



GILBERT ZYZNIEWSKI'S LIFE STORIES

The amazing life of Gilbert Zyzniewski



JANUARY 6, 2022
ZYZNIEWSKI PUBLISHING
Copyright © 2022

Table of Contents

Opening.....	10
A Reflection	10
My Birth and Naming	10
A Bear in the Tent.....	10
When I Was Very Young	11
Fairy Tales Could Come True.....	11
Barbara's Mudpies	11
The Tea Party.....	12
Trying Something New	12
A Broken Arm	13
Gathering Wood	13
Lightning.....	14
The Birth of Our Twin Sisters.....	14
Grade Schools.....	15
Christmas.....	17
Thanksgiving.....	17
Easter Memories.....	18
Ring Bearers.....	19
An Invitation	19
Roller Skating	19
Grade School Track Meets	20
Games	21
Music.....	21
Church Country Band.....	23
Spot	23
Guy Busatti Bakery	24
Circus Tents and Free Tickets	24
The Columbia Gardens	25
VE and VJ Days	26
Uncle Fred the Umpire	26
The Freedom Train.....	27

Riding the Last Streetcars	28
14 Cent Movies	29
Special Treats	29
Pasties	30
Donald & the Girl from Georgia	30
The Chitwood Dare Devils	31
Camping in Glacier Park	32
A Special National Park	32
Stepped on by a Bear	33
Learning to Yodel	33
A Forest Fire in Glacier	34
Winter Entertainment	34
Gangrene & Epsom Salt	35
Earning Extra Dollars	36
Collecting Bottles	36
Selling Newspapers	36
Gardening with Grandfather	37
Additional Gardens	38
Working for Mr. Scott	38
Mr. Scott's Bull	40
Great Uncle Jim's Cabin	40
Great Uncle Jim's John Deer Tractor	41
Great Uncle Jim's Wagon	41
A Time to Take a Bath & Wash	41
A Family of Skunks	42
Blowing in the Wind	42
A Farmer and A Trapper	42
The Fruit of the Land	43
Free Vegetables	43
Bees and Hives	44
Harvesting Potatoes	45
Oscar	45
The Sun River Flood of 1953	46
Swimming in the Sun River	47

Chickens and Great Uncle Jim	47
Two Shiny Nickels	48
Lemon Pie	48
Grandfather’s Measurements	49
Grandfather’s Rule	49
If There Is a Will	50
Opening Day	50
Fishing with Grandfather	51
Bob Hope and Bing Crosby	52
Going Fishing	52
The Mama Fish	53
Learning to Fish	53
The Bell Creek Fishing Derby	53
Fly Tying	54
A Forest Fire and Rattlesnakes	55
Bobby Way & a Large Rattlesnake	56
Fishing Barry’s Meadow	56
Scouting	58
Celebrating the 4th of July	58
God’s Fireworks	59
A Life-Changing Fall	59
1953 National Scout Jamboree	61
Visiting the Seattle Pike Street Market	63
The Olympics	63
Sam Neeley	64
A 1928 Hudson	65
My 1929 Model A Ford Coup	65
Chickens	66
Our Cow Bessie	67
The Horse with Sticks	67
Logging	68
Peeling Logs at Buckhorn Camp	68
Boxing for the Golden Gloves	69
Hunting Rabbits	70

My 270	71
Long Shots	72
Hunting in Texas	73
Gravel Mountain Elk.....	74
Yampa River Bucks.....	77
My Game Cart	79
Matchless Mountain Elk Hunt	80
Never Alone	81
Dick's Last Deer Hunt	82
Michael's First Antelope	83
No Shot Antelope	84
Michael's First Deer	85
Mountain Lions.....	86
Michael's First Elk	86
Wildlife Photography	88
Pikes Peak Big Horn Sheep Hunt.....	89
A Blood Clot	90
The Montana Gilpatrick Ranch.....	91
Moose.....	93
Additional Close Encounters	94
Rocky Mountain College Paid Jobs.....	95
Rare Books	96
Quake Lake	96
Working for Atlantic Oil Company.....	97
Bowling	98
Aurora Borealis	98
Hitchhiking Home from College.....	100
RMC Outdoor Amphitheater Construction.....	101
Drama	101
Christmas Plays	102
The Sugar Beet.....	103
Hunting Ducks on the Yellowstone River	103
Pheasant Feather Flowers	105
Taxidermy & David Jones.....	105

Sand Painting	106
Stained and Etched Glass	107
Tex Evans	108
Serving Geraldine Methodist Church	109
Invitations & Discoveries.....	110
Be Careful What You Ask For	111
A Ministerial Surprise	111
Beginnings.....	113
Filling In	114
The Power of a Sermon	114
Geraldine's Returning Pastor.....	115
Teaching at Denton High School	115
Bow Hunting	117
A Calling, Challenge and Change	118
Mountain View Methodist Church.....	118
The Texas Zephyr.....	119
My Introduction to Highland Park Methodist Church.....	120
Sing Song	120
A Chaplain for the Dallas Cowboys	121
Serving as a Chaplain in Training.....	121
Among the Patients I Served.....	122
Code Blue	123
A Hero	124
An Unexpected Emergency.....	124
Ordination as Elder	126
Going Home to Winlock.....	127
Picking Out a Christmas Tree	129
Dating Jeane.....	129
Jeane and the Pregnant Sting Ray	131
Jeane and the Doves.....	131
A Lesson Learned	132
The Birth of Our Son	132
Our Daughter's Birth.....	133
New Year's Eve.....	134

The Grand Canyon	135
A Mansion in Tucson Arizona	136
Scuba Diving	137
Father Dyer's Chapel.....	138
Establishing JEFFCO Action Center	139
The Lakewood Coffee House	140
The Colorado Council of Churches	142
Overflowing Love	143
A Christmas Gift Revisited	144
Bonnie's "Sauerkraut Juice"	145
Bonnie's Doll Crib	145
Mike's First Lionel Train	146
A Special Visit	146
Coyotes	147
Riding the Train	148
Lake Sharon.....	148
Conference Resident Camp Director	149
Buckhorn Tipi Camp	150
John Wesley Youth Ranch	151
A Time at Iliff Seminary.....	152
Rocky Mountain Conference Backpack Hikes.....	152
RMC Coordinating Team for Alaska Youth Mission Team	153
Peaks and Pines.....	154
Bonnie's First Backpacking Hike.....	155
Lake Nanita	155
Mount Holy Cross.....	156
A Fellow Traveler.....	158
Sharing.....	158
Resurrection	159
Star Light	160
Fishing at Jefferson Lake	160
Snagging Kokanee Salmon	162
Forgetfulness	163
Ruby Mountain	163

Snakes and More Snakes	164
Belly Boating	165
Fly Fishing	166
Clearwater Beach, Florida	167
Fishing with Jeane's Father	168
Mount Massive Fishing Club.....	169
Fishing at Teal Lake	170
Sponsoring a Mission Child	170
Cowboy Church.....	171
Flying W/Roundup.....	171
Founding New Churches	172
General Conference Hosting Committee	173
The World-wide Methodist Conference	174
Western Jurisdiction Committee on Securing Ethnics and Women for Ministry	174
A Member of Program & Arrangements Committee.....	175
Serving on the RMC Communications Committee.....	175
Serving as Memorial Preacher at Annual Conference	176
Area wide RMC Disaster Relief Committee	177
Troubled Waters	177
Driving to Alaska	178
On the Road Again	179
Danger Along the Way	179
Red Deer & Edmonton	179
Dawson Creek	180
Wildlife & Sites	180
Canadian Campgrounds.....	181
Clutter Along the Highway	181
Yukon Buffalo	182
A Broken Powersteering Hose.....	183
Entering Alaska	184
The Top of the World Highway.....	184
Pillars of Jade.....	184
A Gold Nugget	185
A Border Crossing	185

Boundary, Alaska	185
Chicken, Alaska	186
A Gold Dredge	186
Placer Mining	186
A Narrow Road	187
Dall Sheep	187
Bear Facts	187
Fishing in Alaska	189
Arctic Terns	190
Combat Fishing	191
Fishing for Halibut	191
Alaska Tides	193
Commercial Fishing	194
Flounders & More Flounders	195
Marching in a Parade	196
North Star United Methodist Church	196
North Star Hospitality	197
Soldotna United Methodist Church	198
UMVIM Coordinator	199
Western Jurisdiction UMVIM	200
Jefferson Avenue UM Church Roof	201
Warren Village	202
Entries in the County Fair	202
Building and Flying Kites	203
Downhill Skiing	204
Winter Sports	204
Lake John	206
New Years at Lake John	207
Ice Fishing	208
A Near Record	208
Amazing Facts	209
Risks Great & Small	209
Growing Up	209
New Life	210

The National Bison Range	212
Jeane's Earrings	212
Flathead Cherries	213
Repainting Mother's House	213
Visiting the California Redwoods & the Oregon Coast	213
First Pitch for Zephyr's Game	214
Mistaken Identity	217
Communicating	217
Support Needed	217
A Slipping Wedding Cake	218
The Importance of Physical Touch	219
The Grateful Dead	219
Teaching a Variety of Classes	220
Bethel Bible Training	220
Mental Health Seminars	221
Youth in Crisis Seminars	222
Questions of the Gospels	222
Leading Bible Studies at Nursing Homes	223
A Transient Named Paul	224
Painting the Main Sanctuary	225
Fund Raising	225
Work with American Indians	227
Handiworks of the Spirit	228
So It Was at Rinn UMC	228
Berkley UMC Reconstruction Project	229
Church Meal Fund Raisers	229
Learning to Use a Computer	231
Roses and the Old Couple	232
Replacing Our Kitchen	233
Finishing Our Basement Bedroom	234
Closing Thoughts	234

Opening

A few years ago, prior to my mother's death, she and I decided that it was important for us to record some of her life stories so that future generations might know some of her life experiences. Many important memories were noted, printed, placed in three ring binders, and handed out following her funeral celebration.

As we were recalling her life journey and the genealogies of our forefathers and mothers, it became apparent that it was important to record the life stories of those around us.

Thus, I share some of my life memories.

A Reflection

In the depth and recesses of my memories there are echoes and reflections of numerous privileged moments, relationships and experiences that have touched the essential fabric of my life journey. Many of the core values and foundational cornerstones of my person have been inspired and nurtured by those who have traveled the pathways of life with me at various times along the way. For their contributions I am eternally thankful. Historical moments and teachings have impressed their influences and images upon the person I have come to be and the person I seek yet to become. My chosen pathway and commitments in life have ever been expanded and deepened because I have been touched by the price that many have paid, even with their lives, intentionallities and unintentionallities on my behalf and that of others.

My Birth and Naming

Whenever my children ask me when and where I was born, I tell them that I was born the third of nine children in a Safeway parking lot. Shortly after I was born on March 29, 1938, the house in which I was born, in Butte, Montana, was torn down to make way for a parking lot. That location near Harrison Avenue has since become a parking lot for an Ace Hardware store

I was named Gilbert after the many Gilberts on the Cunningham side of mother's family: my great grandfather, my great uncle, and mother's brother. My middle name, "Rolfe", was my mother's maiden name.

A Bear in the Tent

One of my earliest memories as a very young child was of watching a bear tear apart the contents of a tent in which my small crib was located. For some reason or other the bear never bothered me prior to its leaving, but I remember the anguish in my mother's eyes when she found me in the midst of the results of the bear's search for food. As mother entered the tent, the bear made a new exit in the side of that tent.

When I Was Very Young

When Barbara, Lawrence and I were very young, we lived in a small rental house in the hills outside of Butte. Because money was very scarce, it became necessary from May through the middle of October for us to save rent money by camping out in a tent in the hills near Butte. Then cold weather forced us to move to a small rental in Walkerville. Following Donald's birth, we moved to a one room building on the flats of Butte. Our diet consisted of rice, potatoes, noodles, cereal and day-old bread. Inexpensive meats such as liver, tongue, heart and hot-dogs added protein to our diet during those lean times.

For a brief time, because of limited finances, we lived in my mother's parent's garage. A small stove served as our source of heat and a place to cook our food. The garden hose provided water and we went to the bathroom in the main house.

In 1941, we moved to a government low income, subsidized housing unit called the Silver Bow Homes on Arizona Street. We lived in the Silver Bow Homes for almost a year. There I attended preschool.

Fairy Tales Could Come True

When Donald and I were 2 and 4 years old, our 8-year-old sister, Barbara, read us the story of "Hansel and Gretel." As she was reading the story, she decided that Donald and I should play the parts of Hansel and Gretel. When she came to the part where the wicked witch put Hansel and Gretel in the oven, Barbara put the two of us in the oven of our family's large wood burning stove. Fortunately, it was summer and not in use at the time. Had our mother not appeared on the scene shortly thereafter, Donald and I would have been more than half baked.

Barbara's Mudpies

Barbara really enjoyed playing house. On many occasions she tested her ability in the kitchen on Donald and me. Mudpies were one of her specialties and were served often. On this particular occasion the entree was made from mud gathered in the chicken coop. She put kernels of wheat on them and set them out to dry. Barbara was really upset with us when we refused to taste those mudpies. Later she put them back

in the chicken coop where the chickens pecked at the wheat kernels. Her mudpies were really for the birds!

The Tea Party

On another occasion our older sister, Barbara asked us if we wanted to have a large glass of apple cider. Since we liked apple cider a lot, Donald and I answered, "Yes." Little did we know that that apple cider would turn out to be apple cider vinegar. Even so, Barbara insisted that we drink the whole glass full.

Trying Something New

Even before I entered kindergarten, I discovered that trying something new was not necessarily pleasant nor something I looked forward to expectantly.

As a young child, I found great comfort in that which was already familiar: my own bed, the same prayer we would say just before we went to sleep; brushing my teeth right after I got up each morning; a sound breakfast to begin each day; the same Sunday school teacher when I went to church; the familiar hymns we would sing in opening exercises; the promise kept by someone who said we were going fishing; the smell of homemade bread baking in the oven of our kitchen stove; the expected roast, potatoes and vegetables or chicken, mashed potatoes, and salad for our Sunday dinner; and extended family gatherings and meals at my grandparents' home on most holidays, with few exceptions.

