica of Krishna, which was “put to bed” behind a curtain in an ornate crib. The monk then showed us where a bowl of food was placed for Krishna to eat when it arose from sleep. When I asked him why the dish of food was still there in the

morning after they had pulled back the curtain, he responded with a benign smile. But I pressed him about this ridiculous practice, “Is it because Krishna might not have been hungry that morning?” To his credit, he smiled again, so I just dropped the matter. Before we left, the monk informed us that we were to join him for a bit of dessert . . . *banana cream pie*! This came as a surprise and we all just looked at each other as he invited us to be seated, cross-legged on the floor. Then he brought out the delicious-looking pie. “I baked it myself!” he grinned. Again, my students just looked at one another and gulped! Had this pie been offered as a meal sacrifice to the false god Krishna? Were we about to eat idolatrous “leftovers?” What was I to do? I knew the students were very uncomfortable (and so was I). So, I announced that I would lead us in prayer, thanking God for the food, and explaining that my prayer would “sanctify” our dessert, no matter whatever else they might have done with it! (Well, doesn’t the Bible say that “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer”? (I Tim. 4:4-5). So, we all proceeded to eat our piece of Hare Krishna pie, but I must confess that it *just didn’t taste right*! That’s the closest encounter I ever had with rank idolatry! It was such a pity to see it up close!

## **CORRECTING THE NASB**

It was in 1973, while I was on the faculty of Rocky Mountain College of Christ along with John Snogren, who taught Greek, that I noticed a passage in the *New American Standard Bible*, whose translation I questioned. The verse was Acts 10:43, which read in the original 1963 edition of the New Testament as follows: “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him *has received* forgiveness of sins.” It appeared to me that the concept of “faith only” among some of the translators may have crept into this verse. They made it sound as though a person who believes in Christ has *already* received the forgiveness of his sins. This, of course, would eliminate repentance or baptism from having anything to do with forgiveness. So, I showed this to John, who checked the Greek text, as well as Dana and Mantey’s *A Manual, Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, and sure enough, the Greek of this verse does *not* warrant the use of “has received.” I further checked a number of reputable translations, all of which read simply “receives” (RSV, NEB, REB, NIV, NRSV, etc.) or “shall/will receive” (KJV, NKJV). Not a *single* translation in my collection of hundreds gave a reading such as “has received.” John wrote The Lockman Foundation, producers of the

NASB, and received a cordial reply from Reuben Olsen, on Oct. 31, 1973, stating, "I spoke to a couple of our translators about your question in Acts 10:43 and both agreed that 'receives' would be the best translation. The matter has been put on the agenda for the next review and revision session of the board. I am not able to say how the present rendition was arrived at. The meeting may throw some light on this." In both the 1977 revised edition and the 1995 updated edition of the NASB, Acts 10:43 has now been changed to read simply "receives!" It's important that we study the Bible carefully, because theological biases can creep into even the best of translations!

## MY ONLY DEBATE

On Dec. 15, 1973, John Snogren (a graduate of the Gering training program and later a teacher in Christian Leadership College) met David Watts, a preacher of the noninstrumental Church of Christ, in a debate over the question of instrumental music. It was held on the campus of Colorado State University, in Ft. Collins, Colorado, the city where both David and John were preaching at the time. Ralph Johnson, of Seattle, Washington, a recognized scholar on the subject, was prevailed upon to participate by providing John with voluminous research materials. He flew in from Seattle, bringing with him on the plane a huge metal file cabinet filled with photocopies, transparencies, books and other valuable study materials on the subject. I was asked to be John's moderator and participate in a limited way by offering advice as the debate progressed. During the course of the debate, one of the key points made by Watts was that J. B. Rotherham, a noninstrumental man himself, in his New Testament translation of Roman 15:9 and I Corinthians 14:15 used the words "sing psalms" to translate the Greek word "psallo." At this point I entered the debate to point out that Rotherham had used those words in his 1878 translation, but had *corrected himself in his 1897 translation* by using the words "strike the strings." Watts did everything he could to discredit my use of Rotherham's revised 1897 translation, asserting that *his* copy of Rotherham was the *definitive* one. So, I read from the *Preface* of my copy of the 1897 edition, which bore out that it was "so thoroughly remolded as to be practically a new work." It soon became evident to all present that Watts was not about to concede a single point of his argument, even when confronted with clear evidence to the contrary. That was my moment of "fame" as a debater.

## **“GOD’S KIDS”**

In the spring of 1973 another “skid road” mission opportunity opened up for us. The experience gained from the *Harbor Light Center* proved very helpful to students of *RMCC*, and served to motivate others to want to become more involved in some kind of ministry. Somehow I got in touch with *The Volunteers of America*, a smaller service organization similar to *The Salvation Army*, that operated a Sunday School mission for children in a storefront building in the 2800 block of Larimer Street in downtown Denver. A few children from nearby projects were attending, mostly blacks and Hispanics, but the number was dwindling and the mission was on the verge of being discontinued. I talked with the lady in charge and explained that we had Bible college students who were both qualified and willing to participate in keeping the mission going. To my surprise, she just turned over the entire operation to us. This included the use of their quarters for classes (3 PM on Sunday afternoon) and the furnishing of light refreshments for the children. (The building had a complete kitchen facility, for it served meals to homeless men on Saturday nights as a regular rescue mission). After conducting the first few weeks myself, I put Steve Heese in charge, for he had proven his ability to work with young people at the Southwest Denver church. Steve soon enlisted help from competent *RMCC* girl students (Paula Gulley, Shirley Whitver, Mary Schellenger, and several others) and gave the ministry the catchy name, “God’s Kids!” He then arranged for transporting children from several low income projects nearby, and eventually built up attendance until it became a significant ministry. In time we were even able to influence some of the kids to attend our youth camp, NYR, and Sunday evening services at Southwest. A few were won to Christ and only eternity will reveal how much good was done in the lives of these underprivileged, minority children.

## **JEEPIN’ FOR JESUS**

A couple of years after his conversion, when Kerry was helping me in the Southwest Denver church, he and I would go out calling together. On one particular night, as we were finishing our calls for the evening, I was driving my 1973 Plymouth Fury III out of a subdivision to an intersection with a main thoroughfare. But, with my limited eyesight, especially at night, I thought we could *cross* the intersection and continue straight ahead. After all, I saw lights ahead of me. So, I drove *across* the intersection and suddenly found myself going down a slight embankment, made a couple of quick turns then finally emerged onto a cement driveway. I just kept going until we were out of the driveway and



onto the street in front of a house . . . in another subdivision! It turned out that I had driven *across the shoulder* and into the *back yard* of a house situated at the end of a cul-de-sac, then across its back lawn, onto its driveway and out to the street! The lights I had seen were coming from a *second-story bedroom* of the house. Kerry and I had to pull over and howl with laughter as we imagined how the people must have felt seeing car headlights shining into their upstairs bedroom window where no headlights had ever shone before! I'm just thankful that I didn't take out a doghouse or something! Kerry always referred to that night of calling as "jeepin."

## **TRACKING STONE FOOTPRINTS**

Another college course I taught was in the field of Christian Evidences, which involved presenting a thorough refutation of the theory of Evolution. A major point in this material was the view that the majority of numerous fossils found all over the world, even including those discovered in high mountains, were deposited there as a result of the Flood of Noah. I used photos showing fossils in such places and in such circumstances that suggested a sudden catastrophe instead of a slow, gradual evolution of the species. This emphasis heightened my students' interest in geological formations. So, I took them on a field trip to the Rocky Mountains, a few miles west of Denver, on April 12, 1975, in search of giant fossil footprints (whose location had been cited in some of my research books). We were able to locate several dozen very impressive indentations near Morrison, Colorado, made by giant dinosaurs when the rock in which we found them was soft mud. We were all equipped with plastic bottles of powered chalk which was sprayed on the tracks so they would show up in photos we took. Besides my students, Don Heese and Don Strong, of Topeka, Kansas participated in the expedition also. I informed The Denver Post in advance of our field trip, so that they sent out staff photographers, who took several excellent pictures of the students pointing to dinosaur footprints and ran them in The Denver Post, Colorado's largest newspaper (April 14, 1975)!

## **IMPACT CHRISTIAN BOOKSTORE**

For all the years that News and Truths / Impact had been published, first from Florida, then Nebraska, it had been printed either in a church building or by a commercial printer. But by the fall of 1975, a new phase of the publication work had begun.

Don Heese had maintained secular employment most of his years of ministry in Denver and was an excellent carpenter, working in

construction management for several companies before becoming president of Van Heese and Hemmerich, a construction company he formed in partnership with David Vanderhoofven and Rolf Hemmerich. The need for office space for the company soon arose so Don was able to acquire a sizable brick building in the Barnum area of southwest Denver. (It was named that because the Barnum and Bailey Circus, in its early days, had once utilized the area as the location for its circus animals and equipment). The building, located at 71 Knox Court, had three basic compartments; the outer portion (about 600 square feet) was a carpeted storefront area (previously used as a dry cleaners); the center portion, somewhat smaller, but very suitable for a three-desk office; and the back part a large area that had contained dry-cleaning equipment. So, Don suggested that we purchase shelving and display cases and use the front area for a retail Christian bookstore to help meet the growing costs of publishing Impact. The middle part was to be used for the construction company's and my offices, while the back part was to be used for housing the large Multilith 1250-LW offset press, plate burning equipment and folding machine, purchased for printing Impact and other Christian literature. This multi-use facility proved a real blessing to our publication work, and Don is to be commended for his foresight and generosity in providing it. Out front was a large reader board sign which read Impact Christian Bookstore - 1-6 PM. So now, the composition, layout, plate burning, printing, folding and mailing of Impact was being done under one roof, truly a publication center!

But, with the acquisition of this excellent facility, my schedule tightened up considerably. I would now leave my home in Arvada by 7 AM in order to begin college classes by 7:30 AM. Then at noon I rushed to the retail bookstore (with my sack lunch), to wait on bookstore customers and then study and grade papers in preparation for the next day's college class. I would then grab a bite somewhere and rush to a 6:30 PM filmstrip study with a family in southwest Denver and finally rush again to an 8:30 PM filmstrip study! I usually arrived back home by around 10:30 PM, well used up for the day!

This kind of schedule, however, which I found enjoyable, as well as challenging, was also taking its toll on my family. Once again, life was moving just too fast to get off!

## **BRUSH WITH DEATH**

During the summer of 1976, as Bethel, Danny and I were returning from a trip to Monterey, LA to visit Tim's family, we drove through New Mexico and southwestern Colorado to see some "sights"

(one of the few times we ever did that). We stopped at Mesa Verde National Park, where for some strange reason in the 13th century, Indians had made their homes in caves on the sides of steep cliffs high above the ground. We drove off the main road to the top of a high plateau which overlooked the hundreds of caves pockmarking the sides of the sheer cliffs, where Indians had once lived for less than 100 years. As we were making our way down the winding gravel road, with Bethel driving, suddenly we came to a sharp curve and were horrified to see a car careening up the road directly at us. Both cars slammed on their brakes and began skidding, with the other car heading right for us . . . sliding sideways! Bethel alertly swerved to her *left* and was able to miss the car by mere inches as it came to a dusty stop near the edge of the shoulder above a steep embankment! It was an older couple and the driver was quite shaken as I went over to see how they were doing. Had it not been for Bethel's skillful driving, and our assigned guardian angel being on duty, we would have been in the worst accident of our lives, with the possibility of fatalities to us all! We were thoroughly convinced, once again, that angels truly are "ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14). That night we stopped at a cheap motel, and as we were preparing for bed, a tiny mouse jumped out from under our pillow. With the terrifying events of the day still etched in our minds, I remarked, "I'd rather be sleeping on mousy sheets than on snow white ones in a hospital bed tonight!"

## **BUS MINISTRY**

The 70s saw the rise of bus evangelism in churches all across America. Books, articles and workshops all began touting the tremendous results from operating a bus program. During these years virtually all of the fastest growing churches, including some in our fellowship, were into bussing children from unchurched families. And given the problems we were having at Southwest Denver in getting the surrounding neighborhood to know where we met, it seemed wise for us to "go to them," in order to "bring them in!" So, we purchased a nice used bus, gave it an attractively designed paint job, then trained a crew. On Sept. 12, 1976 we started our first bus route, covering several subdivisions near our building. After the program was going well, and we were bringing 20 to 30 kids to church each Sunday, I began going out occasionally as "runner" on Saturdays (to confirm attendance the next day) and on Sundays (to inform children that "we're here"). I enjoyed participating in one of the church's important ministries and found that it helped me to bond with members of the crew by demonstrating my

genuine interest in this valuable program. Steve Heese oversaw the ministry and was primarily responsible for its success. Our attendance quickly grew to 122. We also used our bus to transport youth to camps, rallies and skating parties. A worthwhile by-product of our church bus was that it served as a mobile billboard, telling people about the church and its meeting place, wherever it went! Several were converted from the bus ministry, including one man who became an enthusiastic driver!

## **PLACES PREACHED**

During the eight years I spent in Denver (1970-1978), I was able to serve on several camps, rallies and retreats as well as conduct five of my twelve evangelistic meetings. My records show the following places and activities: *Loveland, CO*, Sept. 27, 1970, Sept. 29, 1972; *Loveland, CO* (Thanksgiving rally), Nov. 26, 1970; *Ottumwa, IA* (January Gathering), Jan. 12-14, 1971; *Oakdale, NE*, Mar. 28, 1971; *Portland, OR* (Montavilla), June 13, 20, 1971; *Portland, OR (Duke St.)*, June 20, 1971; *Lexington, NE* (youth rally), Mar. 31-Apr. 1, 1972; *Sidney, NE*, May 14-July 30, 1972 (five times); *Geneva Basin, CO (Nationwide Youth Rally)*, Aug. 1-5, 1972; *Loveland, CO* (youth retreat), Sept. 9-10, 1972; *Loveland, CO* (adult retreat), May 4-6, 1973; *Hayward, CA* (meeting), May 26-31, 1974; *Wray, CO*, July 28, 1974; *Ft. Collins, CO*, Aug. 18, 1974; *Gering, NE* (workshop), Apr. 8-11, 1975; *Hayward, CA* (meeting), May 1975; *Kimball, NE*, (youth rally), Jan. 24, 1976; *Gering, NE* (workshop), Apr. 5-8, 1976; *Ferriday, LA* (meeting), June 13-20, 1976; *Loveland, CO* (Thanksgiving rally), Nov. 26, 1976; *Rutland, VT* (meeting), Apr. 3-8, 1977; *Albany, NY*, Apr. 9, 1977; *New York City, NY*, Apr. 10, 1977; *Ft. Collins, CO* (Cherokee Ranch retreat), Oct. 7-10, 1977; *Las Vegas, NV*, Oct. 28, 1977; *Council Bluffs, IA* (bus workshop), Nov. 21-23, 1977; *Orlando, FL* (rally), Dec. 23-25, 1977; *Oskaloosa, IA* (workshop), Mar. 10, 1978; *Ottumwa, IA* (meeting), May 4-11, 1978; *Roundup Ranch, CO*, (family retreat), May 27, 1978; *New Waterford, OH (Lake Mount)*, Aug. 13, 1978; *Monterey, LA* (meeting) Oct. 5-8, 1978; *Wheatland, WY*, Oct.-Nov. 1978; (My records are incomplete during this period because, due to the stressful situation, a lapse occurs in my record keeping of sermons preached from April 8, 1973 until Dec. 10, 1978).

## **SOME UNUSUAL SERMONS**

In those days I got quite imaginative in the sermons I preached at Southwest Denver. On one occasion I got the idea of bringing a sermon titled, "Description of a Dead Person" (preached March 26, 1978). The

first point was “Some People Are Dead *IN* their Sins,” the second, “Some People Are Dead *TO* their Sins,” and the third, “Jesus Has Died *FOR* Our Sins.” The proposition I was planning to prove was that *everyone is dead!* On the Saturday before I brought the sermon I had arranged with a local funeral home to *borrow a casket* from them. I was even able to talk them into delivering it to the church building (in a hearse, to boot!). Later, someone in a subdivision overlooking our church building said when they saw it they thought I had died! So, as people filed into the church building that Sunday morning, there it was, a beautiful, closed casket, sitting on its stand right there in front of the pulpit. Everyone was unusually quiet, all wondering if someone had died and that this was to be an “impromptu” funeral, instead of a regular Sunday service. But, I just went ahead with the sermon and when I finished the second point, I said, “Now, to illustrate my point that we are all dead, I want everyone to get up and file past the casket and look in. You will see a dead person!” A hush came over the auditorium as I opened the casket lid and draped the heavy satin “pall” out over its edges. But, slowly, row by row people began to get up from their seats and file past the casket (all but a few obstinate (?) people complied). After they had all returned to their seats I then proceeded with the final point of the sermon about Jesus dying *for* our sins. You guessed it. The casket had a large mirror down inside where every person passing it saw . . . *himself!*

Another time I preached a message titled, “Who Killed Jesus?” My first point was “The Romans Killed Jesus;” the second point was “The Jews Killed Jesus;” and the third was “We All Killed Jesus.” The point I wanted to get across was that *our sins* were directly responsible for Jesus having to die such a horrible death on the cross. During the invitation, I stepped off the platform and proceeded to remove a large sheet that had been draped over a huge wooden cross I had Billy build and which was placed on saw horses in the front of the church auditorium. I explained that every sin we have committed was like driving a nail in the hands of Jesus. I then listed many of the sins mentioned in the Bible and asked the people if they had committed any of them. When hands went up in response, I further asked who would be willing to come to the front and drive a huge nail (a replica of the real kind that were used) into the place on the cross where Jesus’ hands were outstretched (pre-drilled holes made this easy to do). And as they did, think of how their sins actually nailed him to the cross! Several people came, but it was very difficult for them to wield more than one or two

blows. It proved a very effective way to emphasize the point, and no doubt was unforgettable to those in attendance that morning.

## **ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN**

Once when I was holding a meeting for Dick Ellis at the Pennsylvania Avenue Church of Christ in Ottumwa, Iowa (May 1978), I was invited home for dinner by one of the poorer families in the church. Now, the couple lived in a very humble home and were people with very little means and were lacking in maintaining their home in the neatest and cleanest way! I remember the entree was fried chicken (what else do people feed preachers?). So, about halfway through the meal, as I was reaching for more potatoes, suddenly I spotted a *cockroach* darting out from under my plate and disappearing under the bread dish! I was taken aback, but tried not to show it. I quickly looked at my hosts and could tell that *they* hadn't seen the critter. What was I to do? I reasoned, if *they* hadn't seen it, certainly I wasn't about to *tell* them. They just continued normal table conversation, as if there was nothing amiss. So, with a rather strained smile, I managed to say, "Please, pass the potatoes!" I learned that you do your best, sometimes under the worst circumstances! And you love everybody, even if they have cockroaches dashing around between dishes on the dinner table. Was I the *real* chicken for not telling them? O, well!

## **A GROWING RIFT**

The next series of events in my life continues to be truly regrettable. Eddie DeVries and I had been very close friends since college days, having spent many precious hours of study together. I liked Eddie as a person and respected his skill as a preacher and leader. I had preached for him several times (Mystic, Iowa City and Hamburg, IA) and he had come to Orlando for four successful gospel meetings (more than anyone else), besides preaching at camps and midwinter rallies I managed. He had also had a primary role in my relocating to Denver, having strongly encouraged me to make the move. His children and ours grew up together and were always close friends (and still are). Eddie also contributed much to my family on a personal level, inviting Terry to be his associate minister and helping Tim out when he moved to Hamburg in 1965. Billy's children even called Eddie "grandpa." I am truly indebted to Eddie for much valuable help to me, my family and my ministry.

In describing the following events of the mid-1970s, I also want to stress that there has never been the first mean or derogatory word

exchanged between Eddie and me. As human beings, we were quite compatible and have shared many good times. And as Christian brothers, we always respected each other's knowledge, dedication and sincerity. But, by about 1972 or 1973 a marked difference in philosophy had begun to show up between us. It may not have been so much a difference in what we believed the Scriptures to teach (except perhaps on the subject of the authority of an evangelist), as much as it was how we perceived that they applied to life situations. It also revolved around a difference in the perception we had of our relationship to the Lord's work in Denver. I felt that Eddie viewed us all, Don, Terry, me and himself as part of the one church in Denver (he expressed this view on several occasions), and that each separate congregation was simply an extension of the Arvada "mother church." Then, another element that led to a growing rift between us was Eddie's emphasis on certain practices being matters of opinion (smoking, drinking, etc.), and that to preach against these things was a form of "legalism." A huge chart was used in Eddie's sermons in the Arvada church to convey these ideas.

With my perception of Eddie holding these views in mind, it became a matter of concern to me (and Don Heese as well) when we observed what appeared to be a laxity in behavior by some attendees at NYR and only minimal discipline for dealing with it. These feelings continued over the next couple of years so that I became less supportive of NYR and eventually even discouraged Southwest Denver youth from attending it! The 1974 issues of Impact were the last to give prominent advertising space to NYR and by September the Southwest Denver church took over (from Arvada) the publication of Impact. Then the following spring (1975) several families from Arvada came to place fellowship with Southwest Denver. By the March-April 1975 issue of Impact, Eddie was no longer listed as "Associate Editor." But the July-August 1975 issue carried a note which probably best summarizes my feelings toward NYR at that time, "Over 550 youth and adults were in attendance at the 4th annual *Nationwide Youth Rally* which evidenced considerable improvement in such areas as discipline, music, appearance, etc. Great good was accomplished through the fine messages, classes and fellowship." (I have always felt that my cautionary words about NYR in those early years probably had a direct bearing on its achieving a much better order in the days since then). But in all of the controversy that characterized those years, I certainly was not without fault. My tendency toward strictness and an unnecessary rigidity in my approach to the Lord's work at times no doubt contributed to tension and produced some negative reaction.

Perhaps the final step in dissolving our working relationship was when the Southwest Denver church began its own training program, *Christian Leadership College*, on Sept. 1, 1975. Don headed up the program, with a faculty that consisted of Don, L. H. Tyree, Paul Crist, John Snogren, Ray Depler, Jan Miles, Audrey Heese and myself. Steve Heese was graduated from *CLC* on May 27, 1977. The greatest sorrow of all to me from this rift with Eddie, however, was that my son Terry continued with *RMCC* (which continued through the 1975-1976 school year), producing a *temporary* estrangement that also included our son Billy.

## **WINDING DOWN IN DENVER**

By the spring of 1977, I had decided that the long commute from Arvada, where we lived, to Lakewood to teach college classes at the Southwest Denver church building every morning, to teach home Bible studies in the Lakewood area, and to manage *Impact Christian Bookstore*, also in Lakewood, was becoming a bit too much. So, Bethel and I decided to sell our Arvada home and look for a place nearer the Southwest Denver church building. The Lord blessed us with a very nice, reasonably-priced home in Lakewood, a city adjoining southwest Denver, in a subdivision of newer, more expensive homes. We moved on Apr. 2, 1977 and lived there until leaving Denver 20 months later.

An opportunity to sell our Southwest Denver church building also came up in the summer of 1978 and we were able to realize a sizable profit, then found a nice building to rent in the Green Mountain area, still farther southwest, while banking the equity.

Don was now preaching for the small church he started in the Cherry Hills area of southeast Denver, while his son Steve, recently graduated from *CLC*, was serving as my associate minister, and developing into an enthusiastic leader in his own right. About then several men began talking about merging Southwest with Southeast so there could be an eldership, but I was not at all favorable to the idea. The fact that neither church now owned property seemed to be a selling point for the merger idea with some. But I felt that if there had been good reason to *begin* churches in these two widely separated areas, there were good reasons for them to *remain* separate churches, especially since there were thousands of souls between the two places in dire need of being evangelized!

Steve's enthusiasm for church growth was now becoming more pronounced. Since the "church growth movement" was now well under way, the seminars and workshops being conducted all over were helping



to focus greater attention on the importance of churches experiencing accelerating numerical growth. Because Southwest Denver was not growing very rapidly, Steve felt led to consider leaving and moving elsewhere, where he could lead out with brighter prospects for seeing the church move ahead numerically! As Steve's ideas began to catch on with several men of the church, it appeared that he would leave, thereby causing some disappointment. As we talked about the matter, I suggested that *I* be the one to leave, with Steve taking over as evangelist at Southwest Denver! This seemed to me the best solution, for I surely didn't want to see Steve leave Denver. (Soon after I left, however, Southeast merged with Southwest to form *The Church in South Denver*, and after an interim ministry by Bill Turner, Steve eventually became its preacher).

## **SUBMITTING MY RESIGNATION**

I submitted my resignation to the men of the Southwest Denver church in August of 1978 . . . without having anyplace to go! But as the word soon got out that I was available, I began receiving "feelers" from churches in various parts of the country. Preachers from Ohio, Indiana, Vermont, Wyoming, Louisiana and Washington contacted me about the possibility of moving there to preach. In all, eleven such calls or letters came, but only three or four were serious proposals. Fred Miller invited me to move to Rutland to preach and lead the training program there. The small church in Wheatland, WY strongly urged us to move there and even offered a small salary (after my resignation I was driving to Wheatland almost every week to preach). I was contacted by the Monterey, LA church and actually made a trip down there to preach for a few days and discuss the matter with the men of the church. The Westside Church of Christ, in Seattle, flew Bethel and me out there to preach and discuss the prospect of that ministry. We prayed much about these matters, as we were willing to go wherever the Lord wanted us to. But I had made one stipulation to all of the places that were considering us . . . the invitation had to be a *unanimous* decision of all the men! The Monterey church seemed quite serious about wanting us to come, and the Seattle and Wheatland churches had actually extended invitations, so after returning from trips to Louisiana and Washington, Bethel and I spent three days in fasting and prayer. Several factors were being taken into consideration: prospects for church growth, climate suitable to my health, proximity to family (one son and all of Bethel's family lived in Oregon), compatibility with the people (the Ken Miles family from Southwest Denver was moving to Seattle at the very same time, etc.). So,

at the end of our three-day fast, both Bethel and I felt very strongly that the Lord wanted us to move to Seattle. Then, just ½ hour after making this decision and calling to inform the Seattle church of it, I received a call from a deacon in Monterey. He proceeded to tell me that all of their men had voted for me to come . . . except two, who abstained from voting! I thanked him for being considered, then hung up, without ever telling him we had already accepted the invitation from Seattle. This was encouraging confirmation that we had made the right choice, and I have never regretted it. My ministry in Seattle proved to be the longest and most productive of my entire preaching career.

## **FAMILY STATUS, 1978**

My extremely busy schedule of activities in Denver (teaching college classes, managing a bookstore, editing a publication, conducting many home Bible studies, preaching in meetings, rallies, retreats, and managing youth camp) during the mid-70s worked an increasing hardship on my family. At one point I was conducting *eleven* home Bible studies a week, including two a night sometimes, besides everything else! I remember one particular week that I didn't see my youngest son, Dan, for *five whole days*! I would leave the house by 7 AM and not get back before 10:30 PM. Dan would not get up for school until after I left, then after school, he went to work at Griff's Burger restaurant and didn't get home until after midnight, when I was in bed! I have always felt that Dan's future problems were directly related to my not spending enough quality time with him during those formative teen years.

As could be expected the pressures of my work and spending so little time at home took their toll on my relationship with Bethel also. We spent little time together beyond attending church meetings and sharing meals (when my schedule was its busiest, we didn't even do that). And we were not as close as we should have been, due to the strain on me from my heavy workload, which resulted in my neglecting her spiritual and emotional needs! At one point, I suggested that she take a brief trip to Oregon to visit her sisters, feeling that the time away could be emotionally refreshing. While she was gone, we exchanged several very candid letters, expressing our deepest feelings about our relationship. (It seems we have always expressed ourselves better by letter than in person). But, thank the Lord, we came through the situation and our relationship became much improved when we finally moved away from Denver, and the pressures and controversies that those years produced. The following brief account tells what our children were doing by the fall of 1978.

Bennie (36) was still living and working in Portland; he and Leann had five children, four boys and a girl. (Danny Ray, Randy, Glenn, Michael, and Tammy).

Terry (35) continued preaching for the Aurora church (with a painting contracting company on the side) and has done an excellent work there in the years since. He and Linda had three children, two boys and a girl (Kevin, Kimberly and Kent).

Tim (29) and Marilyn had moved to Monterey, LA and were helping in the children's work of the church there while Tim began a painting contracting company. They had two boys and a girl (Kenny, Scott and Christy).

Sheila (26) and John lived in Gering until John's graduation, after which he labored in starting a new church in Ft. Collins, CO. They had two sons (Glen and Paul).

Billy (24) married Dottie Heubschman June 2, 1973 after attending a year at *RMCC*. He learned the carpenter trade and later started an interior trim company. They had a girl and a boy (Joy and Jake).

Dan (20) dropped out of high school and was working at various jobs until moving with us to Washington. He later married and had one son (Jess).

The Denver years were hard on all of the family, but the Lord was with us through them all. What the days ahead in Seattle would bring, we could only guess. But, we had the assurance that God would bring us through them as well. He had developed a very good track record along those lines!

## **“BAM” WORKSHOP**

The last major activity of my ministry in Denver was perhaps its most successful! Because Denver was becoming a hub of spiritual activity (Bible colleges, Midwinter rallies, Publications, NYR, Youth Camps, Church planting, etc.), I felt it would be an excellent site for a large-scale church growth workshop. So, on Nov. 20-22, 1978, in a sizable auditorium in Aurora, containing numerous large class rooms, the *BAM Workshop* was held. (BAM was an acronym for “By All Means,” an allusion to the verse in I Corinthians 9:22 on soul-winning). Its planning began when I invited several capable area preachers to a dinner meeting to discuss the prospect of such a gathering. Those present included Don Heese, L. H. Tyree, Paul Crist and a few others. I proposed that we invite several area churches to participate by contributing a set amount to cover initial costs (advertising, facility rental, travel, printing,

etc.). I further suggested that each of the area preachers assume a specific responsibility for the various aspects of the workshop (registration, housing, notebooks, setup, etc.). I was very gratified at their positive response, which I took as a favorable mandate for going ahead with the project. Having already resigned from Southwest Denver, I was now free to devote more time to developing the program, contacting speakers and working on a myriad of other details. September 17 was suggested as a special day of emphasis for churches (“BAM Soul Saving Workshop Registration Sunday”) and this was prominently publicized in Impact, which had a circulation of nearly 6,000 by that time. The workshop was planned for three weekdays, so preachers could attend without having to be away over a Sunday. The number of class sessions offered was larger than any similar gathering yet conducted by our fellowship (48), and the variety of speakers, including some of the finest in the nation, was also the largest (21)!

The subjects treated in the classes covered almost every conceivable topic associated with growing vibrant churches: bus ministry, Sunday school, prison ministry, evangelistic techniques, membership development, leadership development, parenting, restoring backsliders, follow-up programs, spiritual growth, youth work, personal growth, dealing with discouragement, goal setting, children’s church, motivation, building attendance, ladies’ ministry, financial stewardship, worship assemblies, family devotions, foreign evangelism, prayer life, mass media, home studies, etc.

I believe the Lord blessed BAM partly due to its careful planning, dedicated leadership, harmonious cooperation, competent personnel and vital classes. Since this was the first year, attendance was not the greatest (about 200). But financially the workshop met all expenses, including paying the air travel for all speakers coming from a distance. (In fact, there was a surplus, which was contributed to the Lord’s work elsewhere). Had someone else carried the BAM workshop idea forward after I left Denver, I feel it would have become one of the most effective gatherings of its kind in the nation. We moved away one week after BAM concluded!

## **RESTORED FELLOWSHIP**

Even though I (and the faculty of *CLC*) was no longer working together with Eddie, he and I continued to maintain a cordial relationship and got together to discuss how we might resolve our differences on several occasions. I remember one particular day shortly before we moved, that we met at a restaurant for breakfast and continued our

discussion for five or more hours. We just couldn't come to any agreement. Neither of us was able to concede to the other's perception of the situation. It was a friendly discussion, with no rancor or ill will, but completely without any resolution of our differences. Finally, a thought came to me and I presented it to Eddie. "What if," I said to Eddie, "you and I had never seen each other until today; what if we had never met until now?" I then went on to suggest a scenario. I pointed out to Eddie that since we both liked each other, and enjoyed each another's companionship, why not begin our relationship all over again . . . starting that day! If we could successfully do that, it would mean there were no differences, no controversies, no misunderstandings, and no strife between us! We could begin our friendship afresh, and go on from there, as if the past had never happened! Now I realize that some may say this was dodging important issues, sweeping everything under the rug and even conceding to defeat. But, so what! I felt that a loving, Christian relationship was far more important than being right about our views. And I didn't have to change my perceptions about our differences, I would just no longer act on them! Life is too short, I concluded, to perpetuate differences! It worked.

So, a few days before we moved from Denver, Eddie, Betty, Bethel and I all went out to a nice restaurant for a lovely dinner. Then, we came back to my house for popcorn and an evening of enjoyable fellowship and laughter. That was over twenty years ago, and we've been laughing ever since! And although separated by many miles over the years, I have maintained a very cordial relationship with Eddie and Betty and count them among our dearest friends!

# **1978-2001**

## **SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

### **MATURING WRITER**

#### **GOING BACK HOME!**

We finally pulled away from Denver, CO on Nov. 27, 1978, with Bethel driving our 1970 Ford LTD. I was driving a 24 foot U-Haul truck filled with all of our belongings. Riding with me was our only child left at home, Dan, who had recently turned 20. Dan had not done well those last few years in Denver and we were hoping that he could get a fresh start in a new place and make a spiritual recovery.

We really weren't able to predict that the trip would consume five whole days, although we had planned on going through Portland to stay one night with Bennie before heading north for Seattle. As it turned out, we spent two full days (and nights) crossing Wyoming alone, with blowing snow coming down in the form of ground blizzards, which severely restricted our progress. To make matters worse, the extremely heavy load of the printing press (2,600 lbs.), plus books and all our furniture, slowed us down to 15 miles an hour in spots crossing the Rockies! This was our second winter move (the first being our move from Iowa to Florida in December, 1954, some 24 years earlier). The most memorable part of the trip for me was our descent into the breathtaking Columbia River gorge. This part of the country had become my favorite place due to the sentimental attachment it held . . . meeting Bethel, early married life, our first home, my conversion, my home church, etc. So, after arriving safely at Bennie's, and spending an enjoyable overnight visit with his family, we reached Seattle on Dec. 1, 1978. This place would become the longest stay of my preaching ministry. Would it be our final earthly home? Only God knew!

#### **OUR FIRST HOUSE**

The Westside Church of Christ had rented for us a comfortably large home in south Seattle about three blocks from the Glen Acres church building (Ralph Johnson, preacher), where I would be teaching in the training program. It was about a 10-minute drive from the meeting place of the Westside Church. We had decided to keep our nice Denver house and rent it out, with Billy offering to maintain it, collect the rent, etc. We really appreciated this, but it meant going back to a rental in Seattle for a few years. What a far cry this house was from that little block house the Union Park church had rented for us in Orlando when

we first started out in 1954! It had four large bedrooms, double car garage, huge basement rec room, two fireplaces, large basement room for the printing equipment and bookstore stock, outside deck with a view of the Seattle skyline and snow-capped Cascade mountains, etc. Little did we know that this would be the first of four homes in which we would live while in Seattle! And due to circumstances involving a change in the location of the church's meeting place, we would stay in this house only 13 months!

## **A RENEWED ZEAL**

That first year in Seattle was one of exuberant activity, reminiscent of my first year in Orlando, FL, some 24 years earlier! During my last four months in Denver, the brief "rest" from local church responsibilities had afforded me an opportunity for spiritual refreshment and reflection and gave me a much more positive outlook toward people and the Lord's work generally. I was leaving behind the accumulated problems that had developed over the previous four or five years and was anticipating a wonderful ministry with a church I felt had real potential. . . . Westside Church of Christ. Having just led in what I felt was a very successful church growth workshop in Denver (BAM), I felt highly motivated to jump into the Seattle work with renewed excitement and fervor! I was now 51 and my health was relatively good, my skin problem having been in remission since leaving Florida over 10 years earlier. I may have been at peak efficiency, mentally and spiritually; the next few years would determine if that were true!

The Westside Church of Christ had begun in a house in 1970 under the leadership of Myron Wells, but was now meeting in a small building of its own. It had grown to about 65 in attendance, was well-taught, permeated by a loving spirit and seemed eager to grow. Its meeting place was somewhat of a disappointment to me, however, when they flew us out in October to consider the work. I had assumed that they were located in a regular church building, but found instead a renovated pharmacy building with seating for about 75 on the main floor and a very cramped basement where a few children's classes were held. But it did show signs of much remodeling, having been purchased only two years earlier, and was definitely a "step up" from meeting in the preacher's home for about five years! I had heard that West Coast churches were quite "liberal," so was pleasantly surprised to find that was not the case with Westside. I was very impressed by their faithful attendance and generous giving, but mostly by the open expressions of love and

brotherliness demonstrated by the young families making up the congregation.

### **“MINISTERING SAINTS” PROGRAM**

Within the first few months I inaugurated a program I called “Ministering Saints” (Hebrews 6:10), patterned somewhat on a method that had been utilized by Myron. It involved appointing a person to be in charge of each of some twenty areas of church ministry (music, Lord’s Supper, building maintenance, benevolence, Sunday School classes, etc.). Each person was asked to prepare a monthly progress report and turn it in to me. From these reports I then compiled and distributed a comprehensive description of what all the church was doing. This approach not only allowed more of the Christians to become involved in the work of the church, and to have a means of accountability, but also kept everyone informed of the progress being made. I have always felt that communicating with the members was a vital factor in maintaining a unified, vibrant, contented body of believers! As the church developed new ministries, additional people were appointed. This same method of organization continued to be utilized throughout the years, although, when the reports were no longer required, it resulted in less accountability.

### **BETHEL’S IMPORTANT MINISTRY**

Soon after arriving in Seattle, women from both the Glen Acres and Westside churches invited Bethel to lead a joint ladies’ Bible study class on the subject of prayer (“What Happens When Women Pray”). It was held at the Glen Acres church building since we lived so close for that first year. It was so successful that ladies talked about it years later. In fact, she was asked to teach a completely revised class on the same subject some eighteen years later (1996) for ladies of the Crown Hill church. By this time in our lives and ministry Bethel’s prayer life had become widely known and, no doubt, was responsible in a great measure for whatever success I was able to experience in the Lord’s work. One of the Glen Acres’ ladies, Carolyn Chase, even composed the following poem to commemorate Bethel’s 57th birthday:

God always does the very best,  
When we entrust our way to Him.  
He moved a special pair out West,  
Even though their sight was dim



To the needs of this far place;  
Lives that they could guide and teach.  
They didn't know the ones who'd need;  
The souls of those that they could reach.  
God led to us our brother Bill,  
Along with faithful, dear wife Bethel,  
From the heights of Colorado,  
To the lowlands of South Seattle.  
Adjusting to the many changes,  
In terrain and rainy weather,  
They took a toll on Bethel's health,  
But now she's got herself together---  
With vitamins and healthy foods,  
Advice from good, "Prevention"  
She's gained the vigor, vim and zest---  
These are just a few to mention.  
Time's slipped by, she now has come,  
Her day of celebration,  
We join with her with thankful hearts,  
To God who brings salvation.  
For bringing her to meet our need  
In such a very special way,  
To share the wisdom giv'n to her.  
In teaching us just how to pray.  
So, have a Blessed Birthday!  
Our special prayer for you,  
May He provide you rich rewards,  
Bless all you say and do.

## **ADVANCED STUDY PROGRAM**

Part of the reason the Westside Church of Christ had extended an invitation for me to move to Seattle was to become a teacher in the cooperative Bible college level training program, known unpretentiously as *Churches of Christ Advanced Study Program*. It had begun the previous September with the teachers being Ralph Johnson (preacher of the Glen Acres Church of Christ in south Seattle), Lee Turner (director of Key Communications, a ministry to the Muslim world via short-wave radio), and Myron Wells (former Westside preacher whom I had replaced). In succeeding years, several others would serve as teachers, including Don Fleming and Darrell Duff, preachers for the Kent Hill Church (located farther south in the suburb of Kent). The night classes

were made up mostly of members of the three cooperating churches (Glen Acres, Westside and Kent Hill), with the emphasis on preparing both men and women for varied roles of service in the church, rather than training preachers only. Most of my classes were the same as those I had previously taught at Gering and Denver. Course costs were \$8 per hour for each quarter, with a \$10 entrance fee.

Classes were held at first in the Glen Acres church building, but later at Kent Hill and Westside/Crown Hill also, making it more convenient for the teachers. Always a night school program, it was very difficult to motivate students to view it as a regular college; most considered it to be just something they did “on the side.” Also, without a central “campus” for all classes, it kept the students from getting to know each other very well and consequently led to a low key concept of “college.” The way it worked was that the students had to drive to the church building where the teacher preached in order to take his classes. Inevitably that meant that most of my students had to come from the north end (where the Crown Hill building was eventually located). Some years I had as many as 10-12 students; other years fewer than three (I finally decided to teach only if there were three or more students for my class, since when one or two would drop out, it left me with virtually no “class”). And since students had to have full time day jobs, very few could get off work in time to drive to the other church buildings for class. That meant that a student might get in only a couple of courses a year, making it take as many as ten years to graduate! All of these factors made the program less than ideal for preparing young men to be preachers.

By 1981 the program was called, simply, *Associated College Training* (ACT), because when I pointed out to Ralph that the initials for Advanced Study Program spelled ASP, he wisely suggested another name! Then, in September of 1982 the name was again changed to *Seattle Christian College* and continued to be called that. While we were able to provide helpful training for a large number of young men and women, we graduated only one person, John Darling, on Nov. 1, 1987. (Among other students who took classes for several years were: Jim Mayer, Bob Othmer, Neil Taylor, Dave Johnson, Dave Hunter, Mark Hudson, Ray Boyce, etc.). We were able, however, to work out an arrangement with *Boise Bible College* for one of our students, Max Lach, to complete his formal training in one year at BBC and graduate from there.

## DEVELOPING OUTREACH MINISTRIES

Upon arriving in Seattle I was given only one name as a contact to follow up on. If I were going to begin reaching souls for Christ in Seattle, I knew I had to generate some new contacts. My method of evangelism had been, from my early years in Orlando, geared toward getting into people's homes to teach them the gospel. I had found that the better taught they were before baptism, the more likely they were to "stick." So, in an effort to broaden the church's outreach I began a Bible Correspondence School, similar to what I had done in Denver. It offered a free Bible course through our placing of boxes in strategic places, filled with postage paid, return-addressed post cards. Only this time I was able to involve one man and two ladies in placing the boxes, replenishing the cards and grading the lesson booklets. Of course, I still attempted to get into homes to teach people personally where possible. By now I was learning more about "delegating" *and* involving others in ministry.

My attendance at several church growth and evangelism workshops during the several years previous to moving to Seattle helped me learn of other means of making contacts for the Lord also. One such approach involved the use of the telephone. So, I acquired phone numbers of people in the vicinity of the church building and lined up several volunteer ladies to make the calls. I wrote out a prescribed presentation to make during the phone conversations. It was very up front and straight forward. "This is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm calling on behalf of Westside Church of Christ. We would like to meet you and tell you about the ministries of our church. Would you welcome a brief visit by our minister?" It took about twelve seconds and called for a simple "Yes" or "No" response. I was able to make several good contacts as a result of this approach.

But, the "old reliable" method of reaching lost souls is the one least preferred by most preachers . . . door-to-door canvassing. The reason "cold turkey" calling is least practiced is that it is perhaps the most difficult and, some would say, the least rewarding. But I had done a lot of it in Florida, Nebraska and Denver, (and even in Oregon before attending Bible college), so that first year decided I would pick an area not too far from the Westside church building and go to work. After all, I had only one contact when arriving in Seattle and that one proved to be a "cold turkey" indeed! My approach was to explain to people who answered their door that I was offering to show them a series of Bible filmstrips in their home free of charge. If interested I would then begin a weekly series of Bible studies, using the "Jule Miller filmstrips" as a tool. Of the first seventy homes I visited on 12th Avenue SW, two agreed

to see the filmstrips, but neither of them showed much interest so the studies were soon discontinued! But, one lady said she wouldn't be able to have a home study because of her work schedule as a nurse, but would like to attend church meetings. Vivian Johnson came a few weeks later and obeyed the Gospel on July 29, 1979. Her husband, a biker, was not the least interested, but through a dramatic series of events involving a serious accident that almost cost him his life, became a Christian less than two years later!

Another method I used in door-to-door calling a few years later was called "Casual Survey." I would ask individuals what they felt the church needed to be doing for the community. After carefully tabulating their answers on clipboard sheets (most didn't have the foggiest idea), I would then go on to explain what we were already doing . . . teaching people the Bible in their homes. Then I would attempt to interest them in a filmstrip showing. While not many were converted using this method, the Bytheway family and Dorothy Rasmussen were reached for the Lord as a result of such efforts.

## **UNDERGROUND CHURCH SERVICE**

On July 8, 1979 the Westside church conducted a most unusual service. I got the idea that it might prove a blessing if we held a Sunday evening service designed to replicate an ancient "underground church" meeting, similar to the early Christians gathering in catacombs beneath the streets of Rome. Since the Westside building had no windows, it could easily be made quite dark inside. So, it was announced that people were not to bring their Bibles, but be prepared to quote Bible verses from memory in a candlelit atmosphere. We would sing only songs that had been memorized since no song books would be used. There were to be no announcements, no order of services and no one presiding! Everything was to be spontaneous, including whatever accompaniment might be provided by someone with a guitar. It turned out to be a wonderful blessing, with most of the people sharing the Word, songs and testimonies. A couple of other churches in the area picked up on the idea and held their own such service.

## **MOVE TO CROWN HILL**

By the spring of 1979, the tiny, renovated pharmacy at 4208 SW 100th St., where the church met, was nearly full (its capacity could not have been more than 75). Its long, indoor cement ramp, located along side of the auditorium on the opposite side of the building from its exterior doors, led to a crowded, one room basement where children's

classes were held. The ceiling beams were so low that adults had to duck several times when moving about. It certainly could not have met code and was a virtual death trap for the children meeting down there in the event of a Sunday morning fire. In addition to that, several Westside church families lived in the *north end*, about a 30-minute drive away, plus the building was quite close to the Glen Acres building (about ten minutes). The previous year had seen concerted efforts by some to affect a move to the north end. One family even succeeded in getting the church to “cast lots” in an effort to determine the Lord’s leading in the matter. (The “lots” said “no”). It appeared to me that the time was ripe for beginning to look at the prospect of the church moving to the north end (where there was no church in our fellowship). So I encouraged the church to begin searching for an existing church building in that part of town. By early summer Jim Sturgeon, one of the deacons, who worked in real estate, located a fine, large building in the Crown Hill district for sale by a Nazarene church (9257 14th Ave. NW). I arranged for most of the Westside congregation to tour the facility one Sunday afternoon and they were all very impressed. So, after extensive discussions with the men, several offers and counteroffers between us and the Nazarenes, and taking a poll of all Westside wage earners to determine the extent of additional income that would be available, we finally affected a closing in October and moved in on November 4, 1979 (the same day that American hostages were taken in Iran). But it wasn’t easy.

While the majority of the members were quite enthusiastic about the prospect of the new building, there were a few vocal holdouts. As we neared making a final decision on the building I remember a very tense men’s meeting, involving one of the most influential men in the church, known for holding very strong convictions, *and opinions*. I had called a special meeting of all the men to make a final decision on whether or not to go ahead with an offer to the Nazarenes! I had spent many hours of one-on-one discussions with Westside members and had done extensive work to determine the mood of the congregation, the extent of additional financing available and had dealt with various questions and concerns held by a few. It appeared certain that everything was “go” for the church to obtain that building. But when the matter came up for discussion, this man suggested that we *not* make any decision that night, but instead research the matter thoroughly before taking action. Well, since I had already done my homework over the previous couple of months, I informed him to that effect, then proceeded to call for a vote of the men. But, he insisted that we *not* decide on the matter until doing further extensive investigation into the whole idea of buying that building. After

I reassured him, as well as the entire meeting, that I had been very thorough in my efforts and made certain that it was not only *possible*, but *desirable* on the part of the church, he continued raising objections. This was my moment of truth! I realized that not only obtaining a fine church building, but my very role as a leader hinged on the outcome of that meeting. If I caved in to his pressure, after bringing the church that far, I might as well pack my bags. As he talked on, I vividly recall closing my eyes and bowing my head briefly in silent prayer, “Lord, this is it! If I back down now, after having come this far, we’ll lose the building, and I’ll totally lose respect as a leader. Help me to stand up to this good brother.” So, when he finished, I said calmly, “Thank you brother, you may sit down now!” That was the wrong thing to say, for he continued talking against the proposal with all the more intensity. Finally he sat down. A vote was then taken, and the proposal passed without objection, and after further negotiations, we were able to obtain the building and have enjoyed the use of it for the past nearly twenty years.

What a wonderful day of rejoicing it was when we moved into our spacious new building (built 18 years earlier, but in excellent condition). To celebrate the occasion we invited Myron Wells, then of Spokane, to speak to an afternoon meeting, which was also attended by some from the Glen Acres and Kent Hill churches. We took up a special offering to complete our \$50,000 down payment (the total price was \$235,000). We needed only \$2,000 more after selling our Westside building for a nice profit. (\$3,703 came in that first Sunday!

Average attendance for that month soared to 109! The future looked bright and promising. We called Terry Crist, from Mooresville, IN, for our first meeting November 11-18, 1979. We have never missed a payment (originally they were \$1,500 per month) and owe a balance of less than \$70,000 at this writing (1997). For insurance purposes it has been appraised at nearly half a million!

## **THURSDAY NIGHT STUDY**

Perhaps the most productive activity during my Seattle ministry was the Bible study and prayer meeting held on Thursday nights at the home of two young brothers, shipyard workers Jim (23) and Mike (21) Mayer. It all came about when one of our deacons, Ron Nickens, who also worked at Todd Shipyard, was invited by the Mayer brothers to participate in a Bible study at their home, attended by up to a dozen young, single men and women, many of them fellow shipyard workers. On this particular occasion, in November 1979, right after we moved to our new building in Crown Hill, two Seventh Day Adventist fellows

from the shipyard were causing quite a stir at the study over the subject of Sabbath Day observance. So Jim invited Ron to attend in order to help answer some of their arguments. Ron, in turn, feeling somewhat inadequate for the task, asked me what he should do. Knowing Ron to be a good Bible student, I advised him, "Go ahead to the meeting and do your best to present the Scriptures." Well, after one session with the SDA guys, he informed me that an SDA evangelist had been invited to attend the following Thursday, so he wanted me to be there also. It appeared to me that so much was at stake that I decided to call up some "reinforcements." So, I invited Ralph Johnson, preacher of the Glen Acres church to attend also. He was an expert on cult teaching, especially Seventh Day Adventism and Jehovah's Witnesses. As it turned out, the SDA people were thoroughly routed and I was invited to lead the study every Thursday night thereafter. Within a few weeks, first Mike (Dec. 14) and then Jim (Dec. 15) were baptized into Christ. This meeting, called simply "Thursday Night Study," continued on for a number of years, producing a fruitful harvest of conversions (including Cheryl Moore, Ray Boyce, Mark Hudson and a dozen or so other singles). It was not uncommon for the study to last until after 11 PM some nights, and end up at Green Lake for a baptism! The study subsequently moved to four different places where Jim lived and for a while was being held during the same time as our regular midweek service in the church building on Wednesdays. The success of this gathering may be attributed to the soul-winning zeal of Jim, and had much to do with the decision, a few years later, to hold similar meetings in various parts of the city as a replacement for the Wednesday Bible study and prayer service. The first of such meetings, called Share/Care Groups, was held July 3, 1986.