I knew that all of the national and Christian major holidays would be celebrated in our grandparents' home, most often with a special meal with all the trimmings. I believe that preparation for these special days was almost as important as the days themselves.

My comfort level and sense of security seemed to be wrapped up in that which was tested, tried and found to be true.

Perhaps it was my grandfather's simple rules, more than anything else which enabled me to break out of the patterns which were limiting my discovery of God's endless blessings and the constantly changing wonders which life was beckoning me to explore, savor and share.

Whenever we shared a meal at our grandparents' home, grandfather insisted that we try at least one spoonful of everything that was prepared for our common meal together.

Some of the food, and for that matter, some of the experiences which I very much enjoy today, I might not have tried had my grandfather not held to his simple guideline that something unfamiliar was not necessarily bad.

As a consequence, many of those things which had once been so unfamiliar, even threatening, became vital contributing factors in the assurances and risks of my life journey.

For me an openness to change came gradually, even at times reluctantly.

In most instances, time, encouragement and previous experiences have enabled me to appreciate many of the transformations in my life which have moved me to become the person I am today.

A Broken Arm

In the summer of 1942, when finances improved, our family moved to a 3-bedroom rental house on Montana Street in Butte. Our house was surrounded on two sides with long sloping sidewalks. I found much joy riding my tricycle up and down the steepest sidewalk. I liked to go fast, but in control. One time my brother Chappy, meaning to be helpful, pushed me too fast down the hill. I was frightened and lost control of my tricycle. The tricycle and I tumbled several times. In the process I broke my right arm. I remember receiving a plaster cast that I wore for over six weeks. When the doctor cut the cast away, I recall two things: the hair on my arm had grown into the cast and had to be pulled away with the cast, and my arm muscle had grown much smaller than that of my other arm.

I discovered that good intentions still have consequences and can lead to at least brief, painful results.

Gathering Wood

Before I entered the first grade, we moved to Hobson Street on the flats of Butte into a house we were purchasing. There we had a big yard, 3 bedrooms, a living room and a large kitchen. Soon we began raising rabbits, ducks, chickens and a large garden. The rabbits provided an additional source of weekly income as we sold them each Friday to the local Safeway store. The chickens and ducks provided eggs and meat for our meals.

Our Hobson Street home and the kitchen stove were fueled by wood and coal. We gathered much of our wood in the forests that surrounded Butte.

On one occasion while dad, Donald and I were gathering dry logs, Donald accidentally stepped on a hornet's nest. Donald ran quickly to our truck and slammed the doors shut behind him. I ran to the other side of the truck and found the door locked. By this time I had been stung numerous times by the angry hornets. I asked Donald to unlock the door so that I could escape any further harm. Donald's fear of the swarming hornets kept him from opening the truck's doors. I ran for my life down the road that had led us into the forest. I must have run quite some distance for the hornets finally gave up their pursuit of me, except for a few that were most persistent and still stinging me time and again. I discovered that hornets, unlike honey bees, can sting a person many times. Their stinger does not detach from their body like a honey bee.

Dad also was stung many times before he managed to unlock the driver's door with his key and escape within the safety of the car. Mud from a nearby creek helped to soothe some of the pain that had resulted from the hornet's stings.

I am still amazed how painful a sting such a small insect could inflict. Dad and I were fortunate that we were not allergic to their stings. I am not sure if Donald was stung by even one hornet.

I recall that a load of wood did make it to our home despite the challenges of our day. On future wood gathering outings we were more careful where we placed our feet whenever we were in the vicinity of hornets.

Lightning

When I was five years old our family lived on Hobson Street on the flats of Butte, Montana. Our yard had 15 large cottonwood trees in it. In the summer Butte had a good number of thunder and lightning storms. One evening, just after dark, a huge lightning storm began lighting the sky with numerous bolts of jagged streaks. As the storm grew more intense, the lightning seemed to surround our house and the thunder began to sound instantaneously with each lightning bolt. All of a sudden one cottonwood tree after another was struck causing large branches to fly off of the trunks of the trees. Then one huge tree fell to the ground, shaking the very foundation of our house. When mother checked to see if my brothers, sister and I were all right, she found us under our beds. Dad was at work, so until the storm finally moved on, our family gathered in the only room that was surrounded by other rooms.

The next morning, we discovered the fallen tree and many of the large branches had barely missed landing on our house. Nine trees in our yard had been struck by lightning. Our roof was almost covered with numerous smaller branches from our trees and some even from our neighbor's trees.

Later in my life, as I hiked the high mountains of Colorado, I felt the tingling of electrical currents in the air and in my hair. I could smell the ozone. I knew that I was being served a serious warning to get down out of high places lest I be struck by lightning. I did so quickly.

Nature can be so wonderfully beautiful and calmingly peaceful, but it can also be so fear-inducing and destructively powerful.

The Birth of Our Twin Sisters

When our twin sisters were born, mother and dad were as surprised as was the doctor for they did not know that mother was going to deliver twins. Parents in the 1940s did not have the luxury of knowing beforehand if their little one was going to be a boy or a girl. Mother and dad had chosen two names for the expected baby: Marlene for a girl and Mike if the baby should happen to be a boy.

After the first girl was born, the doctor discovered that another child was also going to be delivered. All at once mother learned that another baby girl was arriving. In that day and time fathers were not allowed to be in the delivery room, so when our first sister was born, dad rejoiced when he learned of his new baby daughter. Then the doctor came to the waiting room and informed him that he was the father of twin girls. Later that day mother and dad realized that they did not have a name for a second daughter. Since a boy had not been added to their family and Mike was not an appropriate name for a girl, they compromised and created a new name "Mylene" which they gave to the first twin delivered. "Mylene" was a combination of the first part of dad's name, Mike and the second half of mother's name, Pauline. Thus, Mylene and Marlene were the names given to our new twin sisters.

When mother went to the hospital to deliver the twins, Barbara, Lawrence, Donald and I stayed at our grandparents' home.

When mother returned home from the hospital, grandmother walked us to our home on Hobson Street. On the way there we encountered a ram goat. Donald and I decided to try imitating the sounds that the ram made. He must not have liked the sounds that we made for he charged after us as we scurried over a pole fence. Unfortunately, grandmother was not as nimble as we were. The goat decided to charge her. Fortunately, the goat's owner arrived just in time to save grandmother from harm. Grandmother gave Donald and me a stern lecture following this incident.

When we arrived at our home grandmother was wearing a wild hat that she had made at a church's Ladies Aid Society craft class. As she leaned over the twins in their crib they burst into frantic screams. Grandmother was very dismayed at their reaction to her greeting. A short time later when grandmother was not wearing her hat, she was greeted warmly by the twins. Grandmother was pleased. Then when she was leaving, she leaned over the twins to say goodbye. Once more they screamed in terror. When her hat fell off onto the floor, the twins once more greeted grandmother as she had hoped to be received. I believe that grandmother never wore that hat again.

Grade Schools

Soon our family outgrew our home on Hobson Street. My siblings doubled in number. Mylene, Marlene, Joyce and Kathy were born. Our house became too crowded. It was then necessary for us to sell our Hobson Street house and to begin purchasing a much larger home on Arizona Street.

Prior to our move to Arizona Street, I had begun grade school at Longfellow Grade School. A gentle woman named Miss Malone was my first-grade teacher. I do not remember my second-grade teacher. In contrast, Miss Dow, my third-grade teacher at Longfellow Grade School was harsh and severe. She accidentally cut off the end of one of my fingers when in frustration she slammed down the cutting bar of a paper cutter. Since it was almost time to be dismissed from school, she refused to allow me to go home early to seek help to stop the bleeding. When my mother learned what had happened, she was furious and brought it to the attention of the school's principal.

Shortly after, we moved to Arizona Street. There I completed the third grade through the eighth grade at Monroe Grade School. My third-grade teacher at my new school was Mrs. Pennypacker. I remember her as kindly, forgetful and a bit eccentric. Often, she looked for her glasses that were usually on top of her head and when she caught someone chewing gum during class, she had that person put the gum on the end of that person's nose until the end of class.

My fourth-grade teacher was Miss Frances Kelly. She specialized in music and spelling. She constantly praised me for my singing abilities, but my spelling abilities were another matter. Whenever anyone misspelled a word, she hit her student's hand with a ruler. I discovered that if I laid my hand flat on my desk whenever I misspelled a word, she often broke her ruler as it struck my desk, rather than my hand. She would then inform me that I owed her 5 cents for the broken ruler. By the time I left the fourth grade, I must have owed her well over \$5 for broken rulers.

When I entered the fifth grade, Miss Crownin, greeted each of her students as if we were the most special persons that she was privileged to teach. Miss Crownin was especially good at teaching math, a subject I much enjoyed. Most of my classmates and I looked forward to going to school and being a part of her class. Sadly, she died of breast cancer before Thanksgiving. Her funeral was the first funeral many of us in her class had ever attended. Before I completed the fifth grade a succession of replacement teachers also died. Many in my class expressed fear of having new teachers lest we contribute in some mysterious way to their deaths. Grief counselors were not available in that period of history.

Our last fifth grade teacher was a man who walked laboriously with metal crutches. He was a victim of polio. He was angry at life and often reflected his anger toward students in our class.

My sixth-grade teacher was Miss Elizabeth Kelly, the older sister of Frances Kelly. She enjoyed poetry and assigned each of her students a poem as homework to memorize each day. If we did not have the assigned poem memorized sufficiently to her satisfaction the next day, we were kept in from recess. I was not good at memorization, so I often sat at my desk frustrated and struggling to complete my memorization during recess. Thus, for some time, I resented poetry. Yet in time I began to appreciate the depth of meaning and beauty of expression of the poetry of others and eventually my own innate talent to express myself through poetry.

One winter morning of my sixth grade several of my classmates and I were playing basketball outdoors. It was so cold that the basketball would not bounce. We didn't realize how cold it was until the school custodian came to the playground to inform us that school was dismissed for the day because it was 52 degrees below zero. This was the only time that I recall school being dismissed due to severe cold weather during my grade school and high school career. In spite of the cold, we continued shooting the ball at the hoop for at least another hour before returning to our homes.

Over the years I have found that experiences of adversity have enabled me to discover increased depth and essential purpose in my life as I learned to meet disappointments and struggles with faith, openness and perseverance.

Christmas

Christmas required going out to the forest with family members to get just the right Christmas tree; trimming the tree with an ever growing number of lights and ornaments; baking mounds of Christmas cookies; choosing and purchasing special presents for family members and friends; listening to Christmas music on our radio and phonograph; singing carols around grandmother's piano; driving throughout many neighborhoods to see their outdoor lights and decorations; being a part of the annual Christmas play at school; attending the Christmas eve service at the Lowell Avenue Methodist Church; going to bed early on Christmas eve; waking up before dawn in anticipation of the many surprises of Christmas morning; rushing through a very large Christmas breakfast of ham and eggs, potato pancakes and maple syrup, a bowl of home canned fruit, thick slices of toast made from mother's homemade bread, donuts or cinnamon rolls, milk and juice; waiting for mother to go into the Livingroom to turn on the tree lights; lining up at the door of the Livingroom beginning with the youngest child; being amazed how beautiful the tree appeared with presents all around the base of the tree; sitting around the Christmas tree trying to guess what might be in each package as we waited anxiously for mother or dad to pass them out among us one by one; waiting a bit impatiently for each person to open his or her package before another gift was presented to the next person; playing briefly with our toys and putting away our new clothes just prior to visiting relatives' and friends' homes where we exchanged gifts with aunts and uncles, cousins and neighbors, grandparents and friends.

Thanksgiving

Many of our holidays and special occasions were spent at grandmother and grandfather's home.

Grandmother spent many hours in the kitchen preparing a variety of stuffings, rewashing place settings, and cooking the turkey or turkeys grandfather had purchased; each aunt prepared her specialty to contribute to the common meal at our grandparents' home; mother baked at least seven kinds of pies as her offering to our Thanksgiving feast; our uncles led most of the children outdoors to play football and croquet--anything to get us out of the house; grandfather played appropriate music on his phonograph and offered a prayer prior to our meal together; the younger children were assigned places at decorated tables in the enclosed porch and kitchen; the older children joined the adults at tables that had been decorated and set up in the front room and the dining room.

Each year grandmother would tell grandfather that she needed a new stove. One year in preparation for Thanksgiving, grandfather decided to purchase a commercial stove with a very large oven, 6 burners and a built-in soup well. Then he purchased the largest turkey that the meat market butcher could deliver. It weighed 38 lbs. Grandmother was very pleased with the new stove, but when she saw the huge turkey, she told grandfather to take it back to the butcher who sold it to him. The butcher was not pleased to have it returned.

Besides holidays, I knew that each family member's birthday would not be overlooked or downplayed.

Easter Memories

Preparing for Easter was always important among my family's traditions when I was young. Mother felt that new Easter clothes were essential for each of her family members, thus each of us went shopping with mother to select our new outfits. Although our family budget was limited, mother always saved what she could to be sure that we would have new clothes for Easter.

Most Easter breakfasts consisted of ham and eggs, pancakes or waffles, fresh fruit and homemade cinnamon rolls, milk and juice. Sometimes dad would also cook potato pancakes, one of his specialties. When we gathered at our church, our family usually filled an entire pew. Grandmother was always pleased to see so many of her family members in church. After church we would often gather at grandmother and grandfather's home with our aunts, uncles, and many cousins for a huge meal. Once more ham was served with mashed white potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, squash, green beans, corn, homemade rolls, relishes, a salad, and a variety of pies.

Each of us were allowed to fill our own plates with as much food as we wanted, but grandfather insisted that we remain at the table as long as there was food on our plates. We learned to limit the helpings of the food we selected, knowing that we could get second helpings if we so desired. We were not allowed to have dessert until our plates were clean. We were also not allowed to join the rest of the children for an Easter egg hunt following our meal until we were finished cleaning our plates.