## **A BOTCHED SUICIDE!**

One night in early 1979, shortly after I moved to Seattle, one of our zealous young deacon Ron Nickens called excitedly to tell me that a would-be boyfriend of one of the single girls in the church had called him, threatening suicide! Of course Ron and I rushed to his house, but after pounding on the door repeatedly, were not able to gain entrance. My attempts to get a next door neighbor to let us in to call 911 from his house proved fruitless, as he was suspicious of someone banging on his door at that late hour. We finally were able to call for help and when the paramedics arrived and gained entrance, they found Dan Breene lying motionless on the bathroom floor. He had a short rope tied around his neck, and one wrist was bleeding slightly. We also discovered an empty pill bottle on the floor nearby! Upon examination Dan seemed to be all

right and after talking with him we were puzzled at what appeared to be a botched job of suicide. But it all cleared up when the paramedics explained to us, rather annoyed, that Dan had been doing this repeatedly. It seems they had responded to several such calls, only to find a rope that led to nowhere, superficial cuts and an empty pill bottle. Dan was simply *faking suicide* in order to gain sympathy from the girl. (I suppose we should have been suspicious at the short rope, minor cuts and empty bottle . . . after all, who uses *three ways* to kill himself?). The medics even scolded Ron and me for calling them out on a false alarm! But, how were we to know? With his threatening phone call, the rope, the blood and the bottle, who wouldn't have assumed that it was a real suicide attempt?

## **WASHINGTON CHURCH PLANTING**

In the Spring of 1979, Myron Wells, who was now preaching at the North Central church in Spokane after leaving Westside, had become deeply burdened for starting new churches in Washington state. So he called a meeting of the leaders of congregations in the state which were already working together on camps and retreats, to discuss the project. Besides Myron, the preachers and churches eventually involved were: Ralph Johnson (Glen Acres), Charles Dailey (Minnehaha), Don Fleming (Kent Hill), Terry Walker (Deer Park), myself and one or two others. The plan was for the seven (eventually) sponsoring churches to take up a monthly special offering to help in starting new churches. Yakima was the first town targeted and at first Charles Dailey drove there to spend a couple of days a week calling and teaching, until his son-in-law, Bruce Rodda, was selected to lead the work. After a few years a second congregation was started, the Liberty Church in Spokane, with Dave Adams leading. It was a wonderful project and both churches continue meeting at the present time. But, it was very poor timing for Crown Hill. We were really struggling those first few years to meet the \$1500 a month building payments and provide me with full support, all this with under a hundred in attendance. The preachers from the sponsoring churches served as an advisory committee which met regularly to discuss plans, finances, etc., and to give advice and counsel to Bruce and Dave. This proved to be a very enjoyable experience for me and the committee continued to meet until the effort was discontinued when the two congregations were able to launch out on their own.



## **PUBLICATION WORK CONTINUES**

Since our first house had such a huge area *underneath* the double-car garage, initially I set up the printing press and bookstore down there. But with no one to operate the press, I had to have Impact commercially printed for the first two issues in Seattle. About then, rather providentially, I heard about a brother living in Canby, OR who was an experienced printer and was looking for a place to utilize his talents in the Lord's work. I began corresponding with Alec Bowman, which eventually led to his family moving to Seattle in the fall of 1979 to oversee printing Impact as well as numerous tracts, meeting handbills, letterheads, etc., over the next several years. Within the next two years Impact reached its peak circulation (over 7,000), before it had to be discontinued because of excessive postage costs. (The final issue was dated September-October 1981). By this time both Ralph Johnson and Lee Turner had become involved as Associate Editors, with Ralph also being in charge of mailing. After moving from our first house, I transported the printing press and bookstore into rooms in our newly acquired church building at Crown Hill. The bookstore continued for many years, even after the periodical Impact ceased, supplying church members with books, Bibles and various other items used in the Lord's work (communion supplies, cassette players, filmstrips, etc.). It specialized in purchasing for resale various hard-to-find Bible translations which were, in turn, resold to Bible collectors, ministers and Bible students by mail order.

## **OUR SECOND HOUSE**

By the end of 1979 the church had settled into its new building in the Crown Hill district of north Seattle. But Bethel and I were still living in south Seattle, about a thirty-minute drive away from it. About then a man in the church told us of a nice rental house near the building. So, on Jan. 19, 1980, a scant thirteen months after arriving in Seattle we moved again, to a nice home at 9248 3rd Avenue, NW. Now that we lived in the north end, it became very convenient for me to make use of the small office in the church building for my study and library, so I began keeping regular office hours. It was just a five minute drive to the church building. That year, 1980, would prove to be one of the most trying of our ministry in Seattle in several ways.

## **DAN'S PROBLEMS**

Our hope had been that making a fresh start in Seattle would contribute to a much needed improvement in our son Dan's spiritual life.

And at first it looked like that might be the case. Our next door neighbors, who were members of the Westside church, had a son about Dan's age, so we were glad for the fellowship this offered. Then, on June 17, 1979 Dan came forward at Westside to rededicate his life to the Lord's service. I will never forget one of the things he said to the congregation, as he fought back tears, "I'll need the help of all of you." But, to my extreme disappointment, no one stepped forward to work with Dan on a one-on-one basis, something he needed badly! I even spoke with one of the men and specifically asked him to get close to Dan and hold him accountable. It seems that Dan has always struggled to remain faithful after making a fresh commitment to God.

He was very blessed, though, in getting a good paying job at Todd Shipyard, even though he had no previous experience as a shipwright. But with Dan having no car, I had to drive him to and from work every day. In time he apparently became involved with bad company so ended up losing his good job.

Along about then he fell in with another young man who implicated him in a felony. He was arrested and sent to Shelton Corrections Center for five to twenty years. I did my best to get him out on parole, even going to Olympia and speaking with a state official. That must have helped some for he spent only six months in prison. Dan's imprisonment had a profound effect on me. I became so discouraged that I seriously considered giving up preaching, and when speaking to Terry and Billy in Denver about it, they kindly offered to chip in so much a month for Bethel and me to live on if I were to resign from my ministry. I sincerely appreciated this gesture of moral support, just when I needed it most. But, with God's help, I was able to continue my preaching ministry with the Crown Hill church.

Dan wrote to us faithfully and I answered every letter personally. But it was like part of me was in prison with him as I thought much about what all might be happening to him behind bars. Terry, Billy and Sheila flew out from Denver and we all drove to Shelton to see Dan. That was a very low point in my life and I really appreciated the kids being so supportive of me and Bethel. (A few years later, when he was at McNeil Island Correctional Center, I visited him every two weeks for 18 months!).

Dan has been in and out of prison ever since 1980, usually for parole violation or other minor charges. But, in spite of his personal problems, Dan has always treated his mother and me with kindness and respect, and was *not loved less* by us than our other children! He got

married on Feb. 14, 1981, but was divorced a few years later. He had one son, Jess, who lives with his mother and stepfather in Oregon.

## **CAMP DUDLEY**

Part of my ministry with Westside/Crown Hill was that I inherited a position on the planning committee for Camp Dudley, the Christian youth camp for Washington churches, conducted at a rented facility in eastern Washington, near Yakima. Youth camp in Washington was operated quite differently than I had been used to. My previous camp experience was as manager, which involved determining the courses to be taught, arranging for a faculty, assigning the classes and overseeing all other details. But in Washington the camp manager (it was Charles Dailey in the beginning), presided over several committees (curriculum, faculty, etc.) that shared the responsibility of overseeing camp arrangements. Actually this system worked quite well, spreading out the responsibilities among a number of competent people. Being the new kid on the block, I was asked to be one of the evening speakers for the 1979 senior camp week. On August 29, I brought a message “Death or Deity” that involved using a very vivid description of hell! Well, it produced such a scare among the kids that 19 of them came forward in repentance, many in tears! For the next few years I served on the curriculum committee, but later all of the camp planning responsibilities by Crown Hill personnel were taken care of by our youth group leader and others.

## **MOUNT ST. HELENS ERUPTION!**

One Sunday morning, as I was in my office going over my message for that day, a very memorable event took place. It was May 18, 1980, a date that people in the Pacific Northwest will never forget. No one had yet arrived at the building so everything was still quiet. Suddenly, I noticed something strange. The door from my office to the church platform, a few feet from my desk, *rattled!* I noticed the sound (and even checked the clock), but didn’t place too much importance on it. Perhaps it was just a gust of wind outside that somehow produced a change in air pressure. Then, about forty minutes later, when people began arriving for the service, brother Miles said to me, “Bill, did you hear about Mount St. Helens blowing?” “Why, no,” I responded, “When?” “8:31, this morning,” he explained. Then I knew. It was exactly 8:31 AM when my office door rattled! I had experienced the effects of the volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helens, some 100 miles away!

## **SHOWDOWN OVER “RIFFRAFF!”**

Shortly after acquiring our building in Crown Hill, some serious problems began to develop. It seems that some of the new converts (principally Mike Mayer, Sam Shenai and Rick Williams) were pushing for extremely informal behavior in the public church meetings. They began loud clapping and even foot stomping during the song services. Some of the older members of the church were not very favorably impressed by such conduct. The term “riffraff” was even used to refer to these people. I was sympathetic with these new converts because they were very sincere and earnest . . . but they were also a little rowdy and seemed to be pushing for radical changes, especially in the worship assemblies. I felt that, given a little time, they would tone down their excessive exuberance. But others in the church were not as willing to be that patient. So, the more I tried to be understanding of their new convert zeal, the more disillusioned some in the church became of me . . . and my leadership judgment. I was caught in a dilemma! It was only a couple of families, but they had been very influential and were quite vocal. In one of several meetings to discuss the matter, I made a casual remark to the effect that if they weren’t pleased with my leadership, I would be willing to resign and go elsewhere to preach! One man, especially, picked up on that comment and, unbeknown to me, began maneuvering behind the scenes to oust me. In June of 1980, Bethel and I made a trip to Denver and when we returned we learned that this man had planned a men’s meeting following the Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting, during which he intended to pressure me into resigning. I was to learn later that he had even discussed my ouster with other leaders in the area, Ralph Johnson, Myron Wells and Lee Turner! It seems he had them believing I was so discouraged that I was ready to quit, and that the men of the church were quite willing for me to leave. Getting wind of the planned meeting from Ralph, I decided to bring a lesson that Wednesday night on “Brotherly Love.” Well, that did it. Somehow, my objector’s efforts were foiled and he scrapped the whole idea of calling a men’s meeting. I had been there only eighteen months and had already weathered two major storms! Within a few months the young men who were the source of the problem had moved on, mostly to the charismatic movement. And, while the one man continued to be a “thorn in my flesh” for the next ten years or so (disgruntled over not being appointed an elder), he eventually moved on to a noninstrumental congregation.

## OUR THIRD HOUSE

Rent on the 3rd Ave. NW house we were now living in was \$425 a month and the landlord informed us that it was about to increase to \$450. Although I was now being given \$1400 a month by the church (this was the first place I had ever received full support from a church), \$450 seemed a little steep. About that time I received a phone call from a lady who owned a rental house in the north end, asking me if anyone in the church might be looking for a place to rent. It seems the owners had been in the habit of contacting churches in search of renters, feeling they stood a better chance of getting reliable people that way. Well, when I found out the rent was \$375, Bethel and I went to look at it *for ourselves!* It was a small, older home but had been nicely remodeled and had a very unique fish pond in the front yard, so we took it. Then, after having lived on 3rd Ave. NW for only 10 months, on November 28, 1980 we moved again; this time to 7732 27th Ave. NW, a quiet residential neighborhood called Loyal Heights. This would be our home for the next seven years. (The house we owned in Denver was appreciating all that time, as Billy was doing a great job in keeping it up and rented to reliable people for us).

## BETTER THAN 20/20

In early 1980 I learned that the 21-year-old brother of one of the young men in the church had just undergone cataract surgery involving intraocular lens implants in both eyes. This was a relatively new procedure, was simple, virtually painless and highly successful in restoring eyesight that had been impaired by cataracts. The ophthalmologist, Dr. David McIntyre, did the procedure right in his clinic in Bellevue, WA with the patient going home right afterward.

It had been 17 years since I had eye surgery in Florida to remove the cataract on my left eye. I had been wearing a contact lens (hard) on that eye ever since and appreciated so much the added improvement in eyesight it afforded me. But while it had improved my vision dramatically, this new procedure, involving implanting a lens *within* the eye, offered a much better arrangement. Besides, my contact lens was constantly becoming scratched and continually had to be removed to clean it from oils. So I was excited to learn about something that held out hope for even better eyesight!

Dr. McIntyre performed the intraocular implant surgery on my left eye that summer. On the way home from his clinic Bethel and I stopped by a Chinese restaurant for dinner! The eye healed completely and quickly and later I was fitted to eyeglasses that brought my vision to

20/15, better than normal! In 1985 I had the right eye operated on with similar excellent results. It had been 38 years since I had heard that VA doctor in Portland say, “Son, you’re going blind!” What a refreshing difference was Dr. McIntyre’s comment, “You’re very fortunate that technology has caught up with you!” And, indeed I am!

## **MANY CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

My ministry in Seattle soon led to a flurry of various activities, both spiritual and social, designed to reach outsiders and provide nurturing for the Christians. We continued the annual Anniversary/Homecoming service every year on the Sunday commemorating our move into the Crown Hill building. We invited a variety of preachers, besides Myron, to bring the messages at the Sunday afternoon service, to which we invited Glen Acres and Kent Hill: Charles Dailey, Ron Hunt, Larry Smith, Dave Brink, Gary Strubhar, Tom Burgess, Ron Edson, Ken Barker, Richard Merrill, and others. Once-a-year gospel meetings were also held well into the 90s: Terry Crist, Rod Reyman, Bob Chambers, Lafe Culver (2), Gary Strubhar, Tom Burgess, Bill Putman, and others. Over the years we also had Sweetheart Banquets (for couples) around Valentine’s Day, Senior Saints Banquets (for those over 50), Ladies’ Retreats, Men’s Retreats, Youth Rallies (Seattle Youth Rally), Watch Night Services, Prayer-A-Thons, Easter breakfasts, Monthly birthday celebrations, a Drama Group (called “His Messengers”), which put on two very good plays (“Ten Miles to Jericho,” in 1983 in which Bethel played a lead part, and “The Long Road Home,” in 1984), Children’s musicals, (“Down by the Creek Bank,” “Corky”), a *Toastmaster’s Club* (“Good News Ambassadors”), Ladies Prayer Chain, etc., etc. Crown Hill was a very active and growing church during the 1980s!

## **“GOOD NEWS AMBASSADORS”**

By 1981 some of the men at the regular monthly men’s breakfasts felt we should use the meetings (attended by Crown Hill, Glen Acres and Kent Hill men) for a more constructive, organized purpose. First of all we began reading an assigned book and then held a brief discussion on its contents after breakfast. Later, I researched the prospect of forming a branch of the popular, nationally known *Toastmaster’s Club*, to help develop the men’s speaking abilities. I was elected its first president and the group met for a number of years, providing valuable coaching for some of our men, who used what they learned in bringing communion meditations and even brief sermons at church meetings. Our

group took the name “Good News Ambassadors,” and one of the men went on to win awards in statewide public speaking competition.

## **IMPACT’S IMPACT!**

In the spring of 1981 I received a letter from a Melvin Core, of Mossyrock, WA, a tiny town in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, about halfway to Portland. This elderly man (75), explained that he had been receiving *News and Truths / Impact* for many years and had appreciated its articles very much. He added that he felt he was in agreement with its doctrinal stand on all but one issue --- instrumental music. He had incorrectly assumed that we opposed the use of instrumental music in connection with singing, probably because of our repeated use of the term “Church of Christ.” But, in spite of that presumed difference, he requested that he and his wife be permitted to “join” the fellowship of the Crown Hill Church, even though he explained that they were much too far away to attend church meetings at Crown Hill (Mossyrock was about a 2½ hour drive). He said they would, however, send their monthly tithe check regularly (I didn’t have too much of a problem about that request!), pray for the work, listen to audio tapes of my sermons and partake of the Lord’s Supper faithfully in their small trailer house in Mossyrock. I was impressed, so I immediately wrote back suggesting we get together and discuss the matter in greater detail. So, I drove to the “Yardbird” shopping center in Chehalis, WA, where I met a distinguished looking, white-haired gentleman, who walked quite erectly in spite of his advanced age. After lunch, we enjoyed a delightful couple of hours’ visit as his story unfolded. I sensed an immediate spiritual kinship! It seems he had begun part-time preaching sometime in the 40s following his graduation from Linfield College in McMinnville, OR. (He had also taught school and served as a forest ranger in the Mossyrock area during those years). Somehow he had come into contact with Francis Winder, a Portland preacher whom I knew personally, and was eventually ordained to the preaching ministry by Winder. As we talked, I was surprised to learn that, while in the Portland area, he had also heard Archie Word preach several times and was well acquainted with the writings of Donald Hunt and the Voice of Evangelism! In discussing doctrinal matters, I discovered that we were in virtual agreement on all important issues. His biggest surprise came when he learned that we were very much *supportive* of instrumental music! Years earlier, he went on to explain, he had become the self-taught preacher for the Community Church in Mossyrock and it appears his convictions, which he staunchly preached, had some positive

influence on the church (they had begun having weekly communion and baptized for the forgiveness of sins). In time, however, differences arose and he was not able to continue preaching there. So for some time he found himself without a church fellowship holding convictions similar to his.

“But how did you get on the mailing list of News and Truths in the first place?” I asked. The circumstances surrounding this proved to be quite interesting. It seems his name was among the 150 submitted to me by Francis Winder in 1955 when I started publishing News and Truths in Orlando, Florida. He had read it faithfully all through the years as it had moved to Nebraska, then Colorado (name changed to Impact for Christ) and finally to his own neck of the woods, Washington state!

That meeting with brother Core in Chehalis was the beginning of a long and rich relationship. (They officially placed fellowship with Crown Hill May 3, 1981). I’m sure that this godly brother’s prayers have helped sustain me during the tumultuous years of my Seattle ministry. Over the years, as Bethel and I would make our several-times-a-year trips to Portland, we were able to drive on up to Mossyrock on a number of occasions, during which we visited, prayed, and dined out with this dedicated couple, Melvin and Willa Core. And all of this because of Impact!

In early 1997 brother Core (91) was placed in a long term care home in Morton, WA. After a fall that broke his hip and shoulder he was operated on at St. Peter’s Hospital in Olympia in June. As I left his bedside at the hospital on June 17, he spoke what would be his last endearing words to me, “You’ve ministered to me very well, Bill.” Upon being returned to the care home in Morton, brother Core passed away peacefully on June 29 (while I was at New Life Northwest). On my return trip to Seattle, I stopped at the tiny village of Salkum, WA, to conduct his funeral. Willa remained in a Centralia, WA care facility with Alzheimer’s Disease, where she died several years later.

## **CHURCH SHEPHERDING PROGRAM**

After attending the 1982 Church Growth Clinic V, in Portland, I came back excited about the material I learned from Christian Church preacher Ronnie Epps’ class on “Shepherding.” It had to do with organizing the church into seven areas of ministry, with each area headed by an individual who oversaw a number of persons under him. But, since the entire program was to be under the elders and Crown Hill didn’t have elders, I decided to appoint two mature men as “coordinators” of this shepherding program. So, I set about visiting every man in the church



individually to determine whom they felt would make good “coordinators.” The consensus seemed to be Ken Miles and Rich Stevens, so I called a men’s meeting to get a formal endorsement of these two men. But, to my surprise, someone nominated Alec Bowman at that meeting also. The vote was unanimous for Ken, but Rich and Alec received a *tie vote* for the second man. When a runoff vote was taken, Alec won out, so he and Ken were designated as “coordinators of the shepherding program.” I envisioned this as valuable training for these two men to be eventually appointed as elders. By now there were over thirty persons serving as “ministering saints,” under the seven general areas, who in turn, were directed by myself working with Ken and Alec. This arrangement proved so effective in directing the affairs of the church that these two men were elected by the men’s meeting to serve a second and third year, and then were approved for me to ordain as elders on November 3, 1985.

## **COLD TURKEY RESULTS**

By the summer of 1981 I had begun door-to-door calling in the neighborhood of the church building with Jim Sturgeon, one of the deacons. One family, about three blocks from the building, had the unusual name of Bytheway (Sherry, Phil and their small son Tony). As Jim and I told them about our filmstrip Bible studies, they seemed interested but were so “booked” with various work-related and family activities that there was simply no time in their busy schedule to fit it in. So we left, but I returned a time or two over the next several months in an attempt to set up the study. Finally, they agreed, but the timing was close. Phil got home from work around 4 o’clock PM, so I arrived about fifteen minutes before that, set up the screen and projector and was ready to go when he walked in the door. After a few months of careful teaching they both saw their spiritual need and were baptized into Christ on March 23, 1982.

It was not until several years later that Sherry told me of the amusing circumstance that this arrangement had produced. It seems that the neighbor lady living across the street from the Bytheways was observing me arrive on the same day every week shortly before 4 o’clock, carrying a small suitcase (containing the projector). As soon as I got inside the house, the drapes were closed; then a little while later in walked Phil. Of course, she had no idea that we were setting up for a filmstrip Bible study, assuming instead that some kind of *hanky-panky* was going on.

## **THE FATAL MISPRINT!**

In those earlier years, before we had a church secretary, I had to compile the material for the weekly church bulletin, type it and photocopy it myself! Since I used Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays to work on my sermon, the bulletin often had to wait until Saturday, and sometimes late Saturday night. On this particular Saturday night, about 11 o'clock PM, after running off the 50 or so copies, I reread it, only to be horrified at a "fatal" misprint! One of the Glen Acres church ladies' father had passed away that week so I placed a brief note in the Crown Hill bulletin telling about his upcoming funeral. I knew the man quite well and had even visited him in the hospital only a few days before his decease. As I hurriedly glanced over the bulletin for July 25th, my eyes fell on the death notice, "A memorial service for *Dead* Davis (father of Charlotte Johnson) will be held today at 2 PM at the Glen Acres church." The man's name was *Dean* Davis! So I hurriedly whited out the "d" and replaced it with an "n," in all fifty copies. What if I had not caught the mistake in time? I would have "died" myself over causing people to guffaw instead of grieve!

## **CHRISTIAN SCHOOL BEGINS**

In the summer of 1982 I received a rather strange letter from a total stranger! It was from Bob Pugmire, of Springfield, OR, asking if we had an opening for a teacher in *our Christian school!* He was a member of the church where Alan Walker preached and was the brother-in-law of one of our Crown Hill ladies, Janet Hudson. Somehow he had gotten the mistaken idea that we had a Christian school at Crown Hill. Now, we had talked about starting such a school a couple of years earlier, but nothing ever came of it and we had absolutely no current plans for beginning one. Bob was an experienced teacher, with a degree from Humboldt State College, near Eureka, CA, so that led to our giving the idea of starting a school more serious thought. We invited Bob to visit Seattle and discussed the matter with him at length. The result was a decision by the church to begin a Christian school at Crown Hill. One of the two options for holding classes was to use a large room in the public school building directly across the street from the church building (it was no longer being used as a school, but was being rented out to various social service agencies). The other was to remodel the rear of our church auditorium, including erecting partitions, and conduct classes there and in the church basement. When our use of the school building was blocked by restrictions imposed on us by affirmative action guidelines, we set about remodeling our building. So, school opened Sept. 6, 1983, with grades 1-

4 being taught by Bob. Within a couple of years we extended the grades to include 1-6 and obtained a second teacher, first Jim Macdonald, and then Robin Edson.

My original thought was for Bob to serve as principal and bookkeeper as well as teacher, but it soon became evident that I would have to take over the administration of the school, as Bob had to work part time as a custodian in order to make ends meet. So my duties increased; I was serving as evangelist, with calling and preaching responsibilities; I continued teaching two courses in *Seattle Christian College*; I was writing articles and operating a limited bookstore (from the church building); and now I was overseeing the many responsibilities of administrator of a Christian school. Things went quite well for several years. We had as many as 30 students at one point, but then several problems surfaced. First, the government imposed upon us the need for an expensive inspection of our building, to determine the extent of asbestos usage in floor tile and ceiling plaster. The result was that we were required to eradicate all asbestos laden substances within a given period of time . . . a procedure that would have cost several thousand dollars. Other factors: A new, larger Christian school opened up nearby, taking some of our students; Our church attendance was increasing and we needed the use of the rear of the auditorium for seating; My duties as administrator were stretching me too thin; Some church families began sending their children to other Christian schools because of finances and quality of education. All of these led to our having to make the decision, reluctantly, to discontinue our school. So, our final year of school was 1989 . . . the Lord had blessed our efforts and we had accomplished much good for six years.

## **SEATTLE YOUTH RALLY**

In early 1983, Ralph Johnson, Don Fleming and I began discussing the need for a youth rally for our growing youth groups. There were several youth retreats in the Oregon area but that was too far for some to travel and the expense was also a factor. So, we decided to begin having a yearly rally, first called *Northwest Youth Rally* (changed to *Seattle Youth Rally* in 1984), to be held over a weekend in the Spring, at one of our church buildings or in a rented hall. (Kids coming from out of town were housed in the homes of local Christians). The first one was held at the Kent Hill church facility (April 15-17, 1983), then a school gym near the Glen Acres church building was rented the second year and finally in 1985 it was held at the Crown Hill church building (with a meal served in the school building across the street). The Crown Hill

building was so packed with young people that we had to call the Christians and urge them *not* to attend on Sunday morning, but instead on Sunday night! When the number of kids reached over 400 that Sunday morning the decision was made to move the rally to a camp facility where a fee was charged and meals provided (Camp Berachah, May 1-3, 1987). That reduced the number attending somewhat, but insured better discipline. This arrangement has worked out well over the years since, and it continues to be held at Berachah, near Auburn, a southern suburb of Seattle.

## **LOUISIANA PREACHING OFFER**

Near the end of 1982 I received a phone call from M. J. Mouton, of the Robert's Cove Church of Christ in Rayne (near Crowley), LA, asking me if I would be available to move there and become their preacher. I had known M. J. from my Denver days and was somewhat familiar with the Robert's Cove church (Tim had served for a few years with the Monterey church, which was located in northern Louisiana). Since there was still some unrest among a few at Crown Hill over the "riffraff" incident of a couple of years earlier, I was inclined to give the matter serious consideration. I decided to give the people of Crown Hill an opportunity to voice their feelings on the offer. So, I prepared a form (given to all families on Jan. 9, 1983) which gave people a choice: 1) Should Bill accept an offer to move to a different church to preach? Or, 2) Should Bill remain as evangelist with Crown Hill? The response was overwhelmingly in *favor* of my remaining at Crown Hill, including the two men serving as coordinators. This proved to be the only time, while living in Seattle, I was ever invited to move to another church to preach, and the only such invitation in life that I ever declined! I have never regretted moving to Seattle in the first place, nor my decision to remain there made in 1983.

## **SHADY LADY!**

One dark and rainy night in Seattle, I attended a *Toastmasters' Club* Convention on Highway 99, near the Sea-Tac airport. One of the men in the church, George Munyer, was to receive an award for his public speaking ability that night, and since he was nearly the last speaker on the program, the meeting was not over until after midnight. As I made my way slowly along motel-studded south Highway 99, near the airport (a district known for its shady ladies), I noticed through my rain-splattered windshield a young woman walking along the side of the street near some parked cars. She was well-dressed, wearing a nice

trench coat, high heels, and appeared to be looking at the cars creeping by in the heavy drizzle. I assumed her car had broken down and that she was looking for help. As I rolled to a stop, she surprised me by jumping into the passenger side. As I began to inch ahead in the rain, preparing to ask her about her car, and before I hardly knew what had happened, she blurted out, “How about a date . . . wanna have some fun tonight?” When I finally realized what she was up to I managed to stammer, “Well, no . . . but can I talk to you about the Lord?” Quite surprised and quickly turned off by my counter offer, she abruptly replied, “No,” and began reaching for the door handle to get out. So, as I slowed down, I managed to make her a second offer, “Well, would you at least read a gospel tract?” When she agreed, I fumbled around in the dark while driving with one hand, found a tract and handed it to her. As the car rolled to a stop she quickly jumped out and, in my headlights, I could see her walking toward another young lady of the night. Whew! I don’t know which of us got the biggest surprise that night! After that incident I pondered the Scripture where Jesus said, “Truly I say to you that tax gatherers and *harlots* will get into the kingdom of God before you.” (Matt. 21:31).

### **WHORES GALORE!**

As if once weren’t enough, almost the same thing happened to me again several years later, only worse! It was around noon one sunny summer day, when I was driving to a Viacom cable TV station to drop off a children’s video (“Connie’s Corner”), which the church was then sponsoring on a public service channel. I was driving on a side street just off north Highway 99, Aurora Avenue, a location also noted for its prostitution activities! As I came to an intersection, I noticed out of the corner of my eye a young black girl (she couldn’t have been more than 14-16) approaching my car from the left. As I slowed to a stop, I was surprised to see her wave at me. Instinctively, I waved back, only to be stunned to see her run across in front of my car and jump into the passenger side! “How about a date?” came her standard query. But this time I had more opportunity to speak with her. “Why are you doing this? You don’t have to be living this kind of life. Why don’t you give yourself to the Lord and quit this?” She quickly explained that she couldn’t because her boyfriend was making her do it! As I continued driving slowly, she pointed to the right and said, “Turn here.” Being a little rattled at the whole incident by now, I turned onto the residential side street and proceeded slowly down the block, still talking to the poor girl about her situation. Suddenly, a car raced around me on the left and slammed on its breaks, forcing me into the curb. Three young black men

jumped out and ran over to the driver's side of my car and began shouting obscenities. "What you doin' wit my girl?" Then one of them reached through the open window of my car, grabbed my left hand, pulled it out of the window and began trying to force my wedding ring off of my finger. When he saw that wouldn't work, and still shouting obscenities, he insisted, "Give us your money!" I was *really* shaken up by now, so obediently pulled out my billfold and looked in it. I had only a \$5 bill. Looking around nervously to see if we were being observed, he grabbed the money (they had just so much time before someone would see what was happening and call 911). Then the girl, still sitting on the passenger side, reached down and took my keys out of the ignition. That did it! Somehow, all my fear was gone. I wasn't about to let them take my car, too! "No, you don't," I said, excitedly, as I grabbed the key away from her and started the car. By now the guys had run back to their car, quickly backed up and sped off. In the meantime, I began to back up so I could get out of there *fast*, when the girl shouted, "Ain't you gonna let me out?" I shouted back, "Get out any way you can!" so she jumped out and ran as I was shifting into "drive." Heart pounding, but probably a lot wiser, I shakily drove home!

I never could muster the courage to tell Bethel about either of these incidents . . . too embarrassed, or chagrined to admit my foolishness! The first she heard about them was when I used the stories in a sermon one time. I am still wondering how Jesus had such success in winning harlots! But, believe me, I'm through trying to evangelize shady ladies!

## **SHARE/CARE GROUPS**

By 1983 our midweek Bible study and prayer service at the church building was beginning to be very poorly attended, (sometimes having as few as 15 in attendance). Recall that we were also conducting a Thursday night Bible study at the same time, which was quite well attended and producing evangelistic results. So, I decided to try something that was catching on in a number of churches about that time . . . small group meetings in homes. These were sometimes called LIFE groups, TLC (Tender Loving Care) groups, CELL groups, etc. So we began meeting in several homes on Wednesday nights but, being somewhat in competition with our Thursday night study, they didn't go over well either, so were discontinued after a few months (they went from April until September of 1983). It would be about three more years before we tried this arrangement again, this time with much more success.

By July of 1986, however, the church was ready for this type of meeting so I prepared some material and presented it, outlining what I called *Share/Care* groups. We carefully divided up the church into about 4-5 geographically determined groups (generally), appointed competent leaders to teach the lessons and began our *Share/Care* groups, replacing the midweek church service and the Thursday night Bible study. This worked very well as our attendance at these midweek *Share/Care* groups began to total well over 70 for several years.

## **BETHEL'S HEALTH SCARE**

Bethel has always been a person willing to step up to any occasion that could be helpful to someone. There were a couple of young ladies in the church at that time who were slightly overweight and wanted to drop a few pounds. So they began regular ladies' exercise workouts, doing aerobics a couple of times a week. Bethel decided to join them as a means of encouragement (who knows, maybe she wanted to drop a few herself!). So, she jumped into the activity with both feet and great enthusiasm (she was about 61 at the time). However, within a week or so, she began noticing some numbness in her lips and temple area, so I had her see a doctor, who placed her in the hospital for some tests. Nothing conclusive was ever determined but, considering the events that were to occur almost fourteen years later, it could have been something serious in its beginning stages.

## **A MAJOR LOSS**

I had been at Westside/Crown Hill over five years by the end of 1984 and we were seeing gradual growth in the church. Additions for those years were as follows: 49 (1979), 20 (1980), 30 (1981), 19 (1982), 31 (1983) and 27 (1984). Of course, with "move aways" and "fall aways" to contend with constantly, the net growth is always much less than these figures suggest. But, by 1984 our attendance broke 100 for the first time, and remained above that figure for eight consecutive weeks.

But in July a major blow to the church occurred when Lee Turner moved his entire recording studio and staff to Portland. Besides Lee and Gerry, that meant Jonathan (their son) and his wife, Fawn, George Munyer, Pervez and Rahanna Ernest and children, and another Pakistani family (a total of 13 people), all of whom were involved in producing the gospel radio broadcasts sent to the Muslim world via short wave. Lee needed more space for his operation (Key Communications) and had looked all over Seattle, besides as far away as Vancouver, B.C. and Portland.

Lee was a very stabilizing influence at Crown Hill, helping with the preaching quite frequently and teaching some of the best adult Sunday School classes we ever had. His sermons were strong doctrinally, incisive and very motivating. His deep involvement in foreign evangelism helped focus the church on world missions. His generosity and benevolent spirit were responsible for helping many, in and out of the church, in their time of need. His wife Gerry, son Jonathan and daughter Joanna were also very helpful in many ways. Lee's work with the Hameed family (whom he had influenced to move here from Pakistan) has produced lasting results. Lee was a very strong personality, who intimidated me at times, but overall he was a great asset to the Crown Hill church.

## **OLD "ENEMY" RETURNS**

Nineteen eighty-five saw the fewest additions to the body at Crown Hill so far (14). This was partly due to a recurrence of my skin disease, which had been under almost complete control for the previous twenty years. By 1986 we had lived in our third house, in the Loyal Heights area, for about five years. It was an older home and quite moldy. That and the fact that Dan, who was then living with us temporarily and had a German Shepherd dog, may have contributed to the recurrence, the worst since my Florida days. This time though it was characterized by a deep redness and extreme itching on my *face*! At night I had to aim an electric fan directly at me while in bed since coolness tended to alleviate the severe itching. Also, on Sunday morning, just as soon as I finished preaching, I would immediately go to my office (just off the platform) and put ice packs on my face to help relieve the itching! It wasn't until a couple of years later, however, that VA dermatologists discovered a *new* development in my skin condition. It appears that I had contracted a type of fungus on my face, arms and back that did not respond to the ointments I was using for my eczema. In fact, even topical antifungal creams wouldn't phase it; they had to give me *ketaconazole* in tablet form to counteract the fungus from *inside* my body! This condition was very debilitating and continued for a couple of years, so that I wasn't even able to attend the memorial service for Archie Word held in Portland on Nov. 25, 1988. But once it was "discovered," this new condition has now also been kept in check by *ketaconazole*, while the eczema is still under control with topical creams and an occasional prescription of *prednisone*.



## **CONDUCTING FLORIDA SEMINAR**

But, before my skin problems got very severe that year, I managed to make a trip to Lakeland, Florida to conduct a week long seminar on setting up *Share/Care* group meetings. (I was in Lakeland Jan. 14-19, 1985). The Combee Road church, where our son Tim was attending at the time, had learned of our limited success with such home study groups in Seattle and wanted to begin having them there. Being with Tim's family was a special blessing to me and I thoroughly enjoyed touring the Epcot Center with him. The trip also afforded me an opportunity to work again with Dale Williamson, preacher at Combee Road. Dale had held meetings for me while I was still a student at MSE in the 50s and I had preached on a rally in Lexington, NE when he was there, and held two revival meetings when he was in Hayward, CA. After leaving Monterey, LA, Tim had moved to Lakeland, Florida to work with Roger Deys, another "Florida boy" who helped start the Lakeland work.

## **ASSOCIATE MINISTER ADDED**

On Sept. 14, 1986 John and Janet Darling (she was Ralph Johnson's daughter) placed fellowship with Crown Hill. John had been a student at Seattle Christian College for several years and aspired to become a preacher. He had been attending Glen Acres but had become disillusioned over what he perceived as a lack of evangelism and growth. He immediately became enthusiastically involved at Crown Hill and soon approached the leadership with a proposal to be added to the church staff and begin receiving partial support. Seeing his talent and potential, we ordained him as an evangelist of the Crown Hill Church on June 28, 1987. By July he became my associate minister and on Nov. 1 was graduated from SCC with a B.S.L. degree. He remodeled the old print shop in the church basement into an attractive, small office. (Since our printing press had not been used much for several years, it was sold). John's first year with the church was a rich experience for me. We got along very well and he more than fulfilled my fondest expectations for an associate minister!

But John's boundless enthusiasm soon spilled over the edges as he began inaugurating a number of changes at Crown Hill. In fact, "change" almost became his byline. And since part of his responsibilities included overseeing the music worship, he soon began using, almost exclusively, the newer, contemporary praise choruses, projected on the front wall from transparencies. But the most controversial change, and the one that eventually contributed to a couple of families leaving Crown

Hill, was the practice of hand clapping during the singing (coupled with hand raising).

It was also about that time that the Boston Movement of the a cappella churches of Christ began gaining national attention, and were even then making preparations to establish a work in Seattle. John was especially fascinated by their rapid numerical growth and their “discipling” approach which imposed strict and mandatory accountability measures upon of all their members! As John’s dissatisfaction with the program and leaders at Crown Hill increased, it led to frequent discussions between John, myself and the other leaders. Eventually John’s influence over members of one of the Share/Care groups led to a crisis and finally to John’s decision to move to Nebraska in October 1989 to preach for the small church in Lincoln. When he returned a couple of years later, there were still residual feelings that prevented him from being comfortable working with Crown Hill. He eventually fell away from the Lord, a sad end to such a talented young man!

## **LOSING MY MOM**

Shortly after Dad’s death in 1955, Mom had moved back to Alliance, Ohio where she lived out her years. But in her 70s she contracted uterine cancer and received radium treatments that eventually required that she have a colostomy. Her extreme sensitivity over having had such a procedure led to her becoming a recluse for the remainder of her life. After much insistent persuasion I was finally able to visit her on several occasions during those final years, but she would allow no one else in her house. She finally passed away from stomach cancer in the Alliance Hospital on March 13, 1987 at the age of 83.

During those last several decades of her life, I had a very sweet relationship with Mom, although it was almost entirely by mail and phone. She was very proud of me, my family and my ministry and seemed convinced I could do no wrong. But, she was very reluctant to discuss spiritual matters, although she seemed agreeable with the standards Bethel and I had set for our family. Her funeral was conducted by a Disciples of Christ minister. In speaking with James White, a Baptist preacher who had visited Mom in the hospital, I was told that he had probed into Mom’s spiritual background and that she said she had made a “profession of faith” in Christ as a very young woman.

Because of the early training she gave me, the full support she afforded me and my family throughout my adult life, and by virtue of the many years we had to interact, though much of it was never in person in

the latter years, I feel that Mom was one of the two or three people who had the most influence on my life.

## **CONDO LIVING**

Some time before Mom died, and while still living in the Loyal Heights house, Bethel contracted bronchial asthma. We soon concluded that the must and molds were in the walls, carpet and furniture to such an extent that we needed to move to cleaner, newer quarters. So, after Mom passed away, we began to seriously consider a move. Somehow we got the idea that possibly a Condo would be the place to live. Bethel, who had been doing most of the yard work, was not able to do it anymore. And with my skin condition flaring up again, it wasn't easy for me to mow the lawn during hot weather. I was now sixty and Bethel sixty-five, so we began to look into condominium living. I drew up a sheet with all of the amenities we *preferred*, then started looking around. Some of the things we felt important were: 1) Near the church building, 2) Covered, security parking, 3) All appliances provided, 4) View preferred, and, of course, 5) Within a reasonable price range. So, we contacted Billy in Denver and asked him to put our Denver home up for sale. As it turned out, the people renting it wanted to buy, so that was easy.

About then Sue Moore, a lady in the church, told us about a nice, new Condo located on a side street, Phinney Avenue, in the Greenwood district. When we went to look at it, it had virtually all of the amenities we desired. After praying for the Lord's leading, we were able to buy at Phinney Ridge Condominium, 8720 Phinney Ave., North, a five minute drive from the church building. It had all new appliances, a sunset view of the Olympic Mountains, a covered, security garage and sold for \$85,000. With the equity from our Denver property, which had been steadily appreciating over the previous nine years, we were able to move in on April 11, 1987, with reasonable mortgage payments. We have enjoyed immensely living in the Condo, and have recently celebrated ten years here.

## **THE BEST YEARS**

The next few years would prove to be the best of my entire Seattle ministry. John Darling proved to be an effective soul-winner and was able to influence over a dozen members of his family for the Lord! His first year found us working together very smoothly, and the church began a growth spurt which lasted even after John left. After a low of 14 additions in 1985, we began moving up again. Additions to the body for the next few years were: 24 (1986), 44 (1987), 46 (1988) and 47 (1989)!

Average attendance for 1988 was 145, with a high of 207 on Nov. 6. That same month we had twelve evangelistic Bible studies and seven follow-up studies going, many of them being conducted by members of the church other than supported staff members!

The summer of 1988 also saw the church launch out on its most ambitious ever calling program. While I had done much calling on homes in the area surrounding the church building in previous years, I felt it was time to cover the ground again. I got a detailed map of the vicinity and marked off a rectangular area containing 1000 homes! We called it our “1000 Home Outreach.” I lined up five other young men of the church, Jim Mayer, John Darling, Dan Owen, Steve Obrochta and Dan Darling. We paired up and went calling on the 1000 homes immediately adjacent to our building each Saturday morning for two hours until we knocked on the door of every house! By using the “Casual Survey” approach, our goal was to obtain Bible studies in people’s homes, or at the very least, invite them to services at Crown Hill. While several good contacts were made during the calling effort (June through August), only one soul was reached for Christ, Dorothy Rasmussen. But, who can place a value on a single soul?

## **A “FINISHED LUTHERAN”**

During our 1000 Home Outreach, a very funny thing happened as we were out calling. Every time I think of it, even today, I have to chuckle. Our calling procedure involved one person doing the talking while the other wrote down pertinent information on a clip board . . . including such things as the person’s religious preference. My calling partner that day was Dan Darling, a fine young man, the brother of John. On this particular occasion I was doing the talking while Dan tabulated the information. When we got back to the church building, we always debriefed each other by discussing the calls. In going over his clip board sheet, Dan commented that one man had said that he was a “backslidden Lutheran.” Since I hadn’t remembered anyone telling us that, I asked Dan if I could look at his sheet. He replied, “There it is, he said he was a *finished* Lutheran!” What makes this so funny is that the man was referring to his being a member of an ethnic church in the neighborhood called, “*Finnish* Lutheran.” It has been almost ten years since that happened, but every time I pass that church building, I have to chuckle as I think of the poor guy who never realized he was telling people he was a “finished Lutheran!”

## **SECOND ASSOCIATE MINISTER**

Tension between the Crown Hill leadership and John Darling had come to a head by the summer of 1989. John felt the church was not growing fast enough (even though there were 39 added that year . . . the second most ever in one year), and blamed it on the leadership's failure to implement a more aggressive evangelism and "discipling" program. Jim Mayer, one of the most evangelistically zealous men of the church ever since his conversion ten years earlier had been a student in SCC for about seven years and was developing into a fine preacher. His desire was to devote his life to the work of an evangelist, so although he had not graduated from our training program, we felt Jim was qualified, so ordained him on June 18, 1989. Since by that summer it became apparent that John was not going to remain with us much longer, Jim was added to the supported staff (July 9) and replaced John, who was removed from the church staff in September, and subsequently moved to Nebraska in October. Jim assumed the responsibilities that had been John's, continuing to share the preaching, lead the music worship and follow up on new contacts.

## **NEW LIFE NORTHWEST**

By the summer of 1987 attendance at the Senior week of Camp Dudley (our Christian youth camp) was in noticeable decline. I felt something needed to be done so suggested at a camp planning meeting that we establish a *Nationwide Roundup*-type gathering designed to attract older teens, college age and singles (as well as adults). Its purpose was to provide a closer alternative for that age group than having to drive or fly to Colorado. It was felt that such a gathering held in the Northwest could attract the young people who had been showing waning interest in Camp Dudley. About the same time, perhaps providentially, several preachers in the Portland area were also talking about some type of gathering! So, on Jan. 21, 1988 I distributed a proposal sheet to Oregon and Washington preachers outlining some ideas for such a gathering. Shortly afterwards a preachers' meeting was held in Portland at which it was decided to go ahead with plans for a family camp in the Northwest. After additional information was sent out by Charles Dailey (March 11, 1988), a second meeting of Northwest preachers was held at the Church Growth Clinic (April 7, 1988) in order to make some definite plans (attended by Dailey, Ron Hunt, Gary Strubhar, Myron Wells and myself). An invitation sent to 17 Oregon and Washington churches called for a meeting to be held on Sept. 20, 1988 at Nendel's Restaurant in Yakima, which resulted in representatives of nine churches in

attendance. From these a steering committee was selected, consisting of Gary Strubhar (Gresham, OR), Ron Hunt (Crossroads, Portland), Ken Barker (Deer Park, WA), John Darling and myself. I was invited by the group to serve as Director, but after discussing it with Bethel, and in view of my recurring skin problems at the time, I declined, opening the way for Gary to be selected.

The location selected was the Salmon Falls Campgrounds, near Washougal, WA, with the first family camp, to be called *New Life Northwest*, set for July 24-28, 1989. I continued to be on the steering committee over the years the camp was held, also serving as publicity coordinator and security supervisor much of that time. Besides a registration fee, NLN was also financed by contributions from supporting churches and offerings taken at the evening services, which were held in an old-fashioned camp-meeting-style circus tent! Ample housing was provided by A-frames, cabins and a lodge, besides unlimited space for RVs and tents. Most attendees cooked their own meals (in RVs or on camp fire grills), while a dining hall provided delicious meals for the rest.

The original emphasis on youth was somewhat altered in successive years, however, as efforts were made for NLN to become a means of unifying Churches of Christ and Christian Churches in the framework of a family-style camp. (For several years well-known Christian Church preachers were invited as speakers). Registration reached as high as 150 (those staying on the grounds), with attendance at evening services peaking at 345 in 1992.

### **“BOSTON MOVEMENT” THREAT**

As word reached me in the Spring of 1989 that the fast-growing, highly aggressive Boston Movement of the a cappella churches of Christ was planning to establish a church in Seattle, I set about acquiring over a dozen books and studying up on the movement. In an effort to prevent its influence from adversely affecting Crown Hill I prepared and presented to the church on three successive Sunday evenings (July 9-23, 1989) an extensive, documented series of lessons, exposing its fallacies. It was also hoped that John Darling’s growing infatuation with the group’s methodology would not become an occasion of dissatisfaction and dissension at Crown Hill. The material was well received and effectively fortified the church against the Boston Movement making inroads. The following year (1990) I was asked to present the same material at the semiannual Church Growth Clinic at Portland. Since then I have had several requests for copies of the material from others outside of Seattle.

## **POLISH MISSIONARY**

On April 25, 1989, Jim baptized Max and Nancy Lach. Max, 42, was a native of Warsaw, Poland who had immigrated to the U.S., arriving in Seattle in the late 1980s by way of Canada and Alaska. He was a very devout man who soon became burdened for taking the Gospel back to his native country. After enrolling in SCC to prepare for the ministry, Max experienced a disheartening marriage breakup, precipitated by a Polish immigrant he had befriended. Max took Bible college classes with us for five years and was one of the most diligent students I had ever taught. During that time the Crown Hill church had sponsored him in two short term mission trips to Warsaw (1991, 1993), during which he converted his mother, stepfather and aunt. Before long it appeared evident that Max wanted to complete his formal education sooner than our program would allow. So, I contacted Charles Crane, president of Boise Bible College, and arranged for Max to move to Boise to complete his studies and graduate with a B.A. (Ministry) in one year. We ordained Max June 9, 1991 and following his graduation from BBC in 1994, he was subsequently sent to Poland by the Cherry Lane Christian Church, Meridian, ID, arriving to take up his ministry there December 27, 1995.

## **M.O.R.E. MISSION TEAM**

With Max's conversion the church's interest in foreign evangelism was heightened. We had not been doing a great deal by way of supporting "missionaries" for several years. About then Patti Anderson, one of the dedicated young single women of the church, approached me about forming a mission team to help focus greater interest and involvement in missions. So, in the summer of 1990 I asked several people to be on a committee which I called our *M.O.R.E. Team* (*Mission Outreach for Revival and Evangelism*). At its inception in August 1990, I served as chairman of the team, which over the years has included Patti (Anderson) Hoffer, Al Hoffer, Janet and Mark Hudson, Patt Comstock, Betty Bowman, Ahmed Hameed, Dave Hunter, Jim Owen, Steve Obrochta, Duane Johanson (at large), Lanaya Clouse, and Suzy and Jeff Kyle (and later the Green and Clouse families). Among the first projects of the M.O.R.E. Team were to draft a "Missions Policy Handbook," put up a "foreign evangelism bulletin board" and begin planning for our first "Faith-Promise Rally."

The fruitfulness of the *M.O.R.E. Team's* efforts may be seen in the first seven successful Faith-Promise Rallies held to date. These have raised a total of \$65,253 for supporting our primary missions: the

Dominican Republic (Reeds), El Salvador (Riveras), London (Marshalls), Poland (Max Lach), Zimbabwe (Reymans), as well several others: I.D.E.S., India (Gabriels), OLE (Gilsos), Sudan (Douglass'), Key Communications (Turners), Hungary (Fannins), and Missions Pro (Alton Danielson).

One effort that never quite materialized (early 1991) involved the prospect of my being sent to the Hungarian district of Romania under the auspices of I.D.E.S., to take in Bibles and medicine. The idea was for me to travel with a bilingual person to the village in Transylvania where my parents had lived as children, where I would make contact with people by the name of *Pal*, my original Hungarian name. Efforts would then be made to have Bible studies with them in view of further evangelism by others later. Admittedly, the trip had a dual purpose, for I have long desired to return to my ancestral "roots." But, even though the financing appeared to be available from I.D.E.S., and the M.O.R.E. Team was supportive of the idea, the young Hungarian Bible college student I had planned to travel with backslid and was no longer interested (or even reachable). I guess this will have to remain one my unfulfilled "dreams."

## **BECOMING AN ELDER**

Ken Miles and Alec Bowman had been elders at Crown Hill since 1985. But in early 1990 Alec resigned, leaving Ken as the sole elder. In order to prevent our eldership from having to be dissolved (a single elder, of course, is the not Scriptural arrangement), I, with mixed feelings, agreed to become the second elder. I was already actively engaged in the work of an evangelist, while at the same time, doing much of the work of an elder besides. So, my new status would simply be that of an elder also doing the work of an evangelist, just as my previous status had been that of an evangelist also doing the work of an elder. I viewed the change as somewhat semantic, and accepted the rather awkward arrangement in order to preserve an eldership. I served as elder for 17 months, from March 1990 until August 1991, when Ken also resigned. I feel that since 1991 the leadership strength of the church has declined measurably. The church had developed gradually from 1978 until acquiring an eldership in 1985. Then after having a viable eldership from 1985 until 1991, we had to revert to a less desirable method of leadership. Any church is bound to see this as a step backward in progress!