Following our meal some of the adults would go outside, weather permitting, to hide eggs of many kinds throughout the front and back yards and adjacent empty lot. Everyone hoped to find at least one large chocolate egg and an egg filled with candied fruits and nuts.

Many of the hard-boiled eggs were dyed the night before our Easter gathering by those who hunted for and filled their baskets the next day. It was exciting to discover who eventually found some of the eggs that we had personally, carefully designed and dyed. Often mother created her own dyes from such things as beet juice, onion skins, and lemon juice. If the weather did not cooperate, our Easter baskets were prepared by adults and handed to each of us. Sometimes baby chicks and rabbits were also presented to those among us who had a place to raise them. Stuffed animals were substituted for those who did not receive live animals.

On one occasion our family members held an Easter egg hunt in the wooded hills surrounding Butte. I can still remember the endless number of colored eggs that covered a sizable portion of one hill prior to that Easter egg hunt. The small children were allowed to gather eggs for the first two minutes of the hunt. Then the older children were allowed to join the smaller children. In no time at all there were few Easter baskets not overflowing with brightly colored eggs. Many of the dyed hen eggs were added to potato salads the next day. I do not remember any of us children getting sick from eating so much candy, but we sure had opportunities to do so.

As I look back at these Easter gatherings, I often wonder why some family member did not read aloud one of the Biblical Easter stories. Perhaps it was assumed that attending church was sufficient in itself.

Ring Bearers

My brother, Donald and I were privileged to serve as ring bearers at our Uncle Fred and Aunt Helen's wedding and also at our Uncle King and Aunt Francis' wedding. Both weddings were conducted by Rev. Bracken from the Lowell Avenue Methodist Church in front of the fireplace at our grandparents' home in Butte, Montana.

An Invitation

One evening after school I was invited by one of my friends to join him at his home to work with him on a scouting project which we shared.

He had also invited me to join him for supper.

On numerous occasions Billy had come to our family home and shared in our family meals and activities.

When it came time for supper that evening, Billy's mother insisted that I continue working on our scout project while Billy and his family ate their meal.

It soon became obvious that Billy had not asked his mother if it would be OK for me to join them for their family meal.

Later when I returned home hungry and tired, I discovered my mother surprised and then upset that this family had not found room for one more person to join them at their table.

It was then that I became aware that that which our family had assumed as a common courtesy and privilege was not a common practice to be found in the homes of many others.

Ever since I have asked, "Will there be room for one more at our table and by extension at our church?"

Roller Skating

Both Donald and I enjoyed roller skating. One Christmas we discovered metal roller skates under the tree for each of us. These were skates that took a key to fasten them to our shoes or boots. Since most of the time we wore tennis shoes, it was necessary for us to buy leather soled shoes to wear with our skates. These leather shoes were among the first leather soled shoes we ever owned.

During the first year we roller skated almost everywhere there was a sidewalk, even to school. Sometimes we even skated on the roadways. Speed and new horizons were increasingly available to us. Before the year was over it was necessary for us to buy new rollers for our skates because the metal rollers had worn out.

On a few occasions we rented shoe skates at the roller rink. These shoe skates had plastic rollers. They rolled very smoothly across the wooden floors of the commercial roller rink, but they did not make the familiar click clack of our metal skates as our metal skates rolled over the concrete sidewalks.

Roller skating kept us well exercised and contributed much to our ability to ice skate in the winter. Only when we were able to own our own makeshift bicycles did we eventually set aside our well-worn roller skates.

Grade School Track Meets

Throughout my 5-8th grades I played offensive and defensive tackle on the Monroe football team. Seldom did our volunteer coach have anything affirming to say about our team and rarely did he use many words that were not cuss words.

When I was in the fifth grade many of my friends were joining our school's track team. Up to this time I had never considered being a part of Monroe Grade School's track team. A few of my friends encouraged me to join them. When I looked at the list of track and field events, I discovered that most of the less difficult activities were already taken. There were still openings to run the mile and the high hurdles: to try my hand at the shot-put: and to attempt the high jump and pole vault. Not wanting to be left out, I signed my name under each of the remaining activities except the shot-put. Our volunteer coach spent most of his time with a limited number of persons who he obviously felt held real potential. I was not on his list. Thus, my only preparation consisted of running around the track with some of my friends and jumping over low fences. Before our first inter-school track meet, I did manage to secure two bamboo poles from one of the carpet stores in town after I learned that some of the carpets came to the stores wound around bamboo poles. The carpet salesman seemed relieved to get rid of two of his growing pile of bamboo poles.

Each of us were assigned a participant number. Since the number 13 had not been taken, I was allowed the opportunity to choose 13. When my number was called, I was expected to be lined up for the event that was to take place. I began with the high jump and somehow or other managed to take fourth place. I then ran the high hurdles, attempting to jump them just like I had jumped during the high jump. Needless to say, I came in last in that event. When my number was called for the pole vault event, I took the longest of my two bamboo poles and attempted to copy the example of those who had gone before me. I measured the pole to the cross bar and then backed up and ran as fast as I could with the hopes that my momentum would propel me over the bar. I was so busy trying to hold up the pole and run at the same time that I missed the place where my pole was supposed to be planted. Thus, my first try ended with me tripping over my own feet in a pit of sawdust. I was sure that I would be disqualified. I wasn't.

My next attempt gave me some hope when I managed to plant my pole and rise above the cross bar. I just did not know that I was to cast myself over that bar. Consequently, I hung there momentarily and then fell to the ground.

I missed my third attempt due to the fact that I was running the mile when my number was called once more. I did place 9th in a field of 14 in the mile race. The official must have believed that I was passing that height, for on my fourth attempt the bar had been raised another foot. This time I was more than two feet above the cross bar, but my awkward attempt resulted in my crashing through the cross bar and landing hard on the edge of the sawdust pit. Then on my fifth attempt my bamboo pole broke as I began to rise off the ground. That fall hurt more than any of my previous falls.

Needless to say, pole vaulting and the high hurdles were no longer on my list for future track meets.

I am a bit amazed that when I coached track at Denton High School, one of the events that two of my team members excelled at was pole vaulting.

Games

Whenever we visited grandmother and grandfather, we often played many table games they enjoyed. Parcheesi, Whist and Penuckle were among the games they played often. When grandmother was busy at church or in the kitchen, grandfather would invite us to join him in a game of checkers or chess. We learned much from grandfather, especially about playing chess, because at one time grandfather was a regional chess champion.

Music

Music was always an important part of the expectations, enjoyments and experiences of my mother's family. Without fail, whenever we shared a meal at my maternal grandmother's home, and before the dishes were done, most of those present gathered around grandmother's piano. Grandmother played and sang a song, and we joined her in harmony.

Grandmother was a major part of the inspiration and motivation for my participation in a variety of musical experiences. When I was only 3 1/2 grandmother decided that I should sing "Away in a Manger" at Lowell Avenue Methodist Church's annual Christmas pageant. Since grandmother thought that I should do so, I did.

Many years later grandmother and grandfather moved to Ryderwood, Washington. Whenever I visited them, grandmother invited me to sing a solo or two at her church.

Throughout grade school my music teachers chose me to sing solos at school events. In the 8th grade the Rotary Club held a music competition in each grade school

in Butte. Many classmates entered this competition. Three other boys in my class encouraged me to enter this event with them as a male quartet. On the day of our school's competition, our quartet disbanded. Two of the boys were too fearful to perform before a crowd. My music teacher encouraged me to continue in the competition as a soloist. I sang "The Little White Cloud that Cried." I was selected to represent our school at the inter-grade school competition. Among all of the grade school representatives that year, I was blessed to receive a 2nd place medal.

In high school as a first tenor, I was selected to sing in many of the choir groupings: the concert choir; the Melowteens; a glee club, a male quartet consisting of Ron Bond, Tom Jenkins, Jerry Kneebone and myself; 4 years in the all-state choir at the University of Montana in Missoula; and in a series of musical productions. I was also privileged to sing the male lead in our school's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado" as Nanki Poo. Our school choirs were very active singing many community concerts: at the ACM Club in Butte, for the Rotary Club, for the Elks, for the Eagles, for the Masons, for the Moose Lodge, on radio and TV and performing in many community service projects. We also sang at the state prison in Deer Lodge, the Montana State mental hospital in Warm Springs, nursing homes in Butte and several rehabilitation centers.

Whenever our college choir went on tour across Montana and Wyoming, I discovered that small communities expressed greater appreciation for our musical offerings than larger communities. Perhaps this was due to the reality that our choir tour was one of the few special offerings of the year that came to town in the smaller communities in which we sang.

Throughout my adult years I have sung in church choirs, college and seminary choirs and tours, community choirs and clergy events. I have also sung for many weddings and wedding anniversaries: including our children's weddings, friends' weddings, weddings I have conducted and my grandparents' 50th wedding anniversary. I have sung for funerals: including my grandmother's funeral and my step father's funeral. I have sung solos in the midst of several sermons that I have delivered and shared in duets with my wife and several church members.

I find pleasure playing the harmonica, autoharp and banjo uke. I also like to whistle. Often, while working outdoors, I whistle familiar tunes.

I enjoy a wide diversity of music: from the classics, opera, acappella and Gregorian chants to musicals, country, barbershop, marches, spirituals and some hip hop. I appreciate instruments of most varieties, including those heard in the natural world, especially the human voice.

Music, like poetry, often speaks to the deeper emotions, expressions and thoughts of our souls. My grandmother's appreciation for music and her willingness to share it with others, set me on a wonderful course of harmony with life.

Church Country Band

While serving First United Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado, Jeane and I joined a church country band. Our band had persons who played the piano, fiddle, mandolin, guitars, autoharps, harmonicas, banjo, banjo uke and a washtub bass. Jeane most often played an autoharp and sang. I also played an autoharp and sang. Often, I also played a harmonica, my banjo uke or a washtub bass.

It was a joy to discover the various ways we were able to use our various talents to bring pleasure to others and to ourselves. Sometimes our practice sessions were at least as much fun as our final productions.

We played for numerous churches, nursing homes and a variety of other groups. Most of the time our audiences joined us as we sang familiar tunes. If nothing else they tapped their toes to the lively music.

Music has a way of drawing people together.

Spot

Spot was a very special dog. He was my first dog. My grandfather gave me Spot when he was only a puppy. Grandfather had been given Spot when one of his neighbor's kids had mistreated Spot by tying firecrackers to his tail. From that day on, Spot was extremely afraid of the sound of fireworks. Grandfather abhorred cruelty to animals.

That tiny puppy grew to be a large dog. Spot was a combination of Pointer and St. Bernard. Whenever he would go on point, after a few moments, his tail would begin to quiver and sag under the weight of too much fur.

Spot enjoyed taking me to school each day. I held on to his collar and he ran with me. Sometimes he ran so fast that my feet were lifted off the ground. I think that he taught my legs to take long strides and my lungs to have much endurance. I never saw him on the school grounds during morning or afternoon recesses, but when school was out, there he would be, waiting to take me home.

One day one of my friends called me to tell me that he had seen Spot appearing to be taking a bath in Bell Creek after the long winter season. When I met my friend near the creek, there was Spot wading in the creek, pulling at his matted fur, removing the tangles and underlying fluff. I am sure that the growing heat of late spring was a bit much for a dog with that much winter fur. I wondered why each spring Spot would appear so ragged and disheveled one day and another day to be so sparkling clean and strikingly shiny.

Spot was not an ordinary dog. Instead of chasing cars like other dogs did in those days, he and his friend, Snowball, a Samoyed, found enjoyment chasing trains until one day Snowball tripped and fell beneath the wheels of a boxcar. From that day onward, Spot no longer chased trains. Snowball must have been very special to Spot.

Spot loved carrots. We discovered this fact when dad asked us what was happening to the carrots which he was raising in his garden? At that age most of my brothers and sisters were not overly fond of carrots. No one would admit that he or she

had removed carrots from dad's garden that was surrounded by a high fence. One morning Donald and I discovered Spot inside the garden fence digging carrots and eating them with what appeared as enjoyment.

When he heard our voices, with little difficulty, Spot jumped the high fence and came to our sides as if he had done nothing out of the ordinary.

Sometimes we hitched Spot up to our sled in the winter and our wagon in the summer and he would pull us up and down the street on pavement, snow or dirt. This proved to be dangerous at times, especially when he chose to chase a cat. Spot was very friendly to everybody except persons who wore tool belts. Someone who wore a tool belt must have threatened him at some time and he never forgot.

When we moved from Arizona Street in Butte, we left Spot with one of our neighbors, Guy Busatti, who was also very fond of Spot. I would visit Spot as often as I could as I went to and from Butte High School from my grandparents' home. He seemed content in his new home, but I am sure that there was a tug in his heart, as there was in mine, each time it was time for me to leave him.

Spot was 19 1/2 years old when he died. This was exceptionally old for a large dog and for that matter any dog, large or small.

[Guy Busatti Bakery](#)

Guy Busatti owned a bakery just across the alley from our home. Whenever we visited Guy in his bakery, first he showed us how to prepare the product he was making and then he insisted that Donald and I should take one of his largest glazed donuts from his display shelves and pile it high with the many frostings, sliced nuts, cherries, and shredded coconut ingredients that he used to enhance his bakery goods. Donald loved sweets and his finished products often overflowed into his hands before they had a chance to enter his waiting mouth. Guy would always encourage me to put more on my donut because I either only wanted a plain donut or one enhancement on it. I always felt stuffed after consuming Guy's generous offering.

[Circus Tents and Free Tickets](#)

Whenever The Ringling Brothers and the Barnum & Bailey Circuses came to town, my brother, Donald and I asked if there was anything we could do to secure free tickets to "The Greatest Show on Earth." Often Donald and I joined our friends, the circus roustabouts and the elephants as they raised the "big tops", the main circus tents. It was always amazing to me to see how large those tents were and to see the elephants pull the ropes up the tent poles tightening the canvas just right. Later, I recognized how talented the elephant handlers had been to get the elephants to do exactly what was needed. On two occasions, after the work was done, we were even given rides on an elephant after we had carried buckets and buckets of water to the elephants. For our efforts on behalf of raising the tents, each of us received a free ticket

or two to attend the show. Each year the circus added a bit of variety and excitement to our summer experiences.

In my later teenage years, circuses moved indoors into Butte's Civic Center. Then, I always felt that something had been lost, for the allure of the hustle and bustle of the big tents and the staked-out elephants and corralled animals were gone. Fortunately, the excitement of the parade of circus animals and equipment from the railroad cars to the Civic Center still remained.

The Columbia Gardens

One of the special places near Butte was the Columbia Gardens. The Columbia Gardens was a huge playground, donated by William Clark, one of Butte's "copper kings". It was filled with swings, slides, a zoo, a Ferris wheel, a merry go round, biplanes, a roller coaster, flower beds, beautiful streams, picnic tables, a boardwalk and a huge pavilion that housed a large dance hall. Many famous big bands played at that pavilion.

The Columbia Gardens was a paradise to the children and adults of Butte away from the mines and saloons. We often rode free streetcars and later buses to and from the Gardens. A picnic lunch, a cold drink and a few quarters allowed us to enjoy many of the offerings of this wonderful place for most of a day. It received its name because of its numerous beautiful flower gardens incorporated throughout the grounds, and because the headwaters of the Clark's Fork of the Columbia River began nearby. History tells us that salmon, all of the way from the Pacific Ocean, spawned in these headwaters.

Many of our family members, following the annual 4th of July parade, gathered at the Columbia Gardens for an afternoon picnic. Before dark we returned to Butte for a spectacular fireworks display.

Whenever my maternal grandfather's sisters would come to Butte, we often went to the Columbia Gardens for an all-day picnic. It was their custom to purchase a whole roll of tickets for the carousel so that my brothers, sisters and cousins could ride as long as we wished. I enjoyed the music associated with the hand carved horses on the carousel, but even now I can no longer ride a carousel without getting sick from going around and around.

I found most of my pleasure riding the unique swings, biplanes and wooden roller coaster. I also enjoyed the slides, zoo and flower gardens.

Sadly, the Columbia Gardens no longer exists. When the Anaconda Mining Company sampled the area surrounding the Columbia Gardens, they discovered a very rich vein of ore was present under the park. It did not take the ACM long to take away the awesome gathering place that so many took for granted. Many of us who so enjoyed The Columbia Gardens feel much grief knowing that the endless pursuit of greed-motivated profit took away the essential, simple pleasures of innumerable families. An alternate location for the offerings of The Columbia Gardens was scarcely considered, but never materialized.

How easily basic human values are set aside and even perverted when dollar signs flash before the eyes of those who control much of the economy of the communities they pretend to support.

VE and VJ Days

With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the U.S.A. entered World War II. This was a time following the Great Depression when many young men and women were sent overseas to enter battles that would challenge raging oppression, dehumanizing exploitation and bigoted prejudice. This was also a period of history when citizens of the U.S.A. began to see their economy rally, their work force unify and their leadership and influence across the world soar.

I first learned about the end of World War II in Europe when a B29 airplane showered Butte and other communities across Montana with thousands of fluttering leaflets that announced the signing of the unilateral peace agreement in Europe.

A short time later, after two devastating atom bombs were dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, once more a B29 delivered the long-awaited message that Japan had surrendered.

Even though peace was announced, many years of recovery and grief from the multiple devastations and unimaginable losses had resulted in the course of the war's aftermath. Individuals, families, whole communities and nations across the world had to face endless readjustments as announcements of the deaths and injuries of loved ones were made and as returning veterans came home to discover their livelihoods, family relations, and responsibilities had changed. Nations also were jostling to determine how they would relate to other nations across our world following W.W.II. Instantly, a cold war resulted, leaving nations once more divided.

Humanity seems to feel ill at ease unless there is intentional conflict. Peace and prosperity can be so fleeting!

Uncle Fred the Umpire

When I was young, Butte, Montana, had one or more teams in a regional semi-pro baseball league called the Copper League. Many of the baseball games were very entertaining and well attended. Baseball was not only a national pastime, but it was a social event; a unifying element in building a sense of unity and community, a brief change of pace for many; a respite from stress; a miniature vacation and a time for being with others and making new few friends.

Often when teams played their games at the Clarks Park baseball field, uncle Fred Roberts would serve as one of the umpires. Uncle Fred was an excellent umpire with a good eye, a strong sense of fairness and a quick call.

Whenever possible my brother, Donald and I would ride our makeshift bicycles to Clarks Park and attend as many baseball games as possible. Since we did not have

money to pay for the price of admission to sit in the grandstands, Donald and I would climb the outfield fence and sit on the fence during the games. Anticipation of each game and recalling many highlights and lowlights of the games later with our friends was very much a part of our enjoyment.

Sometimes when a homerun or foul ball was hit over the fence, Donald and I would join others as we attempted to recover the ball as a trophy of that game. Every once in a while, Don or I would become the proud owner of a recovered baseball that we would inevitably use in some of our sandlot baseball games.

Unknown to us, baseball games offered us much exercise: riding over 7 miles to and from our house to Clarks Park; getting up and down from the ball park fence several times during the games in pursuit of baseballs and playing sandlot baseball with baseballs we had recovered. For us baseball was more than a spectator sport.

The Freedom Train

Aunt Helen and Uncle Fred were special persons in Donald's and my life. When Aunt Helen and Uncle Fred were married, Don and I served as ring bearers at their wedding which was held in grandmother and grandfather's home on 1820 Massachusetts Street in Butte. We also served as ring bearers at the wedding of Aunt Francis and Uncle King. Seldom did an opening day of fishing season take place in the latter part of May in Montana that Fred and Helen did not join grandfather, uncle King, Donald and me on our traditional annual outing.

In 1948, it was announced in the Butte papers and over the radio that a very special train was coming to town on April 16th. The red, white and blue Freedom Train, with many of the very important original documents of the birth of the United States of America, was touring our nation. The Freedom Train allowed ordinary citizens to view historical records not available to them unless they traveled to Washington DC, Philadelphia, and several locations across the East coast.

Aunt Helen and Uncle Fred invited Donald and me to join them as we waited for hours in a long line on Front Street near the Northern Pacific Depot. On the Freedom Train we hoped to catch a glimpse of historical records that we were learning about in school, but were unlikely to ever see gathered together again in one place in our lifetime. I remember how excited we were and how electric the atmosphere was around us as we and multitudes of others surrounding us awaited our turns to board the Freedom Train. Even

though Donald and I were fairly young at that time, I recall sensing the great significance of this once-in-a-lifetime event. A deep appreciation of American history was awakened in me from that day forward.

I am sure that those who had conceived the concept of the Freedom Train and those who enabled it to become a reality had only a limited understanding of how great an impact it would have upon so many persons who were privileged to view its contents. Each document was highlighted with a well-researched explanation of why it was important to the founding of the U.S.A. Each item was displayed under heavy glass and

well-lit so that it's full contents could be read very easily. Knowledgeable military attendants were dispersed throughout the Freedom Train to assist viewers and to protect the documents from potential vandalism. Even though there were massive numbers of persons viewing and awaiting their turns to view these documents, at no time do I remember any degree of disinterest, negativity or lack of consideration of others. Anticipation, festivity and deep appreciation permeated the attitudes of those gathered.

It is amazing for me to realize that the majority of today's citizens were not even born when Aunt Helen, Uncle Fred, Donald and I were so privileged to board the Freedom Train. I wonder how a Freedom Train would be received today?

Riding the Last Streetcars

In 1951, I experienced the closing of an era of one form of transportation in Butte and Anaconda, Montana, that had been very essential to most persons before buses became the common form of public transportation in most communities across the United States.

Streetcar tracks and overhead electric wires were found, usually down the center of most primary streets, wherever people needed to go to work, purchase necessary supplies or seek pleasure. In Butte streetcars carried many miners, store owners and service personnel to and from work each day. Streetcars transported people to and from grocery stores, restaurants, schools, hospitals and family gatherings. One track even delivered many of us to and from the Columbia Gardens some distance outside of Butte.

The clang of streetcars early in the morning reminded us that a new day had begun, and the ceasing of the static sound of electricity flashing from the streetcar wires that drove the engines of the streetcars told us that another day was over.

Many a person could tell the time of day by the punctual schedule of the streetcar routes. Much of the economy of Butte and Anaconda depended upon the dependability of streetcar transportation. In a brief time more economical, quiet buses began to replace streetcars as the transportation of choice.

Then one day it was announced that a streetcar would wind its way one last time over the streets of Butte between Front Street, downtown and Park Street, uptown. Many of my family members and friends crowded aboard that streetcar to mark the passing of this once taken-for granted form of transportation. A short time later some of us traveled to Anaconda to share in the closing of their last scheduled streetcar tour.

I am thankful that I was a part of these historical events.

Now many years later, some cities are reviving streetcars in portions of their communities as tourist attractions and in some cases as an additional form of public transportation.

14 Cent Movies

When I was young, Butte had four movie theaters: The Rialto, The American, The Montana and a drive-in theater. The first three theaters were uptown and the price of admission for children was only 14 cents. A quarter would allow us to pay for our admission fee, buy a large bag of popcorn, a cold drink and sometimes even a candy bar. Movies always began with a newsreel and then a cartoon. Sometimes the theater had double features or we would stay for a second viewing of the first feature.

The drive-in theater cost \$1 for a whole car load of people and was located downtown on the flats of Butte. Mother enjoyed taking us to the drive-in theater. At home mother made popcorn, sandwiches and lemonade for our time at the theater. Going to the drive-in was almost like going on a picnic. We ate sandwiches and drank lemonade during the intermission, but popcorn was available for us throughout the movie. Sometimes there was a double feature. Often my younger sisters fell asleep during one of the movies.

One year the merchants of Butte gave each customer a ticket good for a drawing for a Shetland Pony with each purchase. The drawing was held at the Rialto Theater. For some reason mother went alone with all of our tickets. After the show, the winner was picked from a large box of entries. Mother was amazed to discover that she held the winning number. The prize included "Kit Carson", a Shetland Pony, two weeks of free board and room, a saddle, a bridle, chaps, and a full child's size cowboy suit. During those two weeks I rode Kit Carson daily. When my sisters and brother attempted to ride the Shetland pony; Kit Carson bucked and attempted to bite them. Thus in a few weeks mother sold Kit Carson to some people who lived in Whitehall, Montana. With some of the profit mother and dad purchased a large army tent that we used to go camping as often as time would allow.

Special Treats

When we lived on Hobson Street, the milk man delivered milk to our house. During the winter my brothers and sister Barbara were always willing to be first to get the milk from the porch. It did not take me long to discover why. They found that when the milk began to freeze, the cream that had settled on the top of the milk also began to freeze. Ice cream was there at the top of each glass milk bottle just waiting to be sampled.

Many Sunday afternoons during the summer we made homemade ice cream with real cream. How good it was. First, we used a hand-cranked and later an electric ice cream maker. Sometimes on the weekends Dad made potato pancakes that we all enjoyed.

Before we had a refrigerator, the ice man came to deliver ice for our ice box. Often, we went to the delivery truck and the ice man gave us chips of ice. This was a real treat on a hot summer day.

Each Monday when we came home from school the aroma of fresh baked bread greeted us. Mother baked 10-12 loaves at a time for our large family. A big slice of

warm homemade bread with butter was a special treat. Donald always wanted his bread heaping with jelly. Mother had to keep watch over her freshly baked bread so that we did not eat it all before the day was done. The next morning, we looked forward to toast, or even French toast or tomatoes and eggs on toast on our breakfast plates. There is something extra special about homemade bread.

Sometimes after school and on Saturday mornings, we gathered in our big kitchen to listen to radio programs such as: The Shadow, Sergeant Preston and His Dog King, The Lone Ranger, The Green Hornet, Fibber McGee and Molly and The Buster Brown Show.

When we lived on Arizona Street, Donald and I went down to the railroad produce warehouse near our home and watched as men unloaded bananas from freight cars. Don and I were allowed to gather bananas that fell between the loading dock and the freight cars to take home. Frequently we came home with a wagon full of bananas. Mother made cakes, pies, breads, fruit Jell-O and puddings from our windfall of bananas.

Simple treats were often the best treats. Anticipating the treats, contributing by gleaning the bananas, and helping cook was very much a part of the treats themselves.

Pasties

Butte was famous for its pasties. They were a Welsh and Cornish miners' meal of bite-sized meat, potatoes, celery, and onions wrapped in a pastry similar to a large apple turnover. The Welsh first cooked them using parsnips or turnips as potato substitutes since potatoes were initially scarce. The English often added carrots. Mother did not. When mother made a batch of pasties for dinner, she often included a small pastie in our school lunch in place of a sandwich.

Pasties were well received at Jefferson Avenue United Church where I served my last appointment as their pastor for 10 years. At least once or twice a year three laymen and I baked pasties at the church for people to buy at a minimal cost. Any profit made went to support the church budget. One time we baked almost 290 pasties. Within a week all of those pasties were sold. If we had baked 500 pasties, I believe that they would have found a place at the tables of our church members and friends.

Donald & the Girl from Georgia

When Donald was 9 or 10 years old it was his custom to go over to his friend's house across the alley from our home and just walk in. He and his friend were like family. They came and went whenever they chose.

On one occasion Donald went to be with his friend. He walked into his friend's house as usual without first knocking. It turned out that his friend's relatives from Georgia had come to town. There was a young teenage girl who greeted Don shortly after he entered the house with "You da-a-ah."

A few minutes after this unexpected encounter, Donald returned to our home. His face was all flushed. I asked him what had happened. Donald said, "This gal from Georgia had called him a "doll."

Immediately I went over to check on this interchange and found that Donald's friend's cousin in reality had called Donald not a "doll" but a "dog."

I returned home and related this information to Donald, sadly deflating his ego a bit.

The Chitwood Dare Devils

In 1952 the Joey Chitwood Ford stunt drivers came to Clarks Park in Butte to demonstrate their dare devil talents and the versatility, durability and stability of Ford Motor vehicles.