## CHRISTIAN CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Shortly after coming to Seattle I began attending the Gospel Festival, a yearly preaching gathering held at Puget Sound College of the Bible, which recently had moved to Edmonds, WA. But, I always felt extremely out of place, seldom knowing more than one or two people in attendance. Then, after moving to Crown Hill and not having a baptistry, I contacted the Shoreline Christian Church and arranged for the use of their heated baptistry for our rather frequent baptisms. As early as 1980 I attended a very impressive, spiritually edifying Christmas musical production at Shoreline, and encouraged others at Crown Hill to do so. We then attended the program yearly until it was discontinued several years later.

Several people from Crown Hill have attended PSCC (PSCB had changed its name to *Puget Sound Christian College*) over the years (Jim Owen, Dan Owen, Kirk and Suzy Jones, Jeff Kyle). And we had several PSCC students attend briefly at Crown Hill on Sundays and Share/Care meetings in the early 80s (Candy Neiswonger, Kim Richardson, Billie Goettling).

By 1990 I had developed limited interaction with various Christian Church people and activities, especially in the Pacific Northwest. I had already had several articles published in the nationally circulated Christian Church/Churches of Christ periodical Christian Standard (57,000 circulation). And I had presented a chapel message at PSCC (Oct. 23, 1984), and had taught a college course there for one quarter on "The History and Doctrine of Cults." So, I decided to make a concerted effort to reach out to several conservative Christian Church preachers by inviting them to speak at Crown Hill at Sunday night services: Dick Owen (Professor at *Puget Sound Christian College*, April 1990), Roy Stedman (June 1990), Keith Kendall (July 1990), Vincent Smith (November 1990), Don Robinson (January 1991), Sam Harsin (June 1991), Charles Crane (President of *Boise Bible College*, July 1991), Bill Putman (revival meeting, October 1991), and Glen Basey (President of *Puget Sound Christian College*, September 1993). Besides the one chapel message and class at PSCC, not one of the above preachers reciprocated by asking me to preach at their churches. (I always suspected that my known involvement with Archie Word of Portland and MSE in Ottumwa had scared them off!).

A few of the above preachers had become somewhat alarmed at the liberal tendencies they were observing among some Christian Churches in the Pacific Northwest (*Overlake Christian Church*, in Kirkland, WA, had become notorious for its open advocacy of "faith

only” doctrine). Roy Stedman, Vincent Smith, of Olympia, and Don Robinson, of Tacoma, had developed some interaction with Ralph Johnson, and that in turn, came to involve me as well. In several meetings together with these good men and a couple of others, we planned for a gathering that was intended both to encourage fellowship between our churches and emphasize more conservative views on baptism, worldliness, tongues, etc. The first such gathering, called *Northwest Restoration Conference*, was held at the Christian Church campgrounds near Mineral, WA October 5-6, 1990. I was selected to present a speech on “Perceptions Held by Some Churches of Christ (Instrumental) of Independent Christian Churches,” with Ernie Chamberlain bringing a counterpart speech. Both messages were later published as feature articles in the Summer/Fall 1990 issue of One Body, “A Magazine Promoting Christian Unity,” edited by my good friend Victor Knowles. A second conference was held at the *Normandy Park Christian Church* (a Seattle suburb where Roy Stedman preached) and a third (and final) one at *Black Lake Bible Camp*, near Olympia. By that time Vincent Smith had moved away and the focus of the conference seemed to shift, so that it became little more than a Christian Church retreat by then.

I entered into all the above efforts with genuine sincerity and held out hope that some form of unity might develop, with no strings attached. But, alas, my reputation must have produced such skepticism that, by the mid 90s I again had almost no contact with Christian Churches!

## **DON DEWELT’S INVITATION**

But one preacher among the Christian Churches was different . . . Don DeWelt, president of *College Press*, longtime professor at San Jose and Ozark Bible Colleges, and a noted author. He had helped found the annual *Restoration Forum* in 1983, a meeting between a cappella Churches of Christ and Christian Churches, designed to discuss mutual concerns with a view to achieving greater cooperation. I first met Don at the 1950 *San Jose Bible College Conference on Evangelism*. During the intervening years I had very minimal contact with him. But when he founded One Body in 1983, appointing my friend Vic Knowles as editor, it afforded me an opportunity to have renewed contact with him. Yet I was surprised to receive an invitation from him to speak on the *Restoration Forum VIII*, to be held at the *Crossroads Church of Christ*, Portland, OR, in October 1990. I was asked to bring material in favor of using instrumental music from the historical perspective, as a response to

an a cappella brother's material against it. After giving it some thought, I decided I was not the scholar capable of meeting this challenge, so declined the invitation. Subsequently, Charles Dailey presented in my place some very fine material at the Forum (later put out in pamphlet form as "A Scriptural Analysis of Music in Worship"). But it was very encouraging to have a man of Don DeWelt's caliber show such confidence in me.

## **KIDNEY STONE ATTACKS**

As far back at the early 80s I had had my first attack of kidney stones. I was in my car returning from the downtown UPS terminal, where I had just shipped out a quantity of flyers to Fred Miller in England. These were printed on our press by Alec Bowman, and were to be used by college students in London in door-to-door calling designed to obtain Bible studies. Alan Marshall was first contacted by one of these flyers. On my way home I began having severe pains all through my stomach. As they intensified, driving through traffic became increasingly more difficult, until I almost couldn't make it home. After arriving home the pain subsided. I didn't know what it was so went to the VA doctors for tests, where it was determined that I had had a kidney stone attack. A few years later I had another similar attack at home. That time the pain was so intense that I was beside myself, vomiting, pacing the floor and even screaming at times. I was never able to determine for certain that I had passed any stones, however. Then early one morning in 1991 I began having the characteristic stomach pains again. Immediately I knew what it was this time, so started drinking lots of water and even attempted standing on my head out of desperation (Eddie DeVries once told me about that procedure. Gravity was supposed to reverse the flow in the urinary tract and relieve the pain. Didn't work!). It got so severe that I was fumbling with the phone to call 911 when Bethel offered to drive me, pajama-clad, to the local hospital, only ten minutes away. After a quick examination and some pain medication, they decided to administer a laser beam procedure in an attempt to dissolve the stone which was discovered caught in my urinary tract. When that didn't work, they opted for major surgery to remove it on Feb. 4, 1991 at the *Ballard Community Hospital*. VA doctors later determined that my calcium level was remaining too high, and that contributed to the formation of kidney stones. So they convinced me that I needed to have parathyroid surgery (in the neck area) to remove most of my parathyroid glands, thus allowing my calcium level to diminish. I had that surgery performed at

the *Northwest Hospital* on Aug. 5, 1991. (Eventually I had to take calcium supplements to adjust the proper level).

## **RECORD CHURCH ATTENDANCE!**

From February 1991 until June 1993, there were twelve Sundays when the attendance at Crown Hill topped 200: 219 (Feb. 17, 1991), 216 (Mar. 3, 1991), 208 (Mar. 31, 1991), 210 (April 19, 1992), 210 (Feb. 21, 1993), 208 (Mar. 28, 1993), 210 (April 18, 1993), 201 (May 2, 1993), 215 (May 9, 1993), 204 (May 23, 1993), 203 (June 20, 1993). The largest ever *regular* Sunday AM attendance was 223 (Feb. 2, 1992). In fact, the highest *yearly average* attendance came during the month of Aug. 1993 . . . 185!

The year 1994 saw over 50 persons leave Crown Hill, most of them moving away due to work related situations. But several families left for other reasons (see below), including what they perceived as “too strong” preaching from me! Some of these didn’t believe Bible teaching on the subject of the necessity of baptism. Apparently they had been losing their convictions on the subject (if they ever had any) until it finally came to a head! On Sept. 18, 1994 I preached a sermon titled, “How to Have a Strong Church,” only to have three people walk out during the sermon. Members of thirteen other families, however, later expressed to me personally their enthusiastic endorsement of the message!

## **CHURCH PROGRESS SLOWS**

While attendance had held up well in the early 90s, the number of additions began to slow down considerably. With a high of 47 additions in 1989, this figure was to decrease as the decade progressed: 21 (1990), 27 (1991), 30 (1992), 14 (1993), 16 (1994), 21 (1995), 8 (1996), 4 (1997), 5 (1998). This number had not been a single digit since my coming to Seattle in 1978! Reasons for this may have been several. John’s leaving after doing so well at first probably disillusioned some. Developing an eldership, only to have it dissolve in a few years could have had a negative effect. Then Jim’s ordination and being added as associate minister, while being a great advantage at first, led to problems by 1993. As was the case with my associate minister Steve Heese fifteen years earlier in Denver, Jim now felt the church was not growing fast enough. I’m sure the “church growth movement” of the late 70s and 80s contributed to these feelings in some of the younger preachers. At any rate Jim became restless and, during a number of intense discussions we had, some including a few of the other church leaders, Jim voiced his

desire to have more of a leadership role at Crown Hill. When it appeared that he might choose to leave Crown Hill unless this were to happen (Denver *deja vu* all over again!), I decided to relinquish my role somewhat, permitting Jim to take more initiative in church leadership. I must confess that I did so with mixed feelings and some reluctance, but at the time, felt it was the only thing to do in order to preserve church unity and progress. (Had Jim or I moved elsewhere, it would no doubt have had a negative impact on some in the church). So, in December 1993, I drafted a letter and distributed it to all of the church families, outlining the change of roles for Jim and me. Jim was to be viewed as “the preacher,” while I was to take a lesser role. I went over with Jim a lengthy list of administrative duties which he was to assume, then near the end of the year at the close of a sermon one Sunday morning, I publicly called Jim to the platform and explained the new arrangement to the entire congregation. Jim was now receiving full financial support from the church, while I had just begun receiving Social Security and now voluntarily suggested that my own church support be reduced to almost a third of what it had been.

To facilitate this transition, I decided to move my office out of the church building, thus allowing Jim, who remained there and eventually moved into my old office, to be viewed by the congregation as the person on whom it should begin to rely more heavily. I found a very suitable, much larger office in a building within sight of our condo (moved in February 1994 after our son Dan had come to build beautiful book shelves), with the church paying for its very reasonable rent. This arrangement has proven very satisfactory to me, as it was also designed to afford me opportunity to do more writing, something I had always thought I would do when I “slowed down!” But, my “semi-retired” pace saw little reduction in my church activities: I continued preaching half time (Jim and I alternated two Sundays on, two off), teaching courses in SCC, teaching an adult Sunday School class occasionally, leading a Share/Care group, overseeing the Sunday School program, being in charge of Sunday night services, chairing the *M.O.R.E. Mission Team* (and later editing MORE News), as well as making follow-up calls on some new contacts and conducting teaching appointments in homes! I was also involved in several writing projects and editing the journal of the *International Society of Bible Collectors*, Bible Collectors’ World by this time!

Now that we had no elders, I suggested we appoint three “advisors” who would meet with Jim and me to make plans and conduct the affairs of the church. (The three men chosen were Ken Miles (former

Crown Hill elder), Cliff Hoff (former Crossroads, Portland elder) and Mike Clouse (graduate of MSE). While this arrangement has not been ideal, to say the least, we have managed to keep going in spite of the sharp decline in attendance beginning in 1994 (from the 180s to the 120s-130s by 1997!).

### ***AN UNDERSTANDABLE VERSION***

For a number of years I had been making a practice of reading through the entire Bible, or at least the New Testament, once a year. I had used a variety of translations, both literal and contemporary speech versions. Then in 1992, after finishing the *New American Standard Version* (for the second time), I got the idea that I would *write out* the New Testament as I read it. I reasoned that if I benefited from reading the Scriptures (using the eyes), I just might benefit even more by *writing* it also (using the hands as well). I guess I was remembering when I was a kid in grade school having to write on the blackboard one hundred times, “I will not throw erasers!” But what translation would I use? I had long considered the 1901 *American Standard Version* to be one of the best and most accurate of all versions. But as I thought further about the idea, I decided there were many passages in the ASV that were not clear to me, primarily because of archaic language or complex sentence structure. (I had made an attempt at paraphrasing in 1984 when I did a version of I and II Peter, I, II, III John, Jude and Galatians, chapters 1-4. That feeble effort bore the coined title, “Trans-Phrased ParaVersion”).

So, I decided I would read through the 1901 ASV New Testament and reword it in terms that seemed easiest for me to understand. To help me in this process I utilized a number of books to aid in stating the verses accurately, as well as understandably: Two Greek-English interlinear New Testaments, as many as 30 other English translations, and up to six commentaries on most passages, plus several Gospel harmonies, Bible atlases, Bible handbooks and Bible dictionaries. With these tools in hand I began the work of rewording and rephrasing the entire New Testament in September 1992, in the extra bedroom of our condo. I utilized early morning and late night hours, and virtually every spare minute when I was at home, including Saturdays (sometimes all day) and Sundays. I was encouraged in the project by Dr. Robert G. Bratcher, primary translator of the *Good News Bible (Today's English Version)*, who, after examining a portion of the preliminary manuscript at the ISBC convention in Greenville, SC (in 1994), commented, “Bill, you're a translator!” My very discriminating wife, Bethel, read much of the manuscript and was consulted countless times to see how a particular

reading struck her. She was a great encouragement to me during the entire project.

There are about 7959 verses in the New Testament (KJV) so I figured if I translated about 20 verses a day it would take me a little over 13 months to complete the task. As it turned out, I was able to average only about twelve verses a day, working about 2½ hours (on the average). But due to health, emergencies, traveling and other important interruptions I missed some days, yet got in about 20-30 verses many days, and even 52 one day! I wrote out in longhand the entire work in six stenographer's notebooks, then typed that material onto the hard drive of my computer. I spent another five months reading, rereading and revising the computer printouts before the work was ready for publication.

I finished the preliminary work, titled *The New Testament: An Understandable Version*, in 21 months on June 11, 1994, then sent it on disk to a friend in Ft. Worth, TX to format, add page headers and finally run camera ready copies on his commercial 1500 dpi printer (required by the printing company). The printing and binding work was done by Edwards Brothers in their Lillington, NC plant in a beautiful 588-page blue hardback edition. But, I was *very* disappointed that the man in Texas permitted a number of typing errors to creep into the text. In the process of having him correct them, unknown to me he allowed *others* to enter the text, which I was never able to catch. My contract with Edwards Brothers called for 300 copies, but a press underrun resulted in only 295 copies being produced. I personally added stamped numbers to each copy. I had to borrow most of the publication cost (\$6,212.42) so had to sell them for \$39.95 initially to help recoup my investment. (I appreciated my son Billy making a substantial financial contribution to the project). They were delivered to me in Seattle in June 1995.

My major purpose for doing the work was spelled out on the title page: To gain a better personal understanding of the Scriptures, To leave a legacy for our children and grandchildren, To provide something of value for those interested in Bible translations. I presented as gifts specially inscribed copies to our six children and fifteen grandchildren, as well as to a dozen close personal friends. I consider this effort to be the most significant of all my literary endeavors; in fact *Summit Theological Seminary* offered to allow the project in lieu of the dissertation requirement for a Doctor of Ministry degree (which I never pursued).

While the number of copies in print was quite small, still they have had a rather wide circulation, with people obtaining copies in Korea, Australia, Scotland, Norway, Africa, Puerto Rico and England!

## ***BIBLE COLLECTORS' WORLD***

Since shortly after I became a Christian, I began collecting Bible translations (in about 1948). My first one, besides my regular Bible, the *American Standard Version* (1901), was Alexander Campbell's *Living Oracles* New Testament (which we began using for home devotions in Oregon). By the time I was preaching in Florida I had acquired an avid interest in the various English versions and probably had 20 or 30 in my growing collection by then. (Eventually my collection numbered more than 600 volumes, with about one-half being different English translations). By the mid 60s I had learned of a magazine called The Bible Collector that focused attention on translations, translators and Bible collecting in general. I became a regular subscriber and kept all copies, which I carefully read in order to keep abreast of what all translations were available. The magazine did not have a large circulation, but included scholars, translators, libraries and museums in both the United States and several foreign countries. By the 70s, when I lived in Denver, my interest in Bible collecting was greatly enhanced by Don Heese, who also was an avid collector. We shared many good times together browsing through old secondhand book stores for additions to our collections and comparing notes on new finds. We even coauthored an article for The Bible Collector, on "The Lauritzen New Testament," which appeared in the January-March 1973 issue. In subsequent years a number of my own articles appeared in the magazine, including a series which I had planned on publishing as a book, to be titled Bible Collecting: For Fun and Blessings (all of the chapters appeared in The Bible Collector, but the book was never published).

Then, in early 1991 I was contacted by Gerald C. Studer, president of the *International Society of Bible Collectors*, the organization of which Bible Collectors' World (the new name for The Bible Collector) was the official organ, asking me if I would be willing to assume the editorship of the quarterly magazine. I was immediately interested, but with heavy responsibilities at the Crown Hill Church, I had to give it considerable thought and prayer. Since I was then 64 years old and thinking in terms of "retirement" years ahead, I felt that editing a magazine on a subject in which I had great interest, might be an ideal use of part of my time in the years I had left. This was especially true since the work as editor would occupy only a few hours a month. So, I accepted his offer and was confirmed as editor at the first annual convention of the ISBC, held July 13, 1991 at Greenwood (Indianapolis), IN, with my first issue being that of January-March 1992.



Since then I have been able to attend ISBC conventions at Greenwood (again) in 1992, Greenville, SC (1993), Denver (1994), and Lansdale, PA (1996). I missed the 1995 convention in Eureka Springs, AR because of attending my 40th graduation anniversary at MSE.

An interesting, additional benefit of my involvement as editor of Bible Collectors' World has been the opportunity of meeting several distinguished Bible scholars at the annual conventions: Dr. Robert Bratcher, primary translator of the *Good News Bible (Today's English Version)* in Greenville; Dr. Kenneth L. Barker, translation director of the *New International Version* (in Denver); and Dr. Bruce Metzger, chairman of the translation committee of the *New Revised Standard Version* (at Princeton University). (I had met Kenneth Taylor, author of the popular *Living Bible* paraphrase on July 29, 1971, when he gave me an autographed copy of the first edition of that book at the Christian Booksellers Association Convention in Denver).

By 1996 I had appointed a Seattle Bible collector, Mark Mage, as my editorial assistant, thus reducing even more the amount of work involved in editing Bible Collectors' World.

When designing the cover for this autobiography, it seemed appropriate to use a photo I took of my personal Bible collection, since in recent years, I am probably best known for my Bible collection activities.

## ***TAKING A STAND***

Sometime in 1993 I received a phone call from my longtime friend, Victor Knowles, who was by then executive director of *One Body Ministries* (later called *POEM*), and editor of its quarterly unity magazine One Body, headquartered in Joplin, MO. His proposal: Would I like to coauthor with him a history book chronicling the story of Archie Word and the people and churches who had come to be called “the Ottumwa brethren?” Vic had authored a 1992 biography on Word, titled *Voice of Thunder; Heart of Tears*, so was very knowledgeable of much early history of this “movement.” Of course, his writing skills had already become legendary, as a frequent contributor to the Voice of Evangelism and numerous other publications, as well as editor of One Body and prolific author of over a dozen books by then. Ironically, I had given some thought to writing such a book myself several years earlier. In fact, I had made preliminary plans to author a biography on Word while living in Denver, and had even collected some important preliminary data from old periodicals. But when Word displayed a coolness toward my interviewing him, I scrapped the whole idea, sending

what materials I had gathered to Vic. (Later, Word did concede to being interviewed by his grandson, Don Hunt, II).

I was immediately intrigued by Vic's offer (as well as highly flattered). But, after discussing the matter in more detail with him, and later with Bethel, she became quite concerned about the prospect of the book being a "tell all" expose that would stir up strife or dissension. However, after being reassured by Vic (and me) that the book, while recording basic factual information, would not do a "hatchet job" on anyone, she was agreeable with my participating in it. At the time, however, I was right in the midst of my New Testament version, so had some reluctance over getting involved in another long term writing project. But, the prospect of such a book excited my writing instincts, so I accepted Vic's kind invitation and went to work.

Vic's initial proposal had suggested that we divide up the approximately twelve chapters, each writing half of them. But, I vigorously rejected that idea, since I had developed an aversion to books by multiple authors. To me the quality and style of such a work varied so widely that the overall impact of the finished work was often disappointing. My counter-suggestion was that I write certain chapters which he would assign, then he would rewrite them, incorporating my material. This way, I felt the overall work would demonstrate a uniform writing style. And since his style was far superior to mine, the book should reflect his authorship. As it turned out, Vic's assessment of our relative contributions to the book was that he did 80% of the writing and 20% of the research, while I did 80% of the research and 20% of the writing.

So, in the summer of 1993 I compiled and mailed out over 200 research forms to preachers all over the country. (I was very pleased to have received almost a 70% response). I then obtained from Donald Hunt all copies of Evangelism from the Heart of America, the news bulletin of *Midwestern School of Evangelism*. I also examined many back copies of The Church Speaks, the Voice of Evangelism and numerous other publications containing the news of people, places, events, activities and other data about "the Ottumwa brethren." From all of these I compiled (and sent to Vic) extensive lists: preachers (both living and deceased), churches, training programs, rallies, camps, retreats, missions, periodicals, Christian schools, etc. I also cited sources (including volume, number, pages) where numerous other significant pieces of information were recorded. I then wrote a number of articles on various aspects of the movement, mostly interpretative of its philosophy, as well as the entire chapter on missions ("The Mything Missionaries"), plus

chapter summaries to ten of the twelve chapters. After that I read and reread the manuscript in its several forms, making numerous suggestions, additions, corrections and deletions, which I felt would produce the best book. (I also prepared the extensive index of over 400 subjects and 850 persons). Of course, by mutual agreement Vic was to have the final voice in utilizing the material I sent him and in making choices as to what to include or exclude. It proved to be a *very enjoyable* relationship for the approximately two years we worked together, and I believe the book makes a substantial contribution to Restoration Movement history!

Vic's original suggestion for a title focused on the concept of "Standing Alone." It was my suggestion "Taking A Stand" however that was finally adopted. The book was published by *College Press* (Joplin, MO) in 1996 and is being distributed by them. A large box of research materials I utilized in the preparation of the work has been deposited permanently at the *Central Christian Church*, Portland, OR (where Archie Word's grandson, David Brink, ministers).

## **BURTON BARBER MEMORIAL**

The year 1996 had barely begun when the sad news came that brother Burton W. Barber (77), one of my dedicated instructors at MSE (1951-1954) had passed away from a heart attack at Galax, VA on January 8. The funeral service was held Jan. 11 at Galax and a month later a memorial service was held in Ottumwa on Feb. 13, during the February Gathering. But in January brother Donald Hunt had called me to express concern that many people on the West Coast, who knew and loved brother Barber, had not gotten to attend either of these services (very few were able to attend the Galax service because it occurred during a terrible winter snow storm). So, he suggested that I plan a memorial service to be held somewhere in the Pacific Northwest, preferably in Portland, to give opportunity for those in that area where brother Barber had done so much preaching in previous years, to pay their final respects to his memory. Living some 3½ hours drive from Portland, and farther still from others on the West Coast, it presented me with quite a challenge. But I was very sympathetic to the need for such a service so called Tom Burgess and got approval for conducting it at the Crossroads building in Portland.

I first contacted a few people who had been Barber's students at MSE and some of those with whom he conducted meetings, all living on the West Coast. I was eventually able to put together a fine array of preachers to speak at the memorial: Eddie Werner (Coos Bay, OR), Warren Vasey (Sweet Home, OR) and James Brown (Sacramento, CA).

These men had all studied under Barber. I was also able to line up Edwin McSpadden (Riverside, CA), Lee Turner (Portland, OR) and Harold Buckles (Salem, OR). These men had all worked with Barber on various occasions. Rodney Reyman came to read Scripture and lead in prayer and his brother Harold came to lead the singing. The children and grandchildren of Archie Word (“Second and Third Generation”) presented several appropriate musical numbers and I read the poem “One By One” written in memory of brother Barber. Lunch was served in the church gym and tables containing all of Barber’s published works were on display. I was also able to print and distribute a nice folder with brother Barber’s photo on the cover and a biographical sketch and list of his published works inside. I had a large 20” X 28” photo of brother Barber made and mounted on an easel in the front of the Crossroads auditorium for the service (it was eventually donated to MSE and now hangs in their administration building). About 75 persons attended and were blessed as they heard many words of reminiscence about this great man of God!

Little could I have known some 46 years earlier at the Troutdale Gathering, held only fifteen miles from the Crossroads building, that I would someday preside over a memorial service for Burton W. Barber, the man whose sermon had inspired me to become a preacher!

### **40th MSE ANNIVERSARY**

Over the years of living in Seattle I have very rarely traveled any farther east than Denver. (I flew back there every couple of years to have a new hairpiece made by the expert supplier who began making them in 1970). Of course, these trips afforded me a welcome occasion to visit my three children (and seven grandchildren) who lived there. Since moving to Seattle, however, I had been back to Iowa only once (to speak on the 1981 Centerville Rally). But, when it was announced that MSE’s reunion banquet, which had become a yearly event in Ottumwa by then, was to honor its 1955 graduates, I felt very desirous of attending. I decided, however, that while making such a long trip back east, I would also go on to Ohio and spend some time there with my sister, whom I hadn’t seen since 1988 when I attended *Restoration Forum VI* in Akron, OH. So, after a week of wonderful visiting with her and her husband Ralph, I flew to Ottumwa where I got a ride to Centerville (45 miles away) and stayed there in a motel. This afforded me a much needed opportunity to get together with Vic Knowles who was also at the Rally, to collaborate on developing plans for our forthcoming book, *Taking a Stand*.