A group from our neighborhood gathered at Clark's Park to watch speeding cars circle the field on two wheels; weave in and out of obstacles at high speeds; rush by one another, narrowly missing others in dare devil passes; jumping from one ramp to another in close succession and jumping over nine or more cars without ending up in a wreck.

For weeks after this exhibition, the Chitwood Dare Devil stunts dominated the conversations of many of my friends.

Within a week, those of us who had bicycles were constructing wooden ramps that we would drag into the steep ally behind our house. Each of us sped down the alley way and attempted to ride our bicycles up one ramp and fly across increasing spaces to another distant ramp without crashing or breaking our bones. No one broke any bones as far as I remember, but most of us bore scars from our daring efforts. Broken bike frames, bent wheels and twisted handlebars were much in evidence reminding us of the danger in which we had placed ourselves.

David Payne, the Wilson brothers and even Bob Knievel joined Donald and I in our attempts to mimic the Chitwood Dare Devils.

One day Bob Knievel showed up with a small, import car asking us to build stronger ramps. We did the best we could with scrap lumber we scrounged all over the neighborhood. It wasn't long before Bob came speeding down the alley in his shinny car attempting to fly over a space that was more than eight times as far as anyone had managed to clear on a bicycle. He almost made it, but the ramp on which he landed caved in. The front of his car smashed into the round rushing the radiator, fenders, bumper, fan and headlights. The motor was pushed off of its motor mounts.

Later that day we learned that Bob had borrowed that car off of his grandfather's import car lot without his grandfather's permission. Bob was all but thrown out of his grandparent's home where he lived.

Sometime later Bob arrived with a broken-down motorbike that belched black smoke, sounded like a jet plane because of a broken muffler, and missed every other stroke of its pistons. He had traded a bicycle for this almost discarded relic. Miraculously, Bob made two successful jumps with his motorcycle that afternoon before it stopped running. Bob took much pleasure in speed and danger.

I believe that “Evil Kneivel’s” eventual career began in the alley way behind our house, inspired by the Chitwood Dare Devils.

Camping in Glacier Park

One year when our family was visiting Glacier Park, we had just begun settling down in our sleeping bags in our tent when our small dog began to growl and run wildly around our tent. We knew that a bear was near, for each evening bears visited the campgrounds looking for food that could be found in the trash cans and sometimes on the tables of forgetful campers. No sooner had dad assured mother that our food was safe in the trunk of our car than we heard the crash of metal being torn from something near or on our car. A series of loud bangs, the sound of a bear eating something outside our tent, and then the sound of the bear shuffling away, caused most of our family to spend a long, restless night while we awaited the dawning light of the next morning. When dad went out of the tent to discover what the bear had been doing the previous evening, he found the heavy trunk door of our Oldsmobile ripped loose from its hinges lying on the ground some ten feet away from our car.

Most of the food had been eaten and the lid of the ice chest was covered with many tooth holes and claw marks. Our car had been parked little more than twenty feet from our tent. That grizzly bear knew what it wanted and where it could be found. Even many of our canned goods had holes in them where the bear's teeth had punctured them.

We were all amazed that a bear could tear off the trunk door of such a well-built car with only one or two strikes of its powerful paws. We shuttered when we contemplated what such a blow could have done to any one of us.

Camping in Glacier Park did hold its dangers.

A Special National Park

In my estimation Glacier Park is the grandest of the national parks I have ever visited. The first time I visited Glacier was with my brothers, sisters and parents. That year I had been given a small camera as a birthday gift. As we entered the park, we spotted a mother grizzly and her three cubs begging alongside the highway. As we drew near my brother literally pushed me out of the car so that I could get a picture of this family of bears. I did take a picture, that I still have, as I rushed to get back in our car. We camped in a tent in campgrounds that most often had grizzlies visiting the trashcans during the night. Sometimes we would see grizzlies in our campgrounds even during the day.

One of the spectacular lakes to which we hiked a short distance was a lake called Avalanche Lake. It was crystal clear and had waterfalls on three sides of it that splashed into it from three glaciers that hung on clefts high above the lake.

While I was in college a group of my classmates and I were led by Rev. George Harper on a 26-mile hike from Logan Pass, the top of The Going to the Sun Highway, across the Garden Wall to Granite Park Chalet, over Swiftcurrent Pass, and on to the Many Glacier Hotel. The wild mountain flowers were in full bloom and blanketed the mountain side with a brilliant display of many colors: columbines, buttercups, larkspur, lupine, wild geranium, Indian paint brush, glacier lilies, bear grass, red heather, and calypso. We picked and ate wild strawberries along the trail and abundant huckleberries enhanced our morning pancakes. A series of lakes loaded with trout added fresh fish to our meals and big horn sheep, mountain goats and deer posed for pictures along our way.

After reaching the top of the pass, a narrow trail switch backed down a cleft to a beautiful valley far below. About two thirds of the way down we encountered three deer who were heading up the narrow trail to the peak from which we had just come. They were hesitant to pass us as were we also. They were not about to go down and we were not going to climb back up the steep trail we had descended. For over one half an hour we and they debated what we could do. Then tentatively the deer began to move toward us. They brushed against us as they passed by and then they trotted on up the trail and out of sight. Up to that time I had never been that close to a deer. We camped that evening at a lake that was near the trail and waited for the rest of our party to catch up with us. Fish and huckleberries once more added something special to our meals. Sparkling streams and endless waterfalls led us down the trail to our waiting vehicles at Many Glacier Hotel.

Truly, Glacier is a very special park!

Stepped on by a Bear

On one occasion when my college roommate and I were backpacking around Glacier Park, we found ourselves arriving after dark in the campground area near Lake McDonald. Since the sky was clear, the stars abundant, and our bodies were tired from the day's long hike, we decided not to pitch our tent. We laid our sleeping bags on the ground near the parking lot. Sleep came quickly.

Sometime during the night, my college roommate awoke to find me gasping for air. He shined his flashlight on me and then around the campground. A short distance away he spotted a bear ambling away. Apparently, it had stepped on me and knocked the wind out of me as it wandered across our camp area. I must not have smelled or looked like food. I was fortunate.

Learning to Yodel

It was on another hike during a very hot day that my roommate and I chose to take a swim in Iceberg Lake. Iceberg Lake lived up to its name for it was extremely cold and our swim was very brief. It was during that swim that we both learned to yodel.

Yodeling was what our less daring friends thought our reaction to the cold water sounded like.

A Forest Fire in Glacier

I was pleased when I was able to introduce my wife to the beauty and wonders of Glacier National Park.

Later my wife, Jeane, Bonnie, our daughter and Colin, our grandson, made a side trip to Glacier while I was spending some time with my mother in St. Ignatius, Montana. It was during this trip that they encountered up close and personally a major forest fire as they were returning to their camp at West Glacier by way of The Going to the Sun Highway. The raging fire crossed the highway just below them. They took several spectacular pictures of the forest fire. They were fortunate to be able to turn around on that narrow, steep road, backtracking many miles around the eastern perimeter of the park.

In June 2005, when we held a Rolfe family reunion in Hot Springs, Montana, where we celebrated mom's 90th and uncle Gilbert's 92nd. birthdays, our son and his family were introduced to Glacier National Park following our reunion. Our son was impressed for he took over a megabyte of digital pictures while he was there. His family could finally appreciate some of the things I had been telling them through the years about Glacier National Park.

Winter Entertainment

Winter was a special season for recreational innovation when I was growing up. We did not have all of the electronic diversions that are present today. We looked forward to joining our friends and playing outside.

Sleds, toboggans and slick shoe leather became our vehicles to hours and hours of entertainment, exercise and wonderment. Most of our skis were long pieces of wood that were turned up at the ends. Sometimes, when they were available, our skis were barrow staves. Cross country skiing and snowshoeing were more common than downhill skiing. Sometimes we used car trunk lids or engine hoods to slide down the steep hills of Butte.

When the snow was good for making snowballs, we would often build snow men and snow women, snow children, snow dogs and even snow dragons. We would attempt to roll the snow balls for our snow sculptures as large as our strength would allow. Sometimes it would take two or three of us lift the second, third or even fourth snow ball to place it high on top of the initial snow ball base below. Even when our gloves or mittens became wet, we seldom felt cold, for when we were in the midst of creating, especially with our friends and siblings, we were focused, motivated, energized and warmed by our accomplishments. Snow forts, snow tunnels and snow

mountains added to our sense of adventure and sometimes they blocked the cold, piercing winter winds.

Sometimes in the winter in Hamilton, Donald and I joined some of our friends who lived near our farm for a game of hockey on a large beaver pond. Before we could skate there, it was necessary for us to clear the snow from the ice. We never thought of shoveling the snow as work, but rather we looked upon it as part of our recreation. We chipped out a large hole at each end of our hockey rink to serve as goals. We used chunks of ice for our hockey pucks and bent limbs from the trees for our hockey sticks. Most of the time we slid across the ice in our tennis shoes instead of ice skates because most of our friends did not have ice skates. I seldom remember being cold, even though the temperature often hovered near zero. Maybe this was because we were so active and enjoying ourselves.

Once in a while in Butte I played hockey, but it was not as much fun as the times when we created our own rink, goals and equipment.

In Butte many of the vacant ponds were sprayed with water from fire hydrants, thus enabling most neighborhoods to have access to a skating rink nearby. Our largest skating rink was at Clark's Park on the flats of Butte. The rink consisted of a warming hut where we could change out of our street shoes into our ice skates. I do not recall any of our shoes ever disappearing or filling with snow whenever we were at Clark's Park. The outdoor rink covered the entirety of the baseball infield and outfield.

It was at Clark's Park where I spent much of my spare time training for inter-school skating competitions and preparing to try out for the Olympics. I trained for the longer distant races because I had much stamina, endurance and long strides. After a few Olympic competitions, I soon discovered that I could ill afford the dollars it took to continue on to Chicago where the finals were held. Only a few competitors had sponsors who paid their way to each level of competition. Several of my friends from Butte represented Montana in Chicago at the Olympic ice-skating finals. I will always remember the many hours of diligent practice we endured late into the evenings, even when the weather was well below zero. After Butte's Civic Center was built, most of the competitions were held indoors, but most of the practice and training for speed skating took place at Clark's Park.

Over time I could tell about how cold it was by the sound the snow made when I walked on it. The colder it was, the crisper the sound as the temperatures fell lower and lower on the thermometers. Each year we could count on two or more weeks of below zero weather in Butte. Twenty below was common and school was called off only once when the temperature reached 52 below zero. When I was young, I took the cold, snow storms and challenges of winter for granted. To me they were normal and an essential part of the season I called winter.

Gangrene & Epsom Salt

During most winters when we lived on Arizona Street in Butte, Donald and I would join many of our friends sledding down the steep alley behind our house. One of the American Flier sleds that we had was held together with small nails. One of the

nails near the back of the sled had worked loose. It pierced my left leg just below the knee. The next morning, I awoke with a very sore, swollen leg. By the time I went to Dr. Mudlock, my leg was filled with black pus. Dr. Mudlock said that my leg was infected with gangrene. He debated for some time if he needed to remove my leg to keep the gangrene from spreading. Mother and I protested and asked if there were a possible alternative solution. He did not give much hope. Finally, Dr. Mudlock decided to see what one night of placing my leg in a series of hot baths of Epsom salt might do. The next morning following much prayer and many hot water and Epsom salt treatments, my leg showed considerable improvement. Dr. Mudlock was pleased and surprised, but not half as much as my mother and I were.

Sometimes simple home remedies can prevent disastrous consequences.

Earning Extra Dollars

While we were young, Donald and I were always looking for ways to earn a few extra dollars. We shoveled snow, sold newspapers early each Sunday morning on the street corners of uptown Butte, collected scrap metal, sold snacks at rodeos and stock car races, collected tickets at professional wrestling matches, sold shamrocks prior to St. Patrick's Day, helped raise circus tents when circuses came to town and collected returnable pop and beer bottles along roadways.

Collecting Bottles

One of our best bottle collection routes was between Butte and Anaconda, Montana. Donald and I would stuff our backpacks with a good number of gunny sacks and walk the barrow ditches until we ran out of gunny sacks. When the gunny sacks were almost full of bottles, they were very heavy. We would set them along the highway for us to put in the trunk and back seat of mother's car after she found us many hours and miles down the road. Sometimes mother made a second trip down the highway so that we could collect gunny sacks of bottles that would not fit in her car during her first trip. After we arrived at our home, we would wash each bottle and then bring them to one of the grocery stores where we would receive 2 cents for each bottle. Seldom were we not surprised by how many bottles we had collected and how much we had earned. As I look back over these many years, I am also amazed that we were never troubled by wild animals or snakes along the byways. In some ways Donald and I were among the early recyclers. I often wonder how many miles we walked on these many excursions?

Selling Newspapers

For several years I assisted Donald with his weekday newspaper route throughout the Silver bow Homes, a series of public assistance apartments. For many more years we also delivered Sunday newspapers on a route of over 150 homes that we had developed for those who wanted only the Sunday paper. We often received tips over and above the cost of our newspapers, especially during the Christmas season. Early each Sunday morning, despite rain, snow, heat or even below zero temperatures, we sold newspapers from five to ten o'clock on the street corners of uptown Butte. The newspaper manager would deliver bundles of newspapers at our selected street corner even though he seldom did so for most of the other newspaper boys. Perhaps this was because Donald and I often sold between 500-1000 papers at a nickel a piece. Later the Sunday papers went up in price from a nickel, first to a dime and then to a quarter.

When the papers were only five cents, we could buy the papers we were to sell at two for a nickel. Then when they went up to ten cents a Sunday paper, we were charged a dime for three papers. When the paper went up to twenty-five cents a paper, we were charged a half dollar for three Sunday editions.

We always appreciated an older man, who early every weekend morning throughout the year, heated and sold hot Truzzelino's Tamales before the restaurants opened to those who were hungry.

Selling newspapers on the street corners of Butte, Montana, exposed Donald and me to the highs and lows of humanity. We saw the neglect and abuse of and by persons caught up in alcoholism. We heard the cries of cold and hungry children who were locked in their parents' cars while their parents frequented the numerous bars of Butte. We saw robberies in process and even saw and heard guns being fired. We heard the sirens of ambulances and fire engines as they rushed to and from emergencies. We saw the results of persons who died prematurely as a result of falling asleep while smoking in bed. We saw the homeless and hopeless, the lonely and forgotten, the desperate and depressed. We heard stories of dreams shattered, promises broken, and relationships dissolved.

We discovered that most often the real news was not to be found in the script of a newspaper, but mostly in the revelations of the lives of those who were on the streets where the newspapers were being sold.

Gardening with Grandfather

When I was young, I often assisted my grandfather as he planted a garden in his back yard and in a spare lot grandfather owned next to his home.

Grandfather was very systematic in planting his garden. From year to year, he rotated his crops. Before he even bought his seeds, he measured his garden spaces and drew up a plan of what he intended to plant; where it would be planted; and when it needed to be planted. Each fall, after he had completed harvesting his garden, he went to a dairy farm and returned to his garden with year old cow manure. He spread the manure across his gardening spaces. In the spring we would mix the soil and manure together as we hand dug his garden spaces.

Carefully, grandfather measured and spaced the rows according to his outline. A stake was driven at the ends of each row and a string was tightly strung to be sure that we kept the rows straight. Then seeds were planted and watered according to his pre-planned schedule. Grandfather had four 55-gallon barrels into which we shoveled half barrels of cow manure. We filled the remaining space in the barrels with water. This he called, "Garden tea." When the plants were sufficient height, grandfather and I poured his concoction down the rows of his gardens. Following this treatment, his garden really grew. We enjoyed seeing things grow. We also found pleasure harvesting and eating the results of our efforts.

Grandfather had started me on a journey of gardening wherever I found a space to plant a few seeds.

Additional Gardens

Our farm in Hamilton benefited from grandfather's teachings. A plot of land in Lakewood, Colorado, also grew vegetables abundantly with the assistance of my wife, Jeane, and our two little children, Michael and Bonnie.

One memory of our garden in Colorado Springs was a huge squash that my uncle Gilbert admired. We shared that very large squash with several of our neighbors and church members.

A small garden in Boulder produced tomatoes, Swiss chard, and zucchini squash.

Two gardens in Wheat Ridge, one at Jefferson Ave. United Methodist Church and another at The Arvada Garden Club, produced enough vegetables each week to provide all of the free, fresh produce our church members desired with boxes of vegetables left over to donate to food banks in our community. Beans, summer squash, cucumbers, Swiss chard, beets, carrots, lettuce, and corn were readily available throughout five summers. At the end of one fall, just before our first snowfall, I recall harvesting two truckloads of winter squash and one truck load of tomatoes for distribution.

Not only did our gardens fill our stomachs, but they allowed us to be a part of the wonders of assisting things to grow; of seeing the beauty of a variety of plants enhancing a whole garden; of sharing the earth's abundance with others; and of passing on the joy of gardening to others.

Working for Mr. Scott

Mr. Scott was one of my great uncle Jim's neighbors near Sun River. For several summers I stayed with great uncle Jim Cunningham. Whenever Mr. Scott needed extra help, he asked for my assistance. Many mornings I would help him gather eggs from the nests of his chickens. He had a habit that disgusted me. While collecting eggs, he would crack one open and eat it raw. Then he would offer one to me. He

knew that I did not appreciate his offering for the eggs were often covered with chicken manure, yet every morning he would extend his offer in spite of or because of knowing how this affected me. To this day I require my eggs to be well cooked before I will eat them. I do not care for anything that reminds me of rare eggs, such as yogurt or some puddings.

For those two summers, I assisted Mr. Scott to cut, dry and stack hay from his fields. He had two plow horses that he set loose each year in Uncle Jim's woods near the Sun River.

On one occasion great uncle Jim and I went in search of the horses so that Mr. Scott and I could use them to help gather hay. We finally found the horses part way across the Sun River on an island. They had undoubtedly crossed the river to the island because of the wonderful forage they found there. Great uncle Jim and I located a place to ford the river and gain access to the island. After a brief chase, we finally caught the near wild horses that were only used for haying once a year. We put halters on them. Then I rode my horse bareback across the river. Great uncle Jim decided that he would ride the remaining horse across the river. A little more than half way across the Sun River, great uncle Jim's horse decided that he would buck Uncle Jim off. He did. I was not sure that great uncle Jim could swim, but he did make it to shore, wet all over and fuming mad. It was a good thing that it took some while for us to catch that horse once more. Great uncle Jim might have done it some harm. Eventually that horse came to my horse and I was able to put a rope around its neck. I led it to Mr. Scott's corral while great uncle Jim changed his very wet clothes.

Later that day Mr. Scott and I hitched the horses to his hay wagon and began pitching hay up into the wagon. Each time the hay wagon was heaping full, I drove it to Mr. Scott's barn and unloaded it. I then returned to help get another load of hay. That evening as the light was beginning to fade, I was in the hay wagon holding the reins of the horses as Mr. Scott pitched a few more forks of hay onto the near full load. Not wanting to leave his pitchfork in the field, he threw it up near the front of the load. He intended to open the gate and close it behind us and then ride back to the barn in the wagon. This was not to be, for as the horses began to pull forward, the pitchfork slid down the front of the hay in the wagon just far enough behind one of the horses to jab it in the rear. Immediately that horse began to run wildly. Even though the two horses were a very well-matched pair, the other horse had no idea what was happening. Fortunately for me, both horses began to pull together even as we went flying down a short slope into the deep water of a slough. Only then was I able to pull the pitchfork back from the horse's backside. I am sure that the wagon would have turned over had the horses not pulled together and turned toward the slough. After an extended treatment with salve covering the puncture wounds, the wounded horse recovered. We retrieved the hay wagon the next morning by pulling the very heavy, wet hay and wagon out of the slough with another neighbor's huge John Deer tractor. Later we gathered the remaining hay in the fields by hitching the hay wagon to Mr. Scott's Ford tractor.

Mr. Scott's Bull

One day Mr. Scott was going in to town and asked me to keep a watch on his Guernsey bull that he had isolated in a very tall pole corral. He did not want that bull to breed with his herd of cows. While walking back from Uncle Jim's mailbox, about 1/4 mile up a dirt road past Mr. Scott's farm, I discovered that the Guernsey bull had escaped the corral and was heading for Mr. Scott's cows in a distant field. Mr. Scott's dog was with me, so I encouraged it to chase the bull back down the road to the corral. The bull was more interested in the cows and would not be turned away. When the dog continued nipping at its heels, the bull attempted to gore the dog. The dog had enough and headed for the protection of his dog house. I was left with only an old fence post to attempt to turn that bull away from the cows. After being charged twice, I went back to Mr. Scott's and saddled up a large horse. By the time I returned to the bull, he had gone through 3 fences and was on his way through yet another fence dragging barbed wire and fence posts behind him. He was very determined to get to those cows. I finally threw a loop around his neck and quickly made the remaining rope secure to a large cottonwood tree. The bull nearly choked himself to death trying to get to the cows. When Mr. Scott returned, he was not the least bit happy. He drove his ton and a half truck down to the bull and threw another rope around the bull's neck and secured it to the back of his truck. Then he had me loosen the other rope. Reluctantly the bull returned to his corral. We spent quite a bit of time repairing the spot where the bull had torn through the corral fence.

Early the next morning Mr. Scott came to great uncle Jim's cabin and asked us if we might help him get his bull once more. It had destroyed a part of the corral again in its determination to get to some cows. This time it had broken through another neighbor's fence where there was a dominant Hereford range bull. By the time we and the owner of the Hereford bull arrived in the field, the range bull and Mr. Scott's bull were in the midst of one of the worst battles I have ever witnessed. Both bulls were bellowing loudly, foaming at the mouth and were punched full of holes. After much discussion, both Mr. Scott and his neighbor decided that there was little they could do. Later that day, they put both animals down and sent for the owner of a fox farm to pick up the bulls' remains.

The next day Great uncle Jim and I reflected on the series of events that had occurred. Great uncle Jim decided that I should no longer help Mr. Scott in light of the dangers to which I had already been exposed. So, it was to be, despite Mr. Scott's disappointment.

Great Uncle Jim's Cabin

The cabin in which we stayed each time we visited great uncle Jim had been built by his father in the early 1900's from cottonwood logs found on his land. They used "gumbo" mud to chink the logs. The mud insulated the cabin very well. Great uncle Jim systematically chinked his cabin's logs every 10 years.

As long as I can remember, great uncle Jim's cabin was surrounded by a variety of flowers. There were heritage climbing yellow roses, honeysuckle bushes, lilacs, a variety of iris and many varieties of wildflowers depending on the amount of natural moisture provided each year.

The primary irrigation ditches were maintained by hand with a round pointed shovel used to remove weeds in the ditches. Truly this was a labor of love.

Great Uncle Jim's John Deer Tractor

When great uncle Jim was discharged from the army following W.W.II, he purchased a John Deer tractor. He maintained it far better than most persons would take care of their most prized possession. He regularly changed the oil and spark plugs, greased its many parts, checked the tire pressure, washed the dirt and mud off at the end of each day it was used, and replaced the tires and parts whenever they were needed. His tractor was almost as good the day great uncle Jim died as it was on the day he first bought it.

I enjoyed driving his tractor, plowing the fields, going to the woods for firewood, and helping move hay from the fields to a neighbor's barn. The one thing that I did not enjoy about the tractor was the smell that resulted whenever a seagull would go to the bathroom on its hot engine when I was plowing the fields.

Great Uncle Jim's Wagon

Throughout great uncle Jim's life he made good use of the wagon that had carried the Cunningham family west from New York. Often, he took the wagon into town to deliver produce and get supplies. He also used it to haul equipment and fire wood to and from the farm. We all enjoyed riding in this wagon as it was pulled by great uncle Jim's John Deer tractor or by Mr. Scott's horses. This wagon stood in the yard in front of his cabin until just before he died. A neighbor now owns the wagon.

A Time to Take a Bath & Wash

Saturday evenings at great uncle Jim's was the time set aside for taking baths in galvanized tubs. Water was pumped from the deep well and warmed on the wood stove. The weekly wash was done with rain water that was gathered in barrows beneath the eaves of the cabin. The well water was much too hard in which to wash clothes due to its high mineral content.

A Family of Skunks

While helping my great uncle Jim irrigate some of his crops, I had the privilege to observe a mother skunk teaching her family the necessities of survival.

I discovered that skunks were really clean animals as I watched the mother skunk teach her 6 little ones to wash themselves in the clear water flowing in the irrigation ditches.

It was fun to see the little ones scamper after fish that had traveled from the unscreened Sun River down the ditches to the fields being irrigated. Sometimes they attempted to overcome huge carp that occupied much of their attention. Then, after they had tussled with their oversized meal, their mother arrived to assist them to bite through the tough scales of the carp so that they could fill their stomachs with the pink flesh of the fish. From time to time, they caught crayfish, hellgrammites and angleworms that they appeared to relish. After their filling meal, a few of them curled up on the bank in the warm sun and went to sleep while others played like young puppies, always under the watchful eyes of their mother.

Observing nature was always a wonderful pastime as I waited for the long rows of potatoes and other vegetables to fill with life-giving irrigation water.

Blowing in the Wind

One day while great uncle Jim and I were picking rocks out of his fields, a great wind, called a cyclone, roared through narrowly missing great uncle Jim and me. It did come close enough to sweep great uncle Jim's hat off of his head and lift it high into the air and far out of sight. He never expected to see that hat again, but almost a month later, a neighbor over 12 miles away found it lying in his field. Since great uncle Jim had made a habit of writing his name and address in the inner band of his hats, his hat was returned, not too much battered for the journey it had taken. He returned that hat to his head and wore it for another 4 years before he replaced it with a new hat.

A Farmer and A Trapper

In the summer my great uncle Jim was a farmer. In the winter, after his parents died, he was a trapper on a large ranch near Augusta, Montana. Beaver, mink, muskrats, bobcat, lynx, coyotes and occasionally wolverine were among his quarry. Mink, beaver, muskrats and lynx produced most of his winter income. Wheat and potatoes were his main fall cash crops. A portion of the wheat was bartered in exchange for the combining of his crops. He helped many of his neighbors harvest their crops. Even though he had no livestock, he mended many of the fences of his nearby neighbors.

The Fruit of the Land

While great uncle Jim's father and mother were alive, they made it a habit wherever they went to bring a variety of berry plants home to transplant on their place. Throughout the years berries of many descriptions spread throughout the 60 acres of their woodlands. When his folks passed away, it became customary for great uncle Jim to allow endless numbers of people to harvest the resultant abundant berries free of charge. People would come in their cars, trucks, and station wagons with containers of many varieties including old galvanized wash tubs. They would pick strawberries, raspberries, chokecherries, service berries, goose berries, huckleberries, logan berries and thimble berries to name a few.

In most instances people were very appreciative of great uncle Jim's generosity. But on a rare occasion some persons became pushy and demanding. One day a whole family came in two vehicles and asked where they could pick service berries in quantity. The crop that year was very abundant and Uncle Jim pointed this family to the very best berry patch on his land. About an hour later, while great uncle Jim and I were out hoeing the garden, two of the male family members came to great uncle Jim demanding that he go with them to show them his very best picking area. He told them that he had already done so and that there were more than enough berries there for them to pick. One of the men became a bit belligerent and got up in great uncle Jim's face. Great uncle Jim stood 6' 3" and had deep blue eyes that locked onto this man's eyes. His blue eyes turned the color of steel as he told him and his party to pack up and get off his place immediately. They told him that they would not do so until they had finished picking all they had come to harvest. Great uncle Jim reminded them that this was his place, not theirs, and if necessary that he would be calling the sheriff to have them removed. I am sure that great uncle Jim could have removed them single handily, but he chose not to assert himself other than in words. He went down with them into the woods and escorted them from his land. They were cursing him the whole way. On the way out they broke his gate.

I learned that abundant generosity can sometimes be abused and taken too much for granted. Great uncle Jim demonstrated for me that words clearly communicated can often be more powerful than the resultant consequences of physical force.