On each previous occasion when attending the Centerville Rally, dating back to the 60s, I always made it a point to drive the few miles from Centerville to Cincinnati, IA to visit brother James McMorrow, one of my beloved teachers at MSE in 1951-1954. So, on Aug. 17, 1995, this time accompanied by Vic and his father Dale, we made the trip to see brother Mac. It had grieved me for many years that there had been a falling out between the three original teachers at MSE, brother Mac, brother Hunt and brother Barber (since 1961), but I had never brought up the past when visiting brother McMorrow. This time, however, after we had a pleasant visit about various things, the past came up! Brother Mac began voicing his extreme sorrow over the controversy and the treatment he had received. He was especially grieved that "They don't call me 'brother,' only James." So, after obtaining some choice photos for our book from his wife Iola, followed by a beautiful time of prayer, tears and holy kissing, we departed.

The following day Vic and I went to see brother Hunt at his home in Ottumwa (he had suffered a heart attack a few weeks before) to go over his suggestions for the manuscript of our book (he had read and approved it except for some technical changes). In the course of our conversation, the occasion arose to share with him how brother Mac felt. Little else was said about the past before we left.

That night was the MSE banquet, held at a nice hotel restaurant in Ottumwa. When Vic and I arrived, who should be seated there but brother and sister McMorrow! Everyone was so happy to see them (they had not attended the Centerville Rally for years and had never attended the MSE reunion before). As the enjoyable evening came to a close, Bill Payne asked brother McMorrow to close in prayer. But, before he could begin his prayer, brother Hunt was on his feet, rushed to brother McMorrow's side and asked to say a few words. "Brother McMorrow, I'm sorry for all of the differences we had years ago. We were both trying to do what we thought was right." Then they embraced. What a poignant moment! And one for which most of those of us in attendance at that banquet had been waiting for many years. It truly was a *reunion*!

A little over one year later (September 26, 1996), brother McMorrow (83) passed away in a Des Moines, IA hospital after undergoing open heart surgery. A session of the 1997 February Gathering, held at the *4th and Washington Church of Christ* in Ottumwa (Lafe Culver, preacher), was devoted to a beautiful memorial service for brother McMorrow.

I feel certain that the visit by Vic, Dale and myself that hot August afternoon in Cincinnati was used of God and directly responsible for the wonderful reconciliation that took place! And I praise God for it!

## **WRITING MORE BOOKS!**

By 1996 I was well settled into my new office and a routine of church work and writing. Over the previous years I had prepared class notes on a variety of Bible topics, so now decided to put some of them on computer and print a small quantity of them in booklet form. Two such booklets that I self-published that year were: *A New Testament Study of the Eldership* (on the qualifications and work of elders) and *Development of the English Bible* (on English versions of the Bible). I also put out *History of the Union Park Church of Christ* (1996), which I prepared especially for members of that congregation where I had labored for 12½ years. Then I decided to go through my files of the poems I had written and put them in booklet form. This resulted in *Rhymes of the Time* (1997). When these are added to my previous works: *Feminine Adornment As Taught in the New Testament* (1963), *Telling On God* (1967), *A Christian View of Armed Warfare* (1969), *They Go About Two by Two* (1977), *The New Testament: An Understandable Version* (1995), and *Taking a Stand: The Story of the Ottumwa Brethren* (1996, with Victor Knowles), it makes three books (the present autobiography makes four) and seven booklets.

## **TROUTDALE ICE STORM**

Almost every Christmas time since moving to Seattle Bethel and I have made a winter trip to Portland to spend a couple of days during the holiday season with our son Bennie's family (including five grandchildren). Most of the visits had been quite uneventful, weatherwise . . . that is, until December of 1996! Our usual practice was to stay at a nice motel in Portland instead of with Bennie or one of Bethel's two sisters, who lived in the Portland area. That way, we could have a nice break from phones, schedules, and people! But this Christmas visit would be quite different! We were staying in the beautiful new Phoenix Inn in Troutdale, arriving the day before Christmas. Our usual practice was to spend either Christmas eve or Christmas day at Bennie's. Leann always cooked a delicious dinner, after which we opened presents and enjoyed a good time with the kids. (By this Christmas we also had three great grandchildren to visit as well). But, by Christmas eve it began raining . . . and freezing, an old-fashioned "silver thaw." To complicate matters the notorious East Wind came

roaring down the Columbia River Gorge! Now Troutdale was in the direct path of this severe winter ice storm and soon everyone in the motel was socked in. (It even made national TV news). Ice covered everything . . . trees, grass, light poles, roads and cars. I have photos of huge icicles hanging from light poles, at *45 degree angles*, from the wind freezing them as it rained! Needless to say we weren't able to get out to Bennie's (now living ten miles on east, in the Corbett area), or *anywhere!* We were there *all the next day* also! I spent my time reading the Bible, several magazines and newspapers. Suffering from severe "cabin fever," I even found myself watching "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" on television! I even read all of the post cards on a rack in the lobby. Bennie and Leann were able to make it to the motel in their four-wheel drive Blazer, so Bethel and I gingerly walked to the Shari's Restaurant, next door to the motel, for our Christmas dinner! By the next morning the sun had come out. It was still very cold, but the rain had stopped. A few trucks were seen creeping along the highway, so I went out to my car, only to find it totally covered with ice, *all over, an inch thick!* Of course, all the doors were sealed by ice, so I couldn't even get into the trunk for an ice scraper. A man in the parking lot offered me his plastic ice scraper, which I used for over an hour, scraping, pounding and beating on my car until I finally got a door open. Eventually I removed the ice casing in which my car had been trapped. We listened to the weather reports. Another ice storm was on its way. Seattle had had a huge snow storm and another one was on its way! What were we to do? Finally we decided to make a run for it. Trucks were moving and that would help clear the highways. We had a "window" so decided to go for it!

We made it home safely, even though my windshield wiper blade came loose in Centralia (we drove off the highway and I tightened the nut). But, upon arriving in Seattle, we were greeted by ever increasing piles of snow. It looked like we might not make it the last mile home. We finally made it to our condo, only to get stuck in the driveway . . . *fourteen inches of snow!* After digging out I was able to get the car in the parking garage. We were safe, and so thankful to the Lord.

This whole ordeal was so reminiscent of the silver thaws we had experienced almost 50 years earlier, when living in Corbett! How we thanked God for caring for us through that little "window!"

## **BETHEL'S STROKE!**

On Feb. 5, 1997 the writing of this autobiography came to a sudden and tragic halt! At 6:30 AM that morning Bethel arose from bed to go to the bathroom (I was still asleep). Suddenly I was awakened by a

loud “Thud!” Jumping up I was horrified to see Bethel *crumpled on the floor!* As I rushed to help her up I asked, excitedly, “What happened?” Her attempted reply was garbled. Again I asked, “What’s the matter?” This time she answered me with the same garbled sounds. I helped her crawl to the bathroom. A minute later I asked her, again, “How are you doing?” “I’m O.K., now,” came her clearly spoken and welcome response. She went on to explain she had gotten very dizzy while getting out of bed (this had been happening for several weeks), then fell forward while trying to get up! We were to learn later that she had just experienced a TIA (transient ischemic attack), a condition that simulates a light stroke, lasts for only a few seconds or minutes, then vanishes, leaving no permanent signs of disability. After breakfast we called her doctor, who urged us to get to the hospital as soon as possible. So she got dressed by herself and we arrived at the hospital a few hours following the initial TIA. After signing the proper papers and being examined briefly, she was admitted and taken to her room. That evening she was examined thoroughly by a neurologist who prescribed a number of tests, including an angiogram for the next morning. Before the angiogram, the doctor explained the procedure thoroughly, including the *risks* (one out of four hundred suffers a stroke from an angiogram)! Within an hour after the procedure her speech was severely garbled again, her face distorted, her right arm virtually immobile and she could neither stand nor sit up. She has suffered a “left brain” stroke!

Those first few days were very difficult, for both Bethel *and me!* I recall vividly lying at home in bed that first night, thinking I might be losing her and what it would be like without her. Her doctor had taken me aside at the hospital to discuss what measures he should take to keep her alive in the event she had another stroke immediately (the condition causing the stroke, restricted blood veins in the brain, could lead to another stroke at any time). Once I worked through that, and it appeared she would make it, the second night I lay there burdened by the thought that she might never be able to walk, talk, feed or care for herself. Was I up to the occasion? Could I handle it, physically or emotionally? I talked to the Lord about the situation . . . a lot!

But it wasn’t a hard choice to make. I remembered my wedding vows, made almost fifty years before . . . “in sickness and in health.” That meant *this!* I had made a firm decision that I would be there for Bethel, just as she had been there for me years before in my health problems. I reassured her, “Beth, we’re in this together. I’m going to be there for you . . . whatever it takes” And I *meant* it!



Bethel spent one month in the *Northwest Hospital*, about half of that time in the Rehab Center, working with Occupational and Vocational Therapists. At first she was unable to “transfer” from wheelchair to bed or toilet and back, without help. But therapists helped her regain the use of her legs, arms and hands, and develop strength and stamina. Her speech came back slowly, and her writing ability even slower. The Rehab Center and its excellent staff utilizes a unique workout building, called “Easy Street,” known widely for its fine track record in helping to rehabilitate stroke *survivors* (not *victims*; someone surviving a stroke has not been the *victim* of anything!)

The support from our children and family was simply superb! Our grandson Kevin and his wife Barbara drove up from Portland that first weekend, complete with “I love you” balloons! Billy and Sheila flew in from Denver, joined by Dawn, Billy’s wife a few days later! (They bought Bethel several new outfits to wear in the hospital). Bennie drove up from Portland! Billy and Dawn flew in again, this time for Billy to install bars and other safety equipment in our condo. Terry and Linda flew in from Denver, and Tim clear from Florida! After she was home, Bethel’s sister Willa (and husband Eldon and nephew Bill), and sister Carol (and husband Don) drove up from Oregon. Greeting cards (over 125) from longtime friends assuring her of their prayers, came from all parts of the country during those first few weeks! “Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days!” (Eccl. 11:1).

Bethel came home on March 3, where she continued a regimen of various, strenuous exercises, with therapists coming to the house to work with her weekly. By April I would take her back to the Rehab Center periodically where she continued therapy on “Easy Street.” She was back in church every week from the very first Sunday she came home and proved a great blessing to all who met her, displaying a positive, cheerful disposition which marveled everyone! Having come home from the hospital in a wheelchair, within a month she graduated to a walker, then by June to a cane and eventually was even able to walk on her own quite well.

Where were we to go from there? The future looked bright. We thanked our loving Father for the wonderful progress Bethel had made so far and felt He had been in this entire ordeal. It had brought us closer to Him and to each other!

## PLACES PREACHED

During my years in Seattle I was now so distant from the majority of churches and preachers with whom I was most familiar, invitations to preach and teach at camps, rallies, retreats and meetings were considerably fewer. Besides preaching at *Glen Acres* and *Kent Hill*, the other two congregations in the greater Seattle area with which we cooperated, the places where I served during this period of my ministry were the following: *Orlando, FL* (Midwinter Rally), Dec. 22-24, 1978; *Portland, OR* (*Montavilla*), May 28, 1979; *Denver, CO* (*South*), Aug. 5, 1979, Aug. 27, 1995; *Aurora, CO*, Aug. 5, 1979, June 22, 1980, August 24, 1986, Oct. 30, 1988, Oct. 15, 1989, July 10, 1994; *White Pass, WA* (*Camp Dudley*), Aug. 29, 1979; *Spokane, WA* (rally), Oct. 18, 1980; *Callao, MO*, Aug. 16, 1981; *Centerville, IA* (*Centerville Rally*), Aug. 18, 1981; *Portland, OR* (*Northwest Preaching Rally, Crossroads*), May 31, 1982; *Lincoln City, OR*, July 25, 1982; *Edmonds, WA* (*Puget Sound Christian College*), Oct. 23, 1984; *Sacramento, CA* (*Bad Weather Rally*), Jan. 25-26, 1985; *Hayward, CA*, Jan. 27, 1985; *Lakeland, FL* (*Combee Road meeting*), Apr. 26-28, 1985; *Mineral, WA* (men's retreat), May 3, 1985; *Longview, WA*, Apr. 6, 1986, Jan. 1, 1995, Feb. 12, 1995, Apr. 9, 1995, Mar. 24, 1996; *Orlando, FL*, Jan. 18, 1987; *Lakeland, FL* (*Combee Road*), Jan. 18, 25, 1987; *Beloit, OH* (*Fellowship Baptist*), Mar. 18, 1987; *Bellevue, WA* (rally at a cappella Church of Christ), Jan. 29, 1988; *Mineral, WA* (*Northwest Restoration Conference*), Apr. 6, 1990; *Gig Harbor, WA*, July 8, 29, 1990; *Springfield, OR* (*Leadership Workshop*), Sept. 21, 1990; *Maple Valley, WA*, Aug. 4, 1991; *Lakeland, FL* (*Grove Park Christian Church*), July 3, 1994; *Ottumwa, IA* (*4th and Washington*), Aug. 20, 1995; *Lansdale, PA* (*Plains Mennonite Church*), Sept. 15, 1996, *Portland, OR* (*NCB class and graduation banquet*), May 29, 1997, and *Salkum, WA* (*Brethren Church, funeral*), July 3, 1997.

Over the course of my entire ministry, the churches in which I preached were predominantly Churches of Christ. However, I was also able to preach a few times at other churches: Independent Christian Churches (numerous times), a Disciples of Christ church (three times), non-instrumental Churches of Christ (three times), Baptist Churches (three times) a Mennonite Church (once), a Church of the Brethren (once, funeral)! The total number of places (through 1997) was 97 (this included churches, camps, rallies, etc.) in 23 states (*Iowa, Missouri, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, New York, Arkansas, Ohio, Nebraska, Louisiana, Wyoming, Kansas, Minnesota, Colorado, Nevada, California, Washington, Oregon* and *Pennsylvania*). I also conducted 12 revival

meetings in nine states, plus one meeting and two brief mission trips in the Bahamas Islands: (*Abingdon, IA, Elizabethtown, NC, Nassau, Bahamas, Galax, VA, Hayward, CA (2), Rutland, VT, Ottumwa, IA, Ferriday, LA, Gering, NE, Arvada, CO, Monterey, LA, and Lakeland, FL*).

The lengths of time I stayed in a located ministry were: *Orlando, FL* (12½ years), *Gering, NE* (one year), *North Platte, NE* (2 years), *Denver, CO* (8 years) and *Seattle, WA* (18½ years, at this writing). So, together with the three years I preached as a student in Bible college, the total years served in a preaching ministry have been 46 (at this writing)!

## **HISTORY OF HEALTH**

From day one I have had some form of health problem. The eczema (skin disease) I was born with is still with me, but is now under complete control with the use of creams and ointments and an occasional dose of *prednisone* or *ketakonazole*.

*My alopecia* (scalp disease) has now progressed to “universalis,” meaning loss of all body hair. But, with the VA providing me with a new hairpiece about every two years (at \$1500 each), I feel much better about my appearance, especially since I have to meet so many new people and am in front of the public so much as a preacher. (But with Telly Savalas (“Kojak”), Yul Brynner (“The King and I”), Jay Buhner (Seattle Mariner), Montel Williams (talk show host) and many others having made bald “beautiful” again, I might be tempted to go back to “the natural look!”)

The cataracts, which developed when I was only 20, after three eye operations have now been remedied with intraocular lens implants, giving me virtually perfect (20/15) vision. Praise the Lord!

While still living in Denver, I began noticing problems with frequent urination. Over the succeeding years this problem has progressed. I have had my prostate gland examined by both VA and private doctors and learned that it is very enlarged, but apparently without any malignant “nodes.” In recent years I have been taking saw palmetto berry extract capsules, which may have alleviated the problem somewhat.

Since the early 80s I began being plagued with recurrent kidney stone attacks. Since that time I have suffered three very severe attacks, with one in 1991 requiring surgery to remove a stone from my urinary tract. Upon further examination it was discovered that I had an unusually high level of calcium in my system, which was regarded as contributing to kidney stones. So, in 1992 I had parathyroid surgery (on the neck

area), which drastically reduced my blood/urine calcium level, and (hopefully) eliminated the kidney stone attacks.

Also in the 80s, when I was jogging nearly every morning, I began having mild chest pains. Upon receiving extensive treadmill tests and electrocardiograms, my heart was found to be quite good (although I do have a heart murmur). After one treadmill test about ten years ago I was told my heart pumped blood 8% better than the average man my age! About five years ago a similar test recorded 25%! But doctors have recommended walking instead of running, which I have tried to do regularly (until Bethel's stroke).

Since my 20s I have experienced allergic reactions to certain grasses, sprays, chemicals, animals, medications and various other substances (tobacco smoke, paints, etc.). Instant headaches, itching, watery eyes, rashes, hives and nasal congestion have characterized this problem.

But, for a man who turned 70 on April 12, 1997 I think I am in fairly good health. I keep a pretty active schedule, trying to walk a couple of miles several times a week, but get a little "woozy" at times, and find a couple hour nap during the day helps me to teach or call with more alertness in the evenings.

I am so thankful that the VA schedules me for regular examinations for the above problems and furnishes me with all necessary prescriptions and treatment (although I opt to use private physicians for some of the conditions). And my good wife sees to it that I take my vitamins regularly! I also appreciate the disability compensation provided me by the VA for all these years! It has proved a great blessing!

## **“WUNERFUL” FAMILY REUNION**

Since 1971, when Terry's *The New Creations* made a singing tour to the Pacific Northwest from Denver, we have gotten together on several occasions with Bethel's relatives for a large family reunion. Unfortunately, this was after both her parents had passed away, so it afforded no chance for our children to spend time with their grandparents. (Bennie and Terry are the only kids to have had the opportunity of seeing them since we moved from Oregon in 1951). Attended by all of Bethel's sisters and her brother (as well as most of their children), such gatherings have been held at various parks in the Portland/Salem, Oregon area, at a church building or one of the children's houses. In 1996 it was at seascape artist/preacher Byron and Nolia (Bethel's sister) Pickering's new home near Lincoln City, Oregon.

Over the years, those attending have begun to include married grandchildren and even a few great grandchildren!

This year (1997), proved to be the most memorable ever for our family. For the first time all six of our children were able to attend the reunion and we were able to spend a wonderful three days with them and their spouses. (Billy's two children Joy and Jake and Tim's daughter Christy, besides Bennie's children Danny Ray, Randy, Mike and Tammy were also there).

On Friday, June 13, we and five of our children all stayed at the luxurious Phoenix Inn motel in Troutdale (a few miles from where Bethel grew up and where we met and lived after marrying). Bennie and Leann drove in from Corbett for dinner with the rest of us, then we all drove out to his place for pie. What a ball we had!

The next day (Saturday, June 14) a caravan of five cars drove the 2½ hours to Nolia and Byron's estate on a large, wooded acreage a few minutes drive inland from the beautiful Pacific Ocean beach. The weather was ideal . . . warm and sunny, with a light breeze. The reunion was attended by 97 descendants of Dewey and Rena Carpenter for an eventful day of fun, feasting and fellowship! Again, all our family stayed together at the Holiday Inn and enjoyed a wonderful fellowship (a delicious dinner together at Depoe Bay, OR, walking on the beach, shopping, attending church together).

But a memorable incident occurred at the motel that will "live in infamy." Following the tiring but enjoyable family reunion on Saturday afternoon, Bethel and I left early to take a short nap at our motel. We woke up about six o'clock and heard our kids talking outside their rooms (they were staying in adjoining rooms). Bethel said to me, jokingly, "Are we ready to party some more?" So I began dressing, but my shirt tail was still out, my belt unbuckled and I had no shoes on. In that condition I opened our motel door and, standing in the doorway, called out to our kids, "Party gal is ready to go again!" Just then an elderly couple walked out of their motel room directly across the hall, and seeing me still dressing, and having heard what I called out to our kids, the man said gruffly, "You oughta be ashamed of yourself . . . and at your age! But then, at your age I guess it doesn't matter anymore!" As they walked by the woman gave me the dirtiest look! Talk about embarrassment! I was speechless, but the kids found it absolutely hilarious!

The next day, after attending church at Oceanlake Christian with the Pickerings, our caravan made its way back to the Phoenix Inn at Troutdale and a wonderful day of visiting, hiking, fishing and shopping (again!) Our trip was topped off by a wonderful Father's Day celebration

on Sunday night, where the kids showered me with gifts and cards and shared stories of their growing up years. While the food was not tops, who cared? The evening was superb, held in a large, private banquet room, and was a fun time attended by happy laughter and hilarity . . . something the Paul family is famous for!

Although it was a very tiring three days, Bethel held up quite well and everyone had a safe trip home, well fortified with memories to last a lifetime!

## **UPDATE ON FAMILY**

Before finishing this book I want to give an update on the whereabouts, status and circumstances of members of my immediate family. I realize, of course, that some of the following may have changed or been altered, even before the ink on this page dries! But, here is the way it was when these words were typed (Summer, 1997).

Ben (55) and Leann live on a remote, beautifully wooded 11-acre home site with a bubbling creek flowing through its entire length (located in Clackamas County about 10 miles south of Corbett). They had a manufactured home built on the land and Ben (who uses Baker as his last name) has spent countless, strenuous hours clearing, improving and landscaping the property they aptly named "Paradise Hollow." Now retired from the heating/air conditioning insulation trade he had worked in since the 60s, Ben's health has suffered from an asbestosis condition due to his work. Children: Randy, their Down's Syndrome son, lives at home and is doing remarkably well, now being over 30. They are also raising three grandsons, Timothy (Danny Ray's son), Brandon and Nathan (Tammy's sons). Danny Ray, Michael (one son, Nolan), and Tammy are all married and living in the Portland area. (Glenn was tragically killed in a train accident in 1990). Ben and Leann attend *Mountainview Christian Church*, Gresham, OR, where they are both active in teaching children's classes. We get to see them two or three times a year when driving to the Portland area for Christmas, family reunion or some church activity.

Terry (53) and Linda recently moved to a small acreage in Parker, CO (southeast of Denver). Terry continues his preaching ministry (since 1973) with *The Church in Aurora* (large city adjoining Denver on the east), while Linda works as a real estate agent, as well as serving as church musician. (Terry also does part time work as a painting contractor). Children: Kevin and wife Barbara recently moved back to Colorado from Portland, where they plan to build on a mountain home site south of Denver. Kent, single, has his own health and fitness

business in Aurora and Kimberly, married with one son, Dillon, lives and works in Aurora. I see them about every year or two when I'm in Denver to see about my hairpiece.

Tim (48) and Marilyn live in a semi-rural area of Lakeland, Florida, where Tim operates Paul's Painting Co. as a painting contractor. Marilyn is active in a long distance phone business (Excel Telecommunications) as well as serving in various state political causes. They attend *Grove Park Christian Church*, Lakeland, where Tim has served as elder and Marilyn as teacher of ladies and children's classes. Tim also teaches and preaches at summer youth camps. Children: Ken works with his father in the painting contractor business; Scott is a junior at the *University of Florida* (Gainesville), and Christy is a freshman at *Milligan College*, Johnson City, TN, preparing for a teaching career. I get to see them the least of any of our children (only once every few years), due to the extreme distance.

Sheila (45) and Bill (Kelley) live on the east edge of Aurora, CO, where Bill works installing and servicing garage door openers. Sheila has a small cleaning business with a select clientele in the Denver area. They attend *The Church in Aurora* (where Terry preaches) and are active in various church activities (benevolence, ladies classes). Children: Glenn works in management for an Aurora Eagle Hardware store, while going to school; Paul is a sophomore at the *University of Northern Colorado* (Greeley). Sheila's husband Bill had two children when they married, Angie and Joe. We get to see them about once a year.

Billy (43) and Dawn live on a secluded mountain acreage about 32 miles southeast of Denver, near the small rural village of Franktown, CO. Billy operates Bill's Interior Trim, contracting the finish carpenter work in Denver's booming housing industry. Dawn works at computerized custom graphics from their home. They attend *Southeast Christian Church* (southeast Denver). Children: Joy lives and works at Vail, Colorado, while Jake is a freshman at the *University of Northern Colorado* (Greeley), studying physical therapy. We get to see them about once a year.

Dan (38), single, after living in the Portland/Vancouver area for the previous several years, has recently moved to Seattle, where he obtained a good job as shipwright in a shipyard. Dan is now attending *Crown Hill Church of Christ* and trying hard to reestablish himself after a number of difficult years. Hopefully, he will succeed. Children: Jess lives with his mother in Myrtle Creek, OR.

This story would not be complete without saying an appreciative word about our present "in-laws." Bethel and I feel very blessed in

having Leann (Bennie), Linda (Terry), Marilyn (Tim), and Dawn (Billy) for daughters-in-law, and Bill (Sheila) for a son-in-law. There are so many ways they demonstrate their love and affection for Bethel and me!

## AN UNFINISHED STORY

You didn't think you'd get away without a brief "sermon" before I finished my story, did you? After all, this is Bill Paul you're reading! So, if you have read this far, you might as well go ahead and read the rest of the story, for now I will bare my innermost feelings about some touchy issues!

No one ever *finished* his autobiography! If it is supposed to be the story of a person's *entire life*, written by *himself*, obviously it can never be *complete* until his life is *over*! Only the Lord knows how much more there may be to my story. But if it were to end soon, I would still be immensely gratified, since it has been a full, exciting and generally happy life!

Would I do some things differently if I were to have the opportunity of doing them over again? Of course, I would! Who wouldn't? But the major decisions would be exactly the same . . . I would accept Christ early in life; I would marry Bethel; and I would enter the preaching ministry for my life's work! What would I do differently? Ah, such nagging, unwanted thoughts that have occupied numerous fruitless hours over the course of my lifetime . . . I coulda, I shoulda . . . then I woulda!