Free Vegetables

Each year it was customary for great uncle Jim to plant between five and twenty acres of truck farm garden that he freely gave to anyone who came to his place. He enjoyed seeing things grow and sharing them with others. People from all over the county, especially Great Falls, came to great uncle Jim's farm to harvest vegetables. Corn, beets, squash, beans, lettuce, carrots, cucumbers, and tomatoes were among the

many vegetables given away. People left with carloads of free offerings from his garden.

I was always amazed how much the squash vines grew between the time we went to the garden to hoe and the time we returned to the cabin for lunch. The primary irrigation ditches throughout his land were maintained by hand with a round, pointed shovel used to remove weeds.

On one occasion great uncle Jim and I were out in the garden picking wheel barrow loads of cucumbers that were almost overripe. We dumped them on the edge of a slough that ran alongside that portion of the garden. Great uncle Jim had two rows of cucumbers stretching over 100 feet. The more we picked them the more they produced.

As we were picking the cucumbers a lady drove up in a new Cadillac and asked if she could get some vegetables. Great uncle Jim said that she could have all that she wanted. She just needed to pick them. She had never had to pick vegetables before, so she was somewhat reluctant. Consequently, she asked great uncle Jim to pick her vegetables for her. He told her "No," since there were many people that Saturday picking vegetables; great uncle Jim needed to give them instructions; thus, he was unable to assist her any more than he already had.

She then spied the huge pile of discarded cucumbers we had piled on the edge of and in the slough. She asked her boy, who was dressed like "Little Lord Faunteroy" to take off his shoes and gather as many cucumbers as would fit in the trunk of her large Cadillac. When the boy completed the job, he was all tuckered out. After picking enough vegetables to fill up the back seat and the floor of her car, the woman asked how much she owed great uncle Jim. He explained once more that the vegetables were free for the taking. She insisted that she make a contribution. She took something out of her purse, and after much insistence and drama, placed some money in uncle Jim's pocket. As she was driving away, great uncle Jim put his hand in that pocket of his trousers. He extracted her offering. It turned out to be 17 cents.

It is simply amazing what some people will do to draw attention to themselves. She could have shown appreciation with a simple thank you, rather than offering a very depreciating gesture of self-aggrandizement. She had received so much and had insulted a free gift by insisting upon giving so little.

Bees and Hives

Great uncle Jim knew the importance of having bee hives on his land for the bees helped pollinate his crops. Thus, he allowed a bee keeper to place 50+ hives in a corner of one of his fields far enough away from his cabin so that the bees would not be a danger to him or his neighbors.

One day, as my brother, Donald and I were riding in great uncle Jim's wagon behind the tractor he was driving, we rode close to where the bee hives had been placed. First great uncle Jim swatted at a bee that had stung him. Then I swatted a bee that was stinging me. Not to be left out, Donald shouted, "I'm stung! No, I'm not! Yes, I am!" We were never sure if he had been stung or not. Needless to say, great uncle Jim quickly drove us away from the vicinity of the bee hives.

Harvesting Potatoes

One of the crops that great uncle Jim sold as a cash crop each year was russet potatoes. 40+ acres of ground had to be tilled; seed potatoes needed to be prepared and planted; row upon row of new plants needed to be hoed, debugged and irrigated; and then at the appropriate time in the fall thousands of potatoes needed to be dug, sorted and shipped off to market. Great uncle Jim could only sell the premium grade A #1 restaurant quality potatoes to the vegetable distributor in Great Falls. Therefore, there were many potatoes left lying on the fields after harvest. A good number of the left-over potatoes were transported to great uncle Jim's large root cellar; then bagged and sold to neighbors and a number of persons from Great Falls. Many potatoes were saved as future seed potatoes and food for his table throughout the year. Additional potatoes were gathered by my father and me, sacked in 100# burlap bags and transported to Butte where many of our relatives and neighbors shared in the bounty.

Most often my father and I would remove the back seat from our car and clean out the trunk so that we would have as much room for potatoes as possible whenever we made the round trip from Butte to great uncle Jim's Sun River farm. We always planned our trips so that we were readily available to assist with the labor of harvesting potatoes. On the two separate summers that I stayed with great uncle Jim at his farm when I was 12 and 13, I experienced and assisted in the whole process of raising potatoes.

The trips to and from Sun River were always special times for me, filled with wonderful sights and experiences. Most of our trips to Sun River began well before sunrise and our return trips to Butte ended well after dark. On one occasion, as we traveled in the dark to great uncle Jim's farm, my father slowed the car almost to a stop to point out to me deer that were standing alongside the road. As my father began to drive on, a buck choose that moment to rush across the road in front of our car. In that brief second the buck and our car collided. Fortunately, the deer was not killed and our car was not damaged badly, although the grill and the radiator were pushed in a bit. Ironically, our encounter with that deer took place on opening day of deer hunting season in Montana that year.

Throughout the years, times of harvest have remained very special to me.

Oscar

One summer when I was staying with great uncle Jim, he told me stories about some of his life experiences. One was about Oscar, his pet bull snake.

On one occasion, after his folks passed away, two women from the church's Ladies Aid Society dropped by the farm to return some items that his mother had left at the Methodist Church in which she was very active. Great uncle Jim was always very polite, especially to women. He offered them a cup of tea which he enjoyed also.

While they were sitting and reminiscing about his folks, Oscar, crawled through the hole especially made for him in the screen door. Oscar slithered up the leg of the rocking chair in which one of the women was sitting. It seems that Oscar always enjoyed rocking in that particular rocking chair that he considered his own, but Oscar was willing to share it with others. Great uncle Jim noticed that the woman sitting across from that rocking chair began to turn pale and found herself only able to mutter something and point. It was then that the other woman took note of Oscar's presence on the arm of the rocking chair. Needless to say, great uncle Jim did not have a lot of visitors from the Methodist Ladies Aid Society in the future.

Sometime later Oscar was shot as he was crawling out of a gopher hole. The man who shot Oscar was the same neighbor whose sheep great uncle Jim and I helped save when the Sun River flooded in 1953. This incident showed how forgiving and caring great uncle Jim was.

The Sun River Flood of 1953

It was the summer of 1953. Early that summer the snow pack on the upper Sun River melted all at once. This resulted in a major flood throughout the Sun River Valley. When great uncle Jim discovered that the Sun River was overflowing its banks, he was sitting in his outhouse. Since great uncle Jim was a lifetime bachelor, he found it unnecessary to have indoor plumbing. The first rush of water nearly swept the outhouse away with him in it. When he came back into the house his face was white as a sheet. He told me how he had imagined a report in the Great Falls Tribune. The headlines would have read, "Prominent Sun River Resident Seen Floating Down the Sun River in an Outhouse!" He also had worried about the outhouse falling over on the door thus trapping him inside while water rushed in through the two holes."

Near great uncle Jim's home, the river appeared as a massive running lake. Meanwhile Butte newspapers were reporting that the survivors of the Sun River flood were sitting on roof tops hoping to be rescued. Upon reading this report, my mother felt that she had to do something so she contacted the Red Cross to check on our wellbeing. One morning before the flood waters began to recede, a man in a boat pulled near great uncle Jim's cabin and asked if we were all right. We told him that we were OK. We never saw him again.

Numerous farms and ranches were flooded and many people lost much of their equipment, livestock and even their homes. Many of the neighbor's livestock, including sheep, were swept downstream. Great uncle Jim and I, along with numerous neighbors, spent much effort and a considerable amount of time rescuing horses, cows, and sheep from the flood. Sheep were the most difficult to retrieve from the water, for when their wool became saturated with liquid, they required up to four men to lift them out of the torrent of water. In spite of his dislike of sheep, great uncle Jim spent many hours helping save as many sheep as he could.

Because great uncle Jim's house had been built on a piece of higher ground, it became a place of refuge during the flood for numerous kinds of wild animals: deer, skunks, rabbits, snakes, and pheasants.

As the flood water subsided endless numbers of edible mushrooms began to appear. Because we liked mushrooms, we found ourselves eating a sizable quantity of them in lieu of groceries that were unobtainable because of the flood.

Many farmers lost all or most of their crops, but to our amazement great uncle Jim's wheat crop produced more grain per acre than had ever been produced in the whole valley. Many of the heads of grain were over 24" long! The wheat kernels were much larger than normal, consequently the heavy heads of grain caused the stalks to drop dramatically. Considerable effort was required to harvest the 80 acres of grain. The normal yield was 48 bushels to an acre. That year the yield averaged 162 bushels per acre. Much of the grain stood eight to nine feet off the ground; consequently, it took a good amount of time to dry and then harvest the crop. It was necessary to hire an old-fashioned binding machine and raise its cutting bar as high off the ground as possible to cut the grain. Then the stocks of grain had to be removed from the field so that they could dry. After the remaining straw was dried, it also was harvested. Then the stocks of grain had to be thrashed by one of the old-time thrashing machines.

When great uncle Jim's crop had been thrashed, we assisted several more farmers to thrash their grain. On one occasion, I discovered that I was allergic to bearded barley, for the skin all over my body broke out in a red rash and I itched all over. A long swim in the Sun River later that day brought me much relief.

I learned that with most trying times there can be moments that are truly uplifting.

Swimming in the Sun River

On occasion, my brothers and I would go swimming in the Sun River. Sometimes we would launch a log into the river and float for several miles with that log. Then we would walk back and launch a new log. Many pleasant days were spent in this fashion.

We also enjoyed fishing for brown and rainbow trout in the Sun River. Fish gave a variety to our typical diet while at great uncle Jim's where we ate Canadian bacon and toast for breakfast; potatoes, Canadian bacon and soup for lunch and potatoes, fresh vegetables, chicken and dumplings for Sunday dinner. On occasion a roast was substituted for chicken. Uncle Jim always had tea with his meals.

Chickens and Great Uncle Jim

During my summers with my great uncle Jim, chicken and dumplings were often served as a part of our Sunday menu even when uncle Jim did not seem to care for chicken. I often wondered why?

Later I learned that chicken was not my great uncle's favorite meat due to his early experiences with visiting Methodist clergy and guests who often shared a Sunday meal with great uncle Jim's childhood family. I learned that chicken was a common meat dish whenever company visited his family. Since the guests were served the

choice pieces of chicken, great uncle Jim confessed that he learned early that he would be served only the backs, necks or wings of the chicken, pieces with scant meat on the bones. Thus, his childhood memories of chicken dinners prevented him from enjoying a meal that I still much appreciate.

Two Shiny Nickels

Great uncle Jim once shared with me that when he was a child, his mother would often give him two shiny nickels for him to put in the collection basket at church. He confessed that he would intentionally drop one of the nickels down a crack of a board walk on the way to church. He only regretted that he was not present when the wooden walk was replaced.

Lemon Pie

One summer, after I came back from living with my great uncle Jim, I visited with my grandparents. Great uncle Jim was my maternal grandmother's youngest brother.

Upon my return my grandmother asked me a whole series of questions about great uncle Jim. Since he was a bachelor, I assumed that she was asking these questions to find out how he did as a homemaker. She asked, "Did he have a clean house?" "Was he a good worker?" "What did he do for enjoyment?"

When she got to the question, "What kind of cooking did he do and what did he cook best?", I told grandmother that uncle Jim made the best lemon pie that I had ever eaten.

Following our conversation, that evening, grandmother seemed a bit anxious for grandfather and me to finish the main course of our meal. Quickly, she removed the dishes from the table and brought each of us big slices of lemon meringue pie. Hardly had I had time to eat the first bite of that pie when she began asking, "Well?" In turn I responded, "Well what grandmother?" Next she asked, "Well, how is it?" I told her that the dinner was good and that the pie was also good." Finally, she got to the issue at hand. "Was it as good as your great uncle Jim's?" I told her, "No, I reminded her that he made the best lemon pie that I had ever eaten."

The next morning grandfather and I were each presented with another large piece of hot lemon pie. Once more grandmother asked, "Well?" I responded that it was very good. Then she asked, "Just very good?" Once more I responded, "It was very good, but not as good as your great uncle Jim's." Then at noon grandmother presented grandfather and me with two more pieces of hot lemon pie. Once more we went through the same questioning routine which inevitably ended with my response that the lemon pie was very very good, but not as good as great uncle Jim's. It became evident that my grandmother was very competitive with her younger brother. She would not settle for second place in the lemon pie division. That evening for dinner grandmother presented us with still more pieces of hot lemon pie. As grandmother was clearing the table my grandfather whispered to me, "You are going to have to tell her that her pie is

as good as your great uncle Jim's" I reminded my grandfather that he had always taught me to tell the truth, therefore how could I tell other than the truth I knew to my grandmother? He took me to the refrigerator and showed me the remains of four lemon meringue pies. It was only then that it dawned on me that she had been baking a new pie prior to each meal.

I began to wonder when do sibling rivalries ever fade?

Years later when I visited my grandparents in Ryderwood, Washington, I discovered that grandmother's pie rivalry with her youngest brother, great uncle Jim was not finished. When I arrived at their home, I sat down to visit with my grandfather. Grandfather told me that he was glad that I had come to visit them because the only time that he ever got a fresh baked pie was when I came to visit or a neighbor brought one over. I discovered that grandmother was in the kitchen baking a lemon meringue pie. In due time I went to the kitchen and chided her about not preparing pie for grandfather. I told her what he had said to me. Grandmother, who was barely 5 foot tall, stamped her foot and informed me that she baked pie for grandfather at least two times a week. About that time, I heard grandfather's chuckle in the living room. He was good at keeping a poker face, but I had failed to look into his eyes. His eyes usually gave me a hint whenever he was attempting to pull a fast one on me. From that day onward I would often quote grandfather whenever I wished to have homemade pie. I would tell others, "I haven't had pie since the neighbors brought one over."

Grandfather's Measurements

When I was young, whenever I would go to my grandparents' home, my grandfather would inevitably say, "My, how you have grown."

Then he would have me stand next to the door on the back porch, carefully measure how much I had grown and mark my height.

Even if I had not grown a fraction of an inch taller, my grandfather would remark, "In my eyes you sure have grown."

I am sure that I stood taller, just because my grandfather saw in me something which often the yardstick could not yet measure.