First of all, I think I would make some *different* choices, if I were to have a *second chance*. Most of these would have to do with my *children*! I say, I *think* I would make different choices. Given the same set of circumstances, it is difficult to see how a person would have believed or acted differently. But here are some of the things I *wish* I had done differently!

I would like to have spent *more time* with my kids! Gone places, seen things, done things *together*! Perhaps camping, hiking, boating . . . maybe even fishing! I would like to have gone to more of their activities and games . . . baseball, football, basketball . . . school functions, outings, programs. I would like to have taken them on more fun vacations that involved sightseeing . . . activities that might have left happier memories of their childhood. I am keenly aware that a preaching ministry in general, and perhaps mine in particular, can be rather austere, confining and restrictive. Probably my children's freedom of expression was somewhat stifled at times! That tends to go with the territory for preachers, I know, but maybe I was too strict in making my decisions



about their pastimes. I wish I had been a little easier on them when it came to discipline and restrictions! The minor “rebellion” they demonstrated in their teen years . . . some of them more than others . . . may have been somewhat alleviated had I been more flexible and considerate. But in looking back, I think I was simply acting out my convictions and trying to be consistent in them. I now realize that many of those convictions were imposed on me by my peers and then onto my children, far sooner than they were able to evaluate their validity for themselves. These were *my* convictions, yet *they* were required to act on them as if they were their *own*! Of course, all parents pass on their belief system and behavior patterns to their children. But, now I see that the more rigid and dogmatic I was, the less palatable to them were my views and Christianity in general! My children all seem to have followed my general emphasis on the importance of spiritual realities (although they may have picked these up more from their mother), yet they have developed their own application of these principles. And that’s probably good, because each one is his or her own person, and responsible ultimately to God, and not to me! I’m just hoping they picked up on whatever my strong points were and incorporated them into their lives, and missed entirely emulating my weak ones. But, that might be a little too much to expect!

Then there is my dear wife Bethel! She is the only woman I have ever loved (or even said “I love you” to). I’m very glad I married her and I would do it all over again! Bethel and I have *always* felt that our finding and marrying each other was *providential*! We felt that we were truly intended for each other and that somehow God was directing circumstances in our lives to bring us together! But after several years of marriage there began to be some stresses in our relationship (and our children are aware of how much that was). Probably several factors contributed to this. My serious health problems no doubt played a major part. My inability to hold steady, productive work right from the beginning produced financial uncertainties in our marriage. Even before we were married Bethel was a little apprehensive about how successful I could be earning a living for a wife and two growing boys. After all, I had *no* marketable skills. Then when I entered college and more children came along, with our income being very minimal, this certainly placed even greater pressure on Bethel. And with my repeated hospitalizations, she was left to carry the full load of managing the household, as well as caring for six children, mostly alone . . . no wonder there were stresses on our marriage! And when my ministry began to involve Bible college teaching, preaching in meetings, camps and rallies, and publication work,

I'm sure she felt she was beginning to take second place in my life. But, from my vantage point, having come to view "the Lord's work" as the supreme objective in life, it seemed there was so much that needed to be done and so many opportunities opening up, I found myself assuming more and more work. I was not able to see that this was leaving less and less time for Bethel. With continued minimal income and poor health, vacations were very few and far between. And the times for Bethel and me to spend time together . . . alone . . . were almost nonexistent! All this would spell trouble for any marriage. Also, the fellowship of dedicated, well-meaning brethren, with whom I was associated, no doubt led me to make decisions about ministry that placed my wife and children too far down my list of priorities. I think my (our) views were "God, Church, Family," instead of seeing *all* of these as part of "the Lord's work!" Such a view is certain to impose on the feelings, comforts and well-being of family members in a negative way! But, by the grace of God, and Bethel's strong commitment to God, to me and to our children, we were able to make a success of our marriage, although not without some struggles.

Another area of stress had to do with finances. My income for the first 27 years of ministry was consistently below average, and sometimes qualified more as part time wages! But Bethel did a superb job of "making do" with very little at times to feed and clothe our six children. Mostly this was because she is the most *selfless* person I have ever met! She has *always* been more concerned for the needs of others than for her *own*! Buying a gift for her (Christmas or birthday) has always been a chore, because she never really wanted anything! (You can see that I tend to violate the rule of avoiding the use of "always" and "never"). She is *constantly* thinking about others and that accounts for her consistent, lifelong practice of sending small gifts, cards and letters to the sick, needy and hurting, almost everyday! And her concern for my needs has always been uppermost in her thinking (although I didn't always appreciate that fact as much as I should have). I can't begin to recount the many times she would say, as I went out the door to preach, conduct a Bible study or deal with a church problem, "I'll be praying for you!" I have absolutely no doubt that her *prayers* have been the primary factor in *whatever* I may have accomplished for the Lord in my life! A good example of how virtually everyone feels about Bethel are the following words, typical of the many cards and notes she has received from countless men and women over the years: "Bethel, You are such a blessing to me (and to so many people!). Thanks for all you do. You keep up with so many people's needs, it's amazing! You're a constant

source of encouragement to me and a wonderful example of what a Christian woman should be. Thanks for being such a good role model. Signed.” How blessed I am to have found had such a wife and to have had her by my side for half a century!

But, in looking back I also wish I had done some things to make life easier for Bethel in the areas that I *could* have! The high expectations I placed on myself were often also placed on her as well. I’m sure she felt the pressures of trying to cope with my, at times, rather rigid approach to life . . . the discipline of our children, decisions about church matters, interpersonal relationships with my peers, choices regarding the use of my time, etc. With her being a very independent person by nature, sometimes I found it difficult to just let her be herself!

It seems that Bethel’s recent stroke has brought home to me, even more vividly, how much I have depended on her throughout the years of our marriage. But, the upside of her tragic illness is that I have now found a special blessing in caring for her . . . shopping, cleaning, cooking (?), laundry, check writing, correspondence, etc., etc. Now it was *my* turn!

No doubt my philosophy of ministry over the years has been shaped to a great extent by the preaching and fellowship to which I have been exposed during the past 46 years. That it incorporated a certain degree of “legalism,” especially in its earlier years, cannot be successfully denied. But while my actions no doubt belied an exclusiveness in my interpersonal relationship with others, if I know my heart, I have always tried to maintain a cordial relationship, and yes, even a degree of fellowship on a personal level, with people in Independent Christian Churches and noninstrumental churches of Christ. Not long after being “out on my own” in ministry, I discovered that some people among other Restoration Movement churches held similar, if not identical, convictions as I did on a number of “issues.” And even more alarmingly, I noticed that even among “us” there were some widely differing views on certain practices (war, Christmas, modest dress, premillennialism, etc), yet it did not seem to keep us from working together in meetings, camps and rallies. Then, the few times when I discussed such matters openly with other preachers of our fellowship, I discovered that some of them also felt the very same way, yet were extremely reluctant to voice those feelings, especially publicly! I’m sure this has produced a somewhat double standard among many, which only in recent years has given way to a more charitable (and Scriptural, I feel) attitude and practice, especially among the younger preachers. This entire matter is dealt with by Victor Knowles and me in greater detail in

our book *Taking A Stand: The Story of the Ottumwa Brethren* (College Press). Unfortunately, however, the danger does exist of going to the opposite extreme by making fewer and fewer issues matters of importance. Obviously, this would lead to the equally undesirable and unscriptural practices of interdenominationalism that ignores entirely the Biblical principles advocated by the Restoration Movement!

Since such a work as this book has to stop someplace short of my funeral, I have no way of knowing how many more active years, months or days of ministry I still have left. Should that amount of time be considerable, my children and grandchildren will have the opportunity of observing “the rest of the story” firsthand. The main reason for this autobiography is to “fill in the blanks” of my *past* that are little known to my children and virtually unknown to my grandchildren and great-grandchildren!

### **WHAT’S NEXT?**

As these words are being written, Bethel and I are making plans for our 50th wedding anniversary, to be held at Nationwide Roundup lodge, in Colorado Oct. 2-4, 1997, with just our kids and grandkids (twenty-two in all)! It is hoped that this book will be available for them by then!

On a closing note, one of Bethel’s favorite quotations (from Jim Elliott, missionary martyr) also expresses my sentiments:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep  
to gain what he cannot lose.”

\* \* \* \* \*

***The first edition of this book ended here (1997).  
The story was then continued from here  
and completed in early 2005.***

### **WEDDING DÉJÀ VU**

Bethel and I have always made it a yearly practice to go out for a romantic dinner on our wedding anniversary each September 27th. On our 47th, in 1994, I asked her what one wish she might have. She thought for a moment then said, “That we would make it to fifty!”

So we began talking about what we might like to do to celebrate our 50th, if the Lord gave us that many. We both agreed that we would like to have just our family all together, our six children and as many

grandchildren as could attend. We had been to several people's 50th where it was a madhouse of commotion with friends, neighbors and distant cousins coming and going all day. We felt that would be too exhausting and not much fun at all.

When our lovely daughter, Sheila, got wind of it the year before she began making plans, with the help of some of the other kids living in Denver. The plan was to rent the huge lodge at the Nationwide Roundup grounds in the Colorado Rockies and spend the whole three days together!

Then, just seven months before our 50th anniversary Bethel had her stroke! For a couple of days there it looked like we might not make it to 50. But the Lord was gracious in giving her almost a complete recovery over the next few months, so plans for the get together went ahead for us to stay at the lodge Oct. 2-4, 1997, the weekend following the date of our wedding.

The kids and some of the grandkids all stayed in the rooms of the lodge while Bethel and I had a nice trailer all fixed up as the "honeymoon quarters." Those able to be there were: Bennie; Terry, Linda, Kevin and Barbara, Kim and Dillon, and Kent; Tim and Marilyn; Sheila, Bill, Paul and Glen, Angie and Mikayla; Billy, Dawn, Joy and Jake; and Dan. Some of the grandkids couldn't stay the entire time and some couldn't come at all, of course, because of work, school and distance.

We had all our meals together, with lots of fun and laughter, including a hilarious skit put on by Jake and Paul. Jake sat at a table with all of the ingredients for making his grandma's famous chocolate chip cookies before him. But draped over his shoulders and hanging down over his back was a large sheet, with Paul underneath it, except that his arms were sticking out and appeared to be Jake's arms! Well, you can imagine the rest. The laughing could hardly stop!

But the highlight of the entire time was the renewal of our wedding vows. Our original wedding was held in a small cabin (since burned down) in a wooded area above the Sandy River in Corbett, Oregon, with only Bethel's mother, brother, sisters and their spouses present. Terry performed the "second wedding," complete with Bennie giving away the "bride," lovely taped music, a huge cake and numerous beautiful gifts. A group photo of the 23 of us was taken outdoors by a professional photographer with a mountain backdrop (we had only one blurry snapshot of our first wedding).

That Sunday found us all at church in Aurora (CO). Then following the service Bethel and I walked out of the building,

flabbergasted to find Billy's 1966 red Corvette all painted up with "Just Married - 50 Years Ago" signs and decorated with balloons and dragging tin cans. They had Bethel and me get in and drive it around several blocks, followed by 6 or 8 honking cars, all of it video-taped by Kevin driving along in front of us.

Yes, it was indeed the "wedding we never had," and was far more wonderful than Beth or I could ever have expected. All in all, it had to be one of the most memorable three days of our entire lives.

## **AMONG THE AMISH**

Perhaps the most memorable religious meeting I ever attended was one near the small village of Walnut Creek, Ohio, in October 1998 where I attended a service of the ultra-conservative Old Order Amish church one Sunday morning. Holmes County, Ohio, has the largest concentration of Amish in the world. I was in the area attending the annual convention of the International Society of Bible Collectors and one of its members was a retired Mennonite minister who had lived and ministered in those parts for many years. He was personally acquainted with a former member of the Amish religion and had arranged with him for some of our group to attend one of its services, usually "off limits" for non-Amish people.

The Amish people are known worldwide for their quaint dress and extremely primitive lifestyle. (No electricity, automobiles, phones, tractors, appliances, etc.) They are also very shy of publicity, shunning having their photographs taken or having any contact with the "outside world." So that made the occasion of our getting to visit one of their meetings a rare opportunity indeed.

Early Sunday morning about a dozen of us met the former Old Order Amish member at a restaurant parking lot, and we all traveled together in several cars to a remote rural area along a country dirt road. Our first introduction to what we were about to experience came when we passed along the road about a dozen or so black, horse-drawn buggies, the normal mode of transportation for the Amish, all heading for the Sunday meeting.

As we pulled up to a large farm house and parked our cars a short way down the road we saw the buggies being detached from their horses by the "deacon" at whose residence the meeting was being held that Sunday. (They meet on the grounds of a member's farm twice a month as they have no church buildings). The deacon then ushered the horses into a large barn where they munched on hay during the meeting. I counted about eighteen buggies lined up in a row beside the long,

winding driveway “parking lot.” I chose not to wear a necktie that morning, just a suit with buttoned up dress shirt, in deference to the Amish dress code of no neckties. (Their suits were black, with no buttons, only hooks and eyelets. They all wore beards, but no mustaches, and black, broad-brimmed hats. The only ones without beards were the few single men and, of course, the boys. But even the children all wore the characteristic black suits or long, full skirts and bonnets.)

Following the lead of our host we eventually made our way to a large barn where the Amish men all stood in rows along the walls. As each man arrived, he made the rounds, shaking hands and offering the exact same greeting, “Good morning,” but there was no other conversation. We took our places with the others, shaking hands and exchanging the same greeting, then standing by quietly. Women were nowhere in sight, but presumably all gathered inside the farm house.

After about twenty minutes, the leading “elder” began walking toward a new-looking, large metal building, followed single file by the Amish men and our small group of visitors. As we passed the farm house I noticed several young girls crowded at a window, all straining to get a glimpse of the “outsiders” who were coming to their church service that Sunday. When arriving at the metal building, specially built for such meetings, we entered to find a spacious, immaculately clean room with a painted cement floor and plain curtains.

The first thing that struck our attention as we entered were the rows of twenty or so unpainted, backless, long, wooden benches, the *only* furniture in the room. The men and older boys all sat down together at one end, and in a few minutes all of the bonnet-clad women and girls quietly filed in and sat down together on the remaining unpadded benches *facing the men*. There were only three or four feet separating the two groups in the middle.

The service began with the singing (more like *chanting*) of a capella hymns from a 17th century small, thick hymnal containing the *words only*, in high German. All verses of each hymn were “sung” in strangely haunting melodies, with everyone standing much of the time. The “song service” lasted about *forty minutes!* There was *no visible leader*, but everyone *seemed to know* to join in precisely on the *third note* after a man’s solo voice somewhere among the group started each verse! It was obvious that they were all well-acquainted with this entire procedure and although it seemed very long and tedious to us, it went off without a hitch. And I noticed no fidgeting or lack of interest on the part of any, including the children.

We were told in advance that there would be several prayers interspersed among the songs and that we were all to stand, turn around and kneel face down on the hard, wooden benches as one of the Amish men led in the lengthy, fervent prayers (spoken in Pennsylvania Dutch, a form of low German)!

Then began the preaching, presented by two different young men, also in *Pennsylvania Dutch*, the language used in regular, daily conversation by the Amish. The first man was obviously a novice at preaching, bringing only a brief message, with the second, more experienced man, speaking much longer. The leading “elder” sat almost in front of the preacher and expressed frequent approval by both words of encouragement and assenting nods. Interspersed within the lengthy messages (lasting about 1½ hours) were long Scripture readings from the high German translation of Martin Luther.

There was no Lord’s Supper served, no musical instruments, no greeting time, no offering taken up and no announcements. The preacher, speaking with no notes of any kind, stood in the space between the men’s and woman’s benches at one end, on the floor level, and occasionally exhibited a spirited delivery. A few times he broke into his message *in English*, and it seemed the remarks at that point may have been directed toward us “outsiders!”

Finally the service was over and everyone filed outside where much visiting took place. The Amish men I spoke with were very cordial, asking us questions about where we lived and what we did. There was absolutely no hint of their being uncomfortable by our presence. We felt very welcome, even though we understood almost nothing that was being said or sung.

While we were visiting outside following the service, others were setting up tables and chairs in the same large metal building for the common fellowship meal which always closed their meetings. We were invited to participate in the meal, which after an appropriate prayer by one of their preachers, consisted mostly of cold cuts, sandwiches and fruit. (The women had been involved in the service, allowing no opportunity for the preparation of a hot meal, besides they may not cook on Sunday). There were, however, about five flavors of delicious homemade pies that had been baked the previous day. I was a bit surprised, however, that the menu included coffee, given their conservative views on other matters.

My overall impression was that of being transported by time capsule into an era of the long distant past. Although the people were far from preaching and practicing New Testament Christianity as I have



always understood it, there was a fascinating and very refreshing atmosphere of simplicity and plainness -- two qualities they strongly emphasize -- that had a deep and lasting impact on my heart.

## **ROYALTY TO DIRT BAGS!**

During the summer of 1999, Bethel and I took what would be the longest vacation of our lives. We spent three wonderful weeks in Denver, staying one week each with Sheila, Billy and Terry, then flew to Florida, where we stayed a week with Tim and got to attend the wedding of our grandson Scott. The weather was ideal, the visits were very relaxing and we were treated like a king and queen at each place!

Then happened one of the most traumatic experiences of our entire lives. Upon arriving back home in a shuttle bus from the airport in Seattle at about 11:30 PM, we opened the door to our condo to the sound of *blaring music*. The lights were on so we hurried into the kitchen only to find a strange man and woman standing in front of our refrigerator in the process of preparing a meal. A pot of hot water was boiling on the stove and an opened package of pasta on the kitchen counter. Just then another man emerged from the bathroom, half dressed. These three strangers had been *living in our house for almost two weeks!*

I don't know who was the most startled, they or us! Of course, I demanded to know what they were doing in our home and how they got in. One of them mumbled something about our son letting them stay there a few days (which was not true). So, excitedly, and with my adrenalin rushing, I ordered them out in no uncertain terms. The half-clad man grabbed his shirt and the three of them were gone in seconds!

One glance around the living room told us the tragic story. Gone were our TV set, our VCR, and our stereo. A quick check of the bedrooms revealed unmade beds with clothing and sticky candy wrappers strewn about and cigarette burns on the blankets, couch and carpet. We immediately called the police, but they were not able to respond before 2:30 AM, due to a robbery investigation, so they came the next morning.

In the meantime, I discovered my car parked outside, not in the covered parking garage where it had been left. The people had picked up the keys from the buffet and had been driving it the whole time. The seats and trunk were filled with clothing, shoes and trash. The car reeked with cigarette smoke. There were three cigarette-burn holes in the upholstery.

In my haste to rid our home of these brazen vandals, I did not realize that they had also taken with them when they left the keys to our

car, the exterior doors of the condo and to our unit as well! In other words, they had access to our home and belongings (not to mention the other nineteen families living in the condo) for future entry if they so desired! (All of these had to be re-keyed for safety).

When the police came the next morning to investigate, they discovered, among the clothing and junk strewn all over the trunk, a *hypodermic needle* in the front pocket of a pair of ladies jeans! It's a good thing the police were the ones to find it, because, not knowing what to expect, I might easily have been stuck by it when going through the things.

Over the next few days we were to discover *four more needles*, one in an end table drawer, one in the buffet drawer, one in a desk drawer and one under the living room recliner! We also found several thick rubber straps (for restricting blood flow to the arm during an injection) and several pipes or tubes used for ingesting drugs. A number of our spoons had been bent and blackened on the bottom where heated to "*cook*" drugs. Needless to say, we were very antsy for weeks when opening a drawer or reaching under or behind things in a cupboard or on shelves. (A month later I found a marijuana cigarette in the car, even after it had been detailed!).

We soon discovered they had thoroughly ransacked every drawer, shelf, closet and corner of our condo, looking for money or street salable items that could be sold for drugs. Besides nearly emptying our refrigerator and cupboards of food to live on, they had also taken (and presumably sold) a pair of binoculars and a leather jacket we had bought for our son, besides several smaller items. They had also taken a sizable amount of cash from a bedroom drawer we had been saving up for Y2K.

Of course, the three persons were never caught. We had only a few "first names" (they had received several phone calls on our answering machine), and besides, the police were not very anxious to follow up on our situation since they already had murders, rapes and drug busts to occupy their time! We did return one phone call (number on our caller ID) and found it to be the mother of the girl. She was working at a nearby thrift store, so Bethel washed the girl's few items of clothing left behind and I took them, together with her other personal items, in a backpack, and gave them to the mother. The poor girl was homeless and on heroin.

But the upside of the whole ordeal was the wonderful way our insurance company dealt with us. They replaced *all items* damaged or stolen with new, and even better things than we had lost. And also, people in the church generously gave us a substantial sum of money,

anonymously, which helped to cover our loss. We did have some expense, however, in re-keying our condo and our son's pickup as well as paying the high insurance deductibles.

All in all, though, we are thankful to the Lord for sparing our lives (such people sometimes become violent and carry guns or knives), and for helping us to realize once again the uncertainty of riches and the providential protection of our loving God!

## **DECLINING YEARS**

I continued to preach and teach Sunday School classes at Crown Hill during the late 1990s, under Jim Mayer's leadership as the primary evangelist of the church. I also headed up the mission team, designated M.O.R.E. (*Mission Outreach for Revival and Evangelism*), as well as doing calling and teaching classes in *Seattle Christian College*. However, a pattern of decline in Crown Hill attendance began to emerge in the waning years of the 1990s. From a peak yearly average attendance of 185 in August 1993, the number was now showing a gradual decrease: 148 (1994); 128 (1995); 131 (1996); 123 (1997) and 110 (1998). Jim had been ordained as an evangelist in 1989, and then began serving as lead evangelist in 1993. I had moved my office out of the church building by then to allow Jim to make use of it, as he was now being recognized as the preacher at Crown Hill.

Of course, such a decline in attendance, with a number of the stable families moving away due to jobs, retirement, or for other reasons, produced a general lowering of morale in the congregation. By 2000 the yearly average attendance had dropped to below 100. My concern was that unless Crown Hill were to have strong leadership for the upcoming new century, its decline could continue and possibly result in a dissolution of the congregation. By 2000 I was 73 years old and no doubt past my prime as far as energetic and effective leadership was concerned. And under Jim's guidance, the church was experiencing a gradual loss of members. (Whether he was responsible for this or not may never be known). I found it difficult to watch these negative conditions unfolding before my eyes. Bethel's health was gradually declining and I was experiencing periodic stomach trouble as well. All of these circumstances made it difficult for me to see any clear-cut role for me when I would eventually retire from serving in a supported capacity in the church. Because of such conditions, I couldn't bear to see us continuing at Crown Hill, only to go down with the ship, yet I didn't see any viable alternatives either. Would there be an opportunity to continue preaching someplace else? If not, where would we live, and who would

be there to help us out when health problems incapacitated us? Our future seemed very uncertain. But I knew God would work it out some way. He always had.

## **WRITING PROJECTS ACCELERATE**

With fewer church responsibilities, and its corresponding reduction in financial support from the church, I was now able to devote more time to my writing ministry. Besides continuing as Chief Editor of Bible Collectors' World (later renamed Bible Editions & Versions), I was also able to produce a number of books and booklets: *Development of the English Bible* (1998); *Decision Making and the Will of God* (1998); *The Meaning of the Word 'Man' in the New Testament: A Case for the Limited Use of Gender-Inclusive Language* (1998); *Homiletics: The Art of Preparing and Delivering Sermons* (1998); *From Jerusalem to Rome: The Acts of the Apostles* (co-authored with Charles Dailey, 1998); *Historical Quotations on Sabbath / Lord's Day Observance* (co-compiled with Charles Dailey, 1999); *History of the Westside-Crown Hill Church of Christ, Seattle, Washington* (1999); *Memos: Memorable Moments in the Lives of a Loving Couple* (1999); and *The Book of Proverbs: Arranged by Categories* (1999). The book on the history of Crown Hill was prepared for a special 30th year anniversary celebration service to commemorate the founding of Crown Hill (originally called Westside Church of Christ).

## **THE COTTAGE BELOW**

While to us our future seemed very unsure, God was working out an arrangement that would be a solution far beyond our wildest dream. In early 2000 I received a phone call from Billy, who was still living in the nice home on five acres of beautiful hilly and wooded land some 32 miles southeast of Denver, near the rural village of Franktown. He had a proposition for me to consider. He explained that he wanted to build a custom-made, small home on his property for his mother and me to come and live in for the rest of our lives at no cost! The house would be a single-level dwelling, with no steps of any kind and all doorways wheelchair accessible. A perfect place for Bethel to live and get around in with her limited mobility. Obviously, Bethel and I didn't have to discuss it for very long before accepting Billy's generous offer as a gift from God Himself!

Billy had been working on the idea for some time. It had required that he obtain permission from both the Douglas county building code authorities and the Deerfield subdivision association,

which had certain restrictions on multiple dwellings on the five-acre tracts in that large area. He was eventually granted approval to build what would be considered as a guest house or caretaker quarters.

The 900-square-foot home consisted of a large kitchen/dining/living room area, a sizable bedroom, and a large bathroom/washroom. Attached by a hallway was a two-car garage, with a small, enclosed, heated office at one end, complete with ample book shelves. Billy did most of the work, with the help of a number of friends, relatives and neighbors. It was situated down the hill from Billy's large home, about 75 yards away.

Surely Ira Stanphill had our little home in mind when he penned the words to the song *Mansion Over the Hilltop*: "I'm satisfied with just a cottage below...." An appropriate rustic sign hangs in a ponderosa pine tree at the foot of our driveway announcing "The Cottage Below."

## **LAST YEAR IN SEATTLE**

By 2000 we were approaching our 23rd year in Seattle. That final year there would be filled with many changes, along with their attending emotions, some positive and some negative. Billy had indicated that it would consume the better part of a year to build the house once it was begun. Besides the cost of materials, and subcontracting some of the work, the expense to Billy would be considerable since he was spending full time on the project, and therefore not receiving income from his regular work. He began sending me faxes of the house plans for my suggestions and approval. Needless to say Bethel and I were quite excited about the prospect of the move back to Colorado. After all, we had spent eight years there in the 1970s, and despite those being somewhat turbulent years, we had really enjoyed the Colorado scenery and climate. And now that more than twenty years had passed, besides Terry, Sheila and Billy still living there, we had grown grandchildren and a few great grandchildren we had seen only rarely during that time. So, the prospect of returning to Colorado, and probably full retirement, held out great anticipation. I would be 74 by the time we got back there and Bethel would be 79. Billy had mentioned that he wanted the new house to be his mother's 80th birthday present from him. And with only Social Security and VA disability compensation to rely on for income, the prospect of having only minor housing expenses was very comforting. Yes, it was time we considered a change of location for our final earthly home!

But, because of the circumstances in the Crown Hill church, I felt it unwise to share with the congregation our plans to move at that

time. Some of the older families, who had come into the church in the early 80s, shortly after I had moved there, tended to be partial toward me and somewhat critical of Jim, so I felt it best not to add one more potentially discouraging note to the situation. I had planned on telling them well before we made the move, however.

In the meantime, conditions in the Crown Hill church were not improving. Attendance had plummeted into the 70s and 80s at times. There was general unrest as families continued to leave, with very few new ones being added. The leadership team of five men (in lieu of an eldership) had frequent meetings with Jim and me to discuss the problem. The pressure on Jim was mounting as even two of the long-time stable families were rumored to be considering leaving. I advised Jim that he needed to do *something* to turn things around, since the very future existence of the congregation could well be threatened. I suggested that he acknowledge publicly certain inadequacies that he had been accused of by some, and, even if he didn't feel such accusations were fully justified, to apologize, in hope that dissenters would regain confidence in his leadership again. Apparently he felt that course of action was unacceptable, for he and Cheryl came to my office one day and tearfully resigned all leadership in the church. They left the congregation right away and began meeting with the a cappella church to which a number of Crown Hill families had previously gone.

## **BUSY INTERIM MINISTRY**

With Jim's sudden departure, it left me with the sole responsibility for the preaching and primary leadership of the church. Of course, as usually happens, several more families, who were especially close to Jim, also left the church soon afterwards. One of the first things I determined to do was to move my office back to the church building where I could be more accessible to the members. I made it clear to the church, right away, that I would serve only on an interim basis, until a new, younger preacher could be located.

Then sometime during that final year I informed the leadership, and then the entire congregation, of our plans to move back to Colorado. While most of the people expressed sorrow that we would be leaving, they were very understanding of our situation and the need for us to be near our children.

The next months were very busy, filled with sermon and Bible class preparation, counseling, meetings with the leadership team, and generally trying to alleviate some of the harm that the church was experiencing from Jim's sudden departure. I set about making numerous

contacts with preachers I felt would be good for the church. Because of my great concern for the future good of the church I had suggested to the leadership team some very high standards for the new preacher to meet: Godly, Biblically sound, evangelistic, capable speaker, good family, wise administrator, experienced, plus other qualities. I tried to locate a preacher who was already doing a good work where he was, rather than someone looking for a place to move because he was unhappy. This effort proved to be very daunting. I was to learn that for every ten churches looking for a preacher there was only one preacher available. I contacted Bible college presidents and well-known preachers throughout the country for suggestions, advertised in nationally circulated periodicals and made numerous phone calls. Eventually I was able to contact 38-year-old Scott Sheridan, who had studied at Central Florida Christian College, Cincinnati Bible College and Summit Theological Seminary, and had a few years experience preaching in Florida.

By the time I assumed the leadership after Jim's departure, attendance had fallen to about 65-70. During that last year I was able to teach one family, who responded and became a part of the church (the Rebelledos). I was also able to influence two other families, who had left the church earlier, to return (the Caseys and the Eberharters). When we left Seattle, the attendance at Crown Hill was running 80-85, and the people were generally in a mode of encouragement.

### **SHORT TERM MISSION TRIP**

In mid-November 2000 I was invited by Richard Geringswald to teach a class for one week in *Jamaica Christian College* in Kingston, Jamaica. Richard had been one of the high school boys in the *Union Park Church of Christ*, where I served from 1954-1967. He was now president of the college, and had invited me to teach a course in "Development of the English Bible" on several previous occasions. Unfortunately, before leaving for Jamaica I had contracted my recurring throat condition that left me very hoarse and barely able to speak. The condition proved a serious handicap to my doing a very good job of teaching. I also taught a Wednesday night class at Lluidesvale, a small church in a remote section of interior Jamaica, as well at Mandeville in central Jamaica that Saturday. But my throat condition forced me to decline preaching at another church on Sunday night.

One of the special blessings of the trip, however, was that my son Tim, of Lakeland, Florida, where Richard also lives, was invited to spend that same week painting the college/church building in Kingston.

Being able to travel together, and to serve on a mission trip with one of my sons made that occasion a truly memorable time.

Another experience I had while in Jamaica was the day I decided to take a stroll from my room at the college compound on into town by myself. That was my first such visit to a third world country since my mission trips to the Bahamas to hold preaching meetings with Floyd Hughes (1956) and to conduct his funeral (1957). I was deeply impressed by the fact that, as I walked along the crowded streets, with their quaint shops and unkempt clutter, I was the *only white person* amid hundreds of black people. It gave me a small taste of how black people in predominantly white America must often feel. When the local black missionaries learned of my venture they strongly cautioned me not to do that again, since there was a distinct danger of being mugged. Fortunately, all I got were numerous unfriendly stares!

Another memory of that visit was the evenings I spent with Jim Spinnati, who was also teaching a class that week, seated in front of the TV watching events unfolding back in Florida as officials tried to determine the winner of the American presidential election. What a strange feeling, observing your native country's affairs from a foreign nation!

An added blessing was that I was to preach at the Harrell Road church in Orlando on Nov. 19 on my return trip.

## **THE LAST BIG MOVE**

On Sunday morning Oct. 21, 2001, I preached my last message at Crown Hill, appropriately titled "His Last Message." That evening the Christians had a nice going away party for Bethel and me in the basement. Many nice gifts and a money tree were lovingly showered upon us amid parting tears by several families we had been close to. Sheila and Billy had flown out from Denver, and Tim from Florida, a few days earlier to help with the packing and loading. Our car was towed behind the truck on a four-wheel auto trailer. Billy and Tim then drove the large Ryder truck back to Franktown, while Sheila remained on to fly back with Bethel and me. Sherry Bytheway and Tonya Clouse from the church were at the airport to see us off.

Upon arriving in Denver, Bethel and I stayed at Sheila's house in Aurora for a couple of days until the truck arrived, then went down to the new house in Franktown, where we helped with the unloading and overseeing of where to put things. Everything went very smoothly and the move proved to be relatively easy on Bethel and me, although no doubt tiring for the boys driving the truck.



The house was everything we had expected and more. How thankful we were to our children for taking such good care of us and providing for their mother and me in our “old age.”

## 2001-2005 FRANKTOWN, COLORADO SOLE CAREGIVER

### BETHEL'S SECOND STROKE

When leaving Seattle Bethel was using a tubular, aluminum walker, the kind you picked up and moved ahead of you with each step. She had used a wheelchair for the first month after coming home from the hospital following her first stroke in 1997; then used a cane for several years, but eventually had to resort to using this walker shortly before leaving Seattle because of several falls she had taken. She seemed to be getting along fine with it when we arrived in Franktown.

We had been in Colorado for only about three weeks when it happened, November 2001. We were shopping one day at the huge Wal-Mart store in nearby Parker. In such a large store you have to walk a long way to find things and then all the way back to the check-out and out to the parking lot. We weren't sure what exactly caused it, but by the next day Bethel seemed very tired and had lost some of her motor functions. I took her to the doctor, who sent her right into the hospital. After extensive tests they determined that she *probably* had had another stroke, this time a light one. While no one will ever know for sure, I suspect that getting overly tired walking so far, and perhaps coupled with the thinner air at this altitude, it had a negative affect on her brain function. The result was that she had to begin using a walker with wheels and brakes this time, and now doesn't dare take a step away from it because of the danger of losing her balance and falling. But other than not being as mobile, together with the extra risks of getting around, using kitchen utensils or being near the range, she is doing quite well. She feels fairly well and goes with me to church, to midweek home Bible study, and occasionally to the store, out to eat, or to the hair dresser. Of course, I now do all the chores, shopping, getting meals, and managing the household. But, as I told her after her first stroke, it's my turn to take care of her now. Being Bethel's sole caregiver, I do not leave our house for more than an hour unless someone is here to watch over her. And then, I make sure she is seated comfortably and doesn't move around while I'm gone. Fortunately, Bethel has qualified for Medicaid, which pays for a housekeeper/cook to come in for five hours one day and four hours another each week. This has allowed me to be away for longer periods to tend to necessary errands, for which we are very thankful.

## **EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

In less than eight months after arriving in Colorado, Bethel celebrated her 80th birthday (June 8, 2002). We invited our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren to be with us for the fun party held in Billy's birthday present to his mother (thirty-four were able to attend). What a tribute!

Besides many beautiful gifts from the kids, my present to her was the book I wrote about her especially for this occasion, *Bethel: A Place Where God Dwells* (2002). We give free copies of that book to friends who request one. No price has been placed on it since it commemorates the one whose life has been so full of giving freely to others.

## **WRITING MORE BOOKS**

By now I had written several more books. A theme I used more than any others had to do with the Bible, since I was still active as Chief Editor of the journal of the *International Society of Bible Collectors*, named Bible Editions & Versions. I produced a revised edition of *A New Testament Study of the Eldership* in 2000; *Fascinating Stories About the Bible* in 2002; and *News and Notes About Bible Versions* in 2002.

As an outgrowth of my writing for Bible Editions & Versions, I had accumulated a sizable number of brief biographical sketches of Bible translators. While still in Seattle I had enlarged on many of them and did further research on others, until I had gathered data on 346 translators and their work. After completing this project I set about searching for a publisher to produce and market the book. Eventually the manuscript was accepted by McFarland Publishers of Jefferson, North Carolina, who published it as *English Language Bible Translators* (2002). The book has proven to be quite popular as a reference work, and is now in the libraries of more than 194 colleges and seminaries throughout the world as well as being purchased by many individuals.

A popular chart I prepared in the mid-1970s, reproducing the words of 108 translations of Acts 2:38 had now long been out of print. But repeated requests for copies of it led me to research the verse from my now much larger Bible collection and produce a 48-page booklet containing the full verse from 293 translations. It appeared in 2005 as *A Compilation of English Language New Testament Translations of Acts 2:38*. With the exception of *A Christian View of Armed Warfare; They Go About Two By Two; Taking a Stand* (with Victor Knowles); and *English Language Bible Translators*, all of my books have been self-

published by my ministry, Impact Publications, and were printed and bound by me personally.

In 2003 I completed work on a revised and corrected edition of *The New Testament: An Understandable Version*, first released in 1995 in a hardback edition, which has been out of print for several years. This time it was self-published in paperback.

Another book, still in manuscript form, for which I am presently looking for a publisher, is *The U.S. Military Occupation of Japan: 1945-1946*. This work deviates from the theme of the majority of my writings, but was undertaken as an outgrowth of my research into an event in which I participated, as a member of the U.S. Navy, at the close of World War II.

I also write articles for various periodicals on occasion: The Voice of Evangelism; One Body, and others.

## **WIGGED OUT!**

The very first thing I did upon arriving in Denver on Oct. 22, 2001 was to *remove*, permanently, the hairpiece I had worn every day of my life for the previous 30 years! While it had proven very helpful during that time by giving me a more “normal” appearance as I interacted with people both in and out of the church, it was also a “pain” much of the time! It required cleaning with a special solvent often to remove the effects of perspiration and skin oils, which damaged the nylon lining. Then, after wearing each new hairpiece for a just short time, the sun would soon dry out the dead hair, causing it to become brittle, noticeably less natural and quite unmanageable. Because it was designed to remain in place only when the two-sided tape was adequately attached, I’m sure I was observed trying to adjust it properly near the close of a warm day when the tape became less effective. Then, on such occasions when I would need to be away on a trip and have to stay at a camp lodge or motel room with others, wearing a hairpiece entailed the problem of having to remove it in front of people who were unaccustomed to seeing me with no hair. I’m sure this was more of a problem for me than it was for them, however. Yes, wearing my hairpiece certainly served its purpose, and I am thankful to the VA for providing them for all those years. But, circumstances in life had come full circle, with it now being commonplace to see bald heads in the grocery line, on the airplane, at the post office, in a restaurant, law office, bank lobby, classroom and yes, even at church!

So from the “more hair” of the 1960s to the “no hair” of the 2005s, being bald today is no longer unusual and hardly merits a second

glance from anyone in today's society. In 1997 I had referred to a few entertainers and athletes being seen without hair (Telly Savalas, Yul Brynner, Jay Buhner, and Montel Williams) and making bald "beautiful" again, and suggested that I might be tempted to go back to "the natural look" someday. Well now, eight years later, I have done just that.

## **ADJUSTING TO RETIREMENT**

Of prime importance to Bethel and me upon relocating to Colorado was the matter of where we would attend church services. This was a decision we had not had to make since the early 1950s. Throughout all of the years since enrolling in Bible college that decision was a foregone conclusion; we naturally attended where I was the preacher. But now that I was not preaching we had a choice to make. It seemed that the only three real options were: *The Church in South Denver* (the successor church of where I had preached years before); *The Church in Aurora* (where Terry preached and Sheila attended); or *Southeast Christian Church* (where Billy attended). We visited all three places early on and soon ruled out *The Church in South Denver*; it was the longest drive (55 minutes) and had steps for getting to the bathrooms. That, of course, was a big problem for Bethel, since her walking ability was impaired and steps were especially difficult. The Church in Aurora was about 45 minutes and also had steps. Southeast Christian was only 25 minutes and everything was on one level. Then there was the matter of driving to church when the roads were snowy or icy, which could occur on a number of days during the winter. This problem would be easily remedied if we went to church where Billy attended, since he could take us in his four-wheel drive SUV on such days. We finally opted for Southeast, and rode with Billy and Dawn in our car for the first two years.

Then there was the matter of adjusting to a huge mega-church, something we had never experienced before. Southeast had 1,400 in attendance when we began there and by 2005 had more than 2,500. Seeing only strangers every Sunday was the norm, until we became acquainted with about six or eight families. Then there was the preaching. For the first year, the preacher was an older man, Russ McCracken, but then they hired a much younger man. Doctrinal preaching was non-existent, especially on such topics as baptism, eternal security, church polity, and "faith only."

By February 2002 I had submitted an article for publication in the church's monthly 16-20-page tabloid paper *Southeast Sentinel*. It was accepted and led to my being asked to write a regular column,

“Defending Your Faith,” in which I could choose my own topics. I was even appointed Assistant Editor, which entailed proofreading each issue and making suggestions for changing or improving articles. This gave me a real sense of contributing, and was something I could do even though I had to remain at home most of the time. But, by 2004 that publication was discontinued, and with it went my opportunity for writing.

Another adjustment had to do with my bringing occasional sermons. Before moving here I had thought I would be asked to preach a message here and there on occasion. This is what I knew to be the case with many of my contemporary preacher friends. But as time went on, there were no such invitations. After a year or so, when I was finally asked to speak on a rally in Colorado Springs, I found myself unable to accept. It had been just too long and I felt strangely incapable. I guess I had just forgotten how! This was a circumstance I had not anticipated.

Also, in moving back to a place where I had lived for eight years, and where I had made a number of friends, I had expected that I would be able to renew such relationships, and with more free time, be able to spend time with some of them. But after taking the initiative to arrange for lunch appointments myself on several occasions, I was surprised that none of these friends reciprocated. Unless I pursued efforts to get together, it just didn’t happen. Perhaps these friends were all too busy or preoccupied, and I did live more than 30 miles from Denver. And, of course, I was not free to meet with people except only at very limited times. In any event, coming from circumstances where I had frequent interaction with others, I now found myself rather isolated and sometimes even a little lonely.

Another adjustment that I have had to make may well be rooted in a certain degree of ego. For fifty years I was viewed as a church leader. People considered me to be knowledgeable on Biblical matters and frequently consulted me when they had questions about spiritual things. Decisions about various aspects of church life were often mine to make and influenced people’s lives in a measurable way. I was frequently approached in person, by phone, in the classroom or by mail, to provide answers to questions about the Bible or some spiritual matter that people had. I taught scores of young people as a Bible college instructor for more than thirty years. Whether all of this recognition was justified or not, still I had become accustomed to such a role. Now, to most people I am looked at as just another “old man,” perhaps fraught with multiple eccentricities, and not worthy of participating in church affairs or even to be taken seriously at times. Then when I observe much

younger men, whom I view as considerably less knowledgeable and inexperienced, serving in positions of authority, and often making strategic decisions with far too little wisdom or judgment, I find it somewhat regrettable. Of course, I realize that my mental and physical attributes have certainly waned, and I would not really want to fill the same role I once had for so long. As I said, personal ego may play a big part in having some difficulty adjusting to this circumstance. But, I suspect these feelings are not unique to me.

Then, of course, as is no doubt true of all those who retire from an active lifestyle, I found the rather quiet and subdued pace somewhat difficult to adjust to. But, after more than three years now, I am getting used to it, although sometimes I still miss the active schedule of a busy preacher!

## **MORE HEALTH PROBLEMS**

For several years before leaving Seattle I had had periodic bouts with stomach trouble. The pain came on slowly and gradually increased, usually after a large meal, and lasted about three days before subsiding. It was accompanied by severe constipation that required a strong laxative to alleviate the problem. I thought it might be gall bladder related and kept trying to evaluate what I had eaten that could have been the cause. At first the condition occurred about every three or four months, then became more frequent, with the pain becoming more severe. Eventually, in November, 2002, one of the attacks produced such severe vomiting and diarrhea that I had to be rushed to the hospital Emergency Room with severe dehydration. After extensive tests it was discovered that scar tissue from repeated attacks of diverticulitis over the years had restricted my colon. I had surgery that removed that part of the colon and completely remedied the problem.

Bethel's health had stabilized quite well after her second stroke. She became much less able to do things for herself now than when we lived in Seattle, but was getting along fine with my help. But then on July, 4, 2003 she entered the Littleton Hospital for what was eventually diagnosed as a heart attack, but without the usual symptoms. We were sitting at the table eating lunch when I noticed she had a rather blank stare on her face. When I asked her if she were OK, she didn't answer for about a minute. When she finally said something she explained that she had felt numb all over for about a minute. This same sensation occurred to her three more times that day before I rushed her to the hospital ER. She had one more episode in the ER waiting room. After tests they discovered she had had a heart attack, so they installed a stent in her

main artery. She has not experienced any more problems like that since. Praise the Lord!

## **FAMILY STATUS**

The following is brief information on my children, grandchildren and great children as of 2005.

Bennie (63), now retired, still lives on ten acres of land south of Corbett, Oregon with his wife Leann and Downs's syndrome son Randy. His married children are Danny Ray, Michael, and Tammy. His grandchildren are Timothy (Danny Ray), Brandon, Nathan, and Matthew (Tammy) and Nolan (Michael). They continue to raise several of their grandchildren. Bennie and Leann attend *Mountainview Christian Church* in Gresham, Oregon, where Bennie teaches Sunday School classes.

Terry (61) still preaches at *The Church in Aurora*, Colorado, and operates his painting company on the side. He and his wife Linda now live in Parker, Colorado, about 15 miles from us. His married children are Kevin and Kimberly; Kent is still single. His grandchildren are Quade, Ashton and Sierra (Kevin) and Dillon and Dustin (Kimberly).

Tim (56) still lives in Lakeland, Florida with his wife Marilyn, where he operates his painting company. His married children are Ken and Scott; Christy is still single. His grandchild is Colby (Scott). Tim and Marilyn attend *Grove Park Christian Church* in Lakeland, Florida, where Tim serves as an elder.

Sheila (53) still lives in Aurora, Colorado, with her husband Bill. Her married children are Glen and Paul, and step-children Joe and Angie. Her grandchildren are Abby (Paul), Makayla and Damian (Angie) and Hannah and Daryn (Joe). Sheila and Bill attend *The Church in Aurora*, Colorado, where Sheila leads ladies' Bible study groups and helps direct ladies' retreats.

Billy (51) still lives in Franktown, Colorado, on the five-acre tract that also contains our house. He continues operating his interior trim business. His single children are Joy and Jake. Billy attends *Southeast Christian Church* in Parker, Colorado.

Danny (48) now lives in Vancouver, Washington. His single children are Jess and Tanner. Danny presently doesn't attend church services.

## **RANCH LIFE**

Perhaps a good way to close this narrative is to describe a typical day at our "Cottage Below," located about four miles southeast of



Franktown. This is what our daily lives are like living in our small, rural, Colorado home as I approach 78 and Bethel 83.

I get up between 6:30 AM and 7:00 AM. After praying and reading a portion from the Bible, I usually walk down to the road (about 125 yards away) to get the morning paper. I have a light breakfast and then go to my computer in my small office off the garage to access and answer my e-mail. I then do word processing on the current book I am writing, or on an article for some periodical, or editorial work on the journal Bible Editions & Versions, of which I am Chief Editor. About 9:00 AM Bethel gets up and I get her breakfast. After helping her to dress, I see that she is seated in her chair in the living room where she watches the news or a favorite sitcom during the day. Her concentration for reading is very limited and, of course, she is unable to do housework or use her hands sufficiently to write.

Among the numerous “chores” I do around the “ranch” are shoveling snow from the cement walk and driveway in the winter. (Billy must plow our long, gravel driveway with his tractor for me to get out with the car, however.) In the summer or fall I rake pine cones, water certain trees, trim scrub oak bushes and mow the lawn around the house (Billy mows the large fields with his riding mower.) I’m back in my office periodically during the day doing computer work, making an occasional phone call, or writing letters. By 10:30 AM, after seeing to it that Bethel is comfortably seated in her chair, I make the ten minute drive to the post office to mail letters or packages sent out almost daily and to pick up mail, including review books I use in preparing material for our Bible journal. I then respond to the mail, preparing it for mailing the next day. I also spend time on websites researching topics I am studying, or printing out, collating and binding books I am producing. As the noon hour draws near, I prepare for Bethel what I call her “noon food.”

In the early afternoon and evening, if Billy is away at work all day, or out of town, my responsibility is to go up to his house (about 75 yards away) and let his dog out for a “potty” walk. I also feed the foxes that come to his deck every morning and evening for their daily handout (wieners). Later in the afternoon or early evening (weather permitting) I take my 1.8 mile walk on a circuit of country roads in the area (usually about four times a week). It is not uncommon to see various animals during my walk, especially deer, foxes and squirrels, and once in a while a wild turkey or a coyote. In fact, we see animals around our house virtually every day. We’ve even seen herds of as many as eleven deer grazing just fifteen yards outside of our front door. And about a year ago

Billy saw a black bear on his deck, getting into his hummingbird feeder. The next night it was in our yard and bent the metal pole of our bird feeder down to the ground trying to get at the seeds. Dozens of species of birds land on three feeders just a few feet outside our kitchen widow every day. One Sunday morning, as we were eating breakfast before going to church, I counted ten different kinds of birds coming and going on the feeders. We are really enjoying the opportunity of living in such a beautiful and interesting place.

I also take Bethel for a short walk most every day, consisting of ten “laps” around our cement driveway when the weather is mild enough. Even though she must always be pushing her walker (and I hold onto it as we walk) she still gets some much-needed exercise that way.

I check my e-mail periodically throughout the day, and do some reading before beginning to prepare our evening meal, such as it is, about 4:15 PM. After supper we both watch the local news between 5 PM and 6 PM, and then I make it a point to catch The O’Reilly Factor, a program I consider to be “fair and balanced” national and world news reporting and that does more than any other to alert our nation to the dangers of evil and to encourage higher standards of morality. After watching a few reruns of clean sitcoms from the 1960s and 1970s, Bethel and I usually turn in between 9:00 PM and 10:00 PM.

Of course there are a number of other activities that alter this routine. Every other Friday night we attend our small group Bible study, held at various members’ homes. On alternate Friday nights we attend the “Prime Timers” group, a bunch of old people from the church that gets together for a meal, activity or music program! On some nice days I take Bethel for a ride in the car and we eat out somewhere before returning home. I also take her to the beauty parlor periodically, or shopping for gifts for our great grandchildren. I have a nice transport chair I use for wheeling her around in a large store. Occasionally I will drive her to see one of our great grandchildren, or, in the evening to a music concert or school program. But since Bethel is not able to travel any distance, we welcome visits from friends and now, with a new sofa bed, we have accommodations so people can spend nights with us.

Since Bethel qualifies for Medicaid, they furnish us with a housekeeper/cook who comes to our home every Wednesday and Friday (11AM-4PM). It is on these days that I am able to be away tending to a variety of errands. I take the car for servicing, do research at the local library, purchase items for the house, take my books to the printer to be trimmed, shop for groceries (thirteen miles away), take or pick up the laundry, go to the doctor or dentist, pick up Bethel’s prescriptions, and

sometimes have lunch with a friend or one of my children. Being about thirty-two miles southeast of Denver, it often consumes a couple of hours just driving to and from almost anywhere I would need to go in the city, especially during commuting hours.

So, in spite of the drastic changes in lifestyle and ministry activities from what I had been used to, I am adjusting to a new, less active routine that daily revolves around caring for my beloved wife. I feel this is what God has called me to do as my final ministry. And I'm glad to be able to do it for someone so deserving.

## INDEX OF NAMES OF PERSONS MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK:

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Alley, James Matthew  
Andrews, Frederick  
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Baker, Danny Ray  
Baker, Glenn  
Baker, Leann (Schutt)  
Baker, Michael  
Baker, Nolan  
Baker, Randy  
Baker, Timothy  
Bandi, Charlotte  
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