I wonder how many persons have amounted to something more than they would have, just because someone else called forth that which they had the potential to be and become?

Grandfather's Rule

When I was a child and would have a meal at my grandparents' home, I was expected to observe a rule of my grandfather's table.

Each of his grandchildren were allowed to serve themselves from the wonderful bowls and plates of food which my grandmother had prepared for our meal together.

But grandfather's rule reminded us that whatever we placed upon our plate had to be eaten before we were allowed to be dismissed from the table.

Our self-served portions were not limited, except by the guidance of grandfather's rule.

We were even allowed to go back for seconds of desert if we wished, but not until our first servings were finished.

Grandfather was strict in observing the requirements of his rule.

Because of grandfather's rule, some of us spent a considerable amount of time at the dining room table until we learned self-control.

If There Is a Will

One of the gifts which my grandmother entrusted to my care was a saying which had undergirded her life journey.

Grandmother would often say, "If there is a will, there is a way."

The depth of this message has undergirded many of my most challenging decisions.

Thus, to this day I claim the will of faith that God has planted within me by my grandmother.

Opening Day

Much of fishing season in Montana opened the third weekend of May. Many of my relatives and I could hardly wait. Our expectations began to rise as soon as May arrived. We began gathering our fishing gear, oiling our reels, polishing our spinner blades, digging worms and tying more flies than most persons would use in a lifetime. Only once a year did we rent a cabin, but opening weekend was special. Most often we would reserve a place below Meadow Lake (now called Ennis Lake) on the Madison River near Beartrap Canyon. Our excitement and the endless stories of past fishing trips filled the late hours of the night before opening morning. Sleep was hard to come by.

The next morning it did not matter if it was raining, snowing or sparkling with sunshine, we went fishing. At the appointed hour on opening morning, we descended upon the river like a swarm of the huge salmon flies that later in the season rose from the depths of the Madison. By noon we had new stories to tell of fish we had caught and fish that had got away. Around lunch we recalled in vivid detail each fish that had dared to strike at our flies, lures or bait. We took pictures of fish we had kept to bring home and more often than not reminded ourselves of pictures we had forgotten to take of fish that we had returned to the stream.

The Madison, especially in Beartrap Canyon, is quite deep, swift in current, and filled with strong fish. The rainbows leaped high out of the water whenever they were hooked. The brown trout did all they could to power their way toward the bottom of the

stream or into the strongest current they could find. The eastern brook trout were seldom small for most of the smaller fish had been consumed by the large brown trout and rainbows. The cutthroat trout slashed at our flies and spinners as if they were consuming their last meal, which sometimes they were.

The largest brown trout that I ever had on was a trout that resided in a swirling pool between two massive rocks on the edge of a raging torrent of the main stream of the Madison River in Beartrap Canyon. I had cast to the far edge of the pool and allowed the water to draw my spinner back to me. I was standing high above the pool and watched that huge brown trout rise out of the hidden depths of its dwelling place to engulf my spinner. As soon as it felt the bite of my hook, it dove for the bottom and sulked there for some time. Then it began to rush around the pool, shaking its head like a dog trying to rid itself of an unwanted burden. Soon two of my uncles, my grandfather and my brother had gathered to watch my struggle with this immense fish. Its spots were as big as silver dollars. In time they began to attach a net with several ropes that they dropped down to the water hoping to slip it under the fish and pull it up the steep rock on which we were standing. By this time the fish was periodically lying on its side and rising to the surface. All went well until we discovered that the fish was far too large for the net we had. Even so, they kept trying. Each time they touched the fish, it dove towards the bottom. On their final attempt to net the fish, it pulled loose of the hook. I doubt that it initially knew that it was free. For a brief time, it allowed the current to draw it around the pool of swirling water. Then it swished its large tail and slowly disappeared into the depths from which it had come.

I have caught many fish over the years, but few fish will stick in my memory as vividly as that brown trout and a few others. Without doubt, that opening morning of fishing in Montana in Beartrap Canyon was truly special.

Fishing with Grandfather

On many occasions it was my privilege to go fishing with my grandfather. My brother, Donald and I soon discovered that a fishing trip with our grandfather was more than a simple outing. Each spring grandfather, my brother and I and many of my uncles, aunts and cousins were invited to join him on a day-long outing to dig our summer's supply of worms. I am sure that we had enough worms to catch most of the fish in the state of Montana, but grandfather never wanted to be found lacking.

Even when we were only going for a day, grandfather had a tendency to pack everything but the kitchen sink in his station wagon, just in case something might be needed. We seldom lacked for anything.

Fishing with grandfather was more like an adventure, for even when the fish were biting in one location, grandfather felt moved to discover where a stream began or where it ended up. I am sure that grandfather walked along portions of streams with his grandchildren that few persons had even considered let alone traveled. For grandfather fishing was but an excuse for him to explore new places and discover new possibilities. Some of the best places we ever fished were as a result of grandfather's curiosity to

discover what was around the next bend. His venturing spirit permeated all of those who were blessed to journey with him.

Opening day for fishing streams in Montana occurred on the 3rd Saturday of May. We could hardly wait. Our anticipation grew by leaps and bounds. No matter how bright or stormy the occasion, opening day found us along Flint Creek, the Madison River, the Big Hole River, the Red Rock River, the Ruby River, or the Jefferson River.

Bob Hope and Bing Crosby

One time while my brother Donald and I were catching whitefish and trout by allowing our lines to weave back and forth across a bend along the Red Rock River, we discovered two men observing our success. When we had caught our fill of fish, the men asked if they might try their luck and our successful fishing technique in our fishing spot. We were pleased to accommodate them. As we watched their enjoyment of catching fish and as we cleaned our own fish, our uncle King joined us. He asked us if we knew who the two men were? We did not know. Soon we were being introduced to Bob Hope and Bing Crosby. We met them several more times near Ennis, Montana, on the Madison River.

Going Fishing

Throughout my life I have found that going fishing has helped me to clear up the muddy waters of the troubles and cobwebs of my mind and spirit.

When I was young my brother Donald and I found particular pleasure in fishing for Brook trout.

One of our favorite childhood places to fish was in a series of beaver ponds along one of the tributaries of the upper Big Hole River in Montana. The valley of this stream was nearly 2 miles wide. It was covered with willows and an unending succession of beaver ponds. Early in the morning Donald and I would enter this maze of willows anticipating the pleasure of casting our flies and lures.

These fish had seldom, if ever, been approached by the temptations of a fisherman. Most fisherman would avoid this jungle of brush, mud, and water simply because it required too much effort. More accessible waters were readily available elsewhere. Therefore, Donald and I had this stretch of stream pretty much to ourselves.

Many of the beaver ponds were relatively small, allowing only 3 or 4 casts before the fish were spooked. Thus, in the course of a morning we would cover a good number of ponds before we would decide to make our way back along the beaver dams and through many cold, muddy shortcuts.

Sometimes, when the skies were overcast, we would discover that we had attempted to return to the car the wrong way. On such occasions, when we finally exited the maze of willows, mud, and beaver ponds, we would find ourselves on the opposite side of the willow patch, a long ways from those who were waiting our return.

Once more we would have to penetrate the jungle of willows hoping to finally reach our destination.

In most instances it seemed that this journey throughout the many beaver ponds seldom appeared long or difficult until it was time to stop fishing and return to our ride home. Only then did this place, which brought peace to our souls, remind us of the mud and cold waters we would yet have to cross.

The Mama Fish

On a fishing trip with our family of eight brothers and sisters, we older children naturally helped the younger ones. Each of us older children were assigned a little sister to take fishing. I was helping Joyce fish. I cast out her line with a sinker and a worm on the hook.

After a while Joyce had a bite and after a brief fight, pulled in a fish that must have weighed over 4 pounds. I unhooked it and threw it up on the bank of the river.

Joyce was fascinated with this fish. I encouraged Joyce to continue fishing, but instead, she ran to mother shouting, "I caught a mama fish: I caught a mama fish." Mother asked her why she thought that the fish was a mama fish. Joyce responded, "Because it has big lips!" It was a large sucker. To this day we are not sure why she associated "big lips" with mother, because mother did not have very large lips.

Learning to Fish

On another occasion when our family was fishing, I was helping one of my twin sisters, Mylene, to catch a fish. I baited her hook with a worm and made a cast for her. I then wandered about 30 feet up the river and commenced fishing on my own.

In a short while Mylene had a fish jumping. As she was reeling it into shore, just before she got it on the bank, the fish came loose. Without my assistance she cast out again. Soon she had another fish jumping. Once more, just before she got it to shore, the fish fell loose of the hook. She cast out yet another time. In a few minutes she hooked another fish. This one also got away.

I decided to check her hook in case it had a broken barb. Only then did I discover that Mylene had removed the hook and had tied the worm directly to the fishing line below the attached weight. Each of those fish had come loose only after they opened their mouths. During this whole episode I had only one bite.

I wonder who was being taught how to fish?

The Bell Creek Fishing Derby

Each summer in Butte many of the sporting goods stores and some of the service clubs sponsored a fishing derby for children and youth at Bell Creek. Bell Creek

was a tributary of the Clark's Fork of the Columbia River. In the early 20th century, before the runoff of water from the mines had drastically polluted the Clark's Fork, salmon from the Pacific Ocean were known to spawn as far up the Clark's Fork as its headwaters that were in the mountains northwest above Butte. Bell Creek's source of clear water came from the southeast.

On the day of the fishing derby numerous adults were on hand to assist children who were beginners. Sometimes they even lent various children and youth fishing rods and other equipment. A week or two before the derby, the fish and game department stocked Bell Creek with fish of all sizes. Some of the winning fish weighed as much as six pounds. Prizes were awarded for the largest fish, the first fish entered, the most weight of the bag limit of fish, the smallest fish, the most variety of fish, the last fish to be weighed before the derby was over, and various categories for children and youth of different ages.

One year I was blessed with a new telescoping fishing pole. Another year I was awarded hooks, weights, fishing line and a new reel. Aunt Helen and Uncle Fred often supported Donald and me during these fishing derbies.

Once at a Boy Scout fishing derby I received a prize of a closed face Johnson spinning reel. This was a vast improvement over the simple casting reel I had been using throughout the previous years. I was now able to make longer casts into deeper waters and distant pockets of water. I believe that I caught larger fish as a consequence.

I do not recall entering another fishing derby until 2007 when I entered and won a senior citizen fishing derby. In the first 15 minutes I had caught the largest fish recorded during the fishing derby. Fishing has been kind to me.

Fly Tying

Throughout my childhood I found great enjoyment fishing. Thus, when a fly-tying course was offered at the Scout camp I was attending, I took it, and discovered that fly tying was a skill that came naturally to me. Soon I began to collect boxes of materials with which to tie flies. Few birds were safe if they wished to keep their feathers. Road kill was a ready source for much of the fur I needed. Pieces of rugs and colored thread from my mother's sewing basket began to disappear. A clothespin with a rubber band around it served as my temporary fly-tying vise. When I was finally able to purchase a Thompson fly tying vise, I thought that I had surely arrived.

At that time fly tying hooks cost less than \$1 a hundred. As soon as I had saved enough pennies, I rushed to the sporting goods store to purchase my necessary supply of hooks. There I discovered that hooks came in many sizes. Initially, I settled for size 12 hooks, but in time I had hooks of many sizes, especially the smaller sizes. After a period of time, I purchased my very first spool of real fly-tying thread. Soon I had spools of thread in many colors.

Each time I went fishing, I would pay attention to the shape and color of the insects that the fish were eating. When I got home, I tied a series of flies resembling the insects of my memories. In no time at all I had more flies than I could ever use in the

next ten years. Even so, I carried most of them with me fishing in spite of the fact that most of the fishing I did was with worms we had dug in the spring, grasshoppers we caught in the fall, and live hellgrammites and sculpins we had seined from the creeks wherever we fished. Most of the flies I did use were wet flies. It was only later in my life that I began to fish dry flies and nymphs. Much of the fishing that I now do is fly fishing and my fly-fishing vest pockets are heavily loaded with flies I have tied. Although I lose a fly from time to time, I doubt that I shall ever lose or give away enough of the flies I tie to lessen the number of fly boxes I have filled. I enjoy sharing my flies with others.

One day a friend came by my home when I was tying flies. He expressed interest in learning this craft. I showed him that which I had learned. Soon even more of my friends were dropping by to learn to tie flies. One of them would say that he enjoyed tying flies, but he found it hard to catch the flies so that he could tie them. I have taught fly tying classes in most of the churches I have served.

As someone had taught me, I felt challenged and privileged to pass on to others what I had learned.

A Forest Fire and Rattlesnakes

When I was young the Forest Service in Montana required any able-bodied person who drove through the forests of Montana to have an ax, a shovel, a bucket, and a burlap bag in case their services were needed to assist in fighting a forest fire in the vicinity in which they were traveling.

On one occasion, my grandfather, two of my uncles, an aunt, my brother and I were returning from a fishing trip in the upper Big Hole valley. An electrical storm preceded our return home. Lightning had started a fire in the sagebrush along the river and was progressing up the hill and was about to enter an aspen grove and then a long finger of evergreens along the ridge line. A young member of the forest service had already arrived at the fire and was stopping cars and recruiting persons to fight the fire that already had great plumes of smoke that hung close to the ground.

My family members readily agreed to be of assistance wherever they could be of some help. With our tools, we climbed the hill to begin to fight the growing fire. Before we could reach the fire, we became very aware of a growing number of angry rattlesnakes that had been smoked out of their hiding places in their limestone dens surrounding us. Not wishing to be struck by a rattlesnake in the midst of the mass of fleeing snakes, we retreated to the road below us where our cars were parked. The forest service person had seen us coming down the hill instead of fighting the fire. He met us at the road and asked us why we were not fighting the fire? Then he reminded us that we were obligated to battle this fire. Grandfather told him about the numerous rattlesnakes. His response was, "I've a good mind to run you in to the sheriff."

Instead of arguing with this young person, my grandfather invited him to lead us back up the mountain. So off we went. We had barely begun our climb when a rattler almost struck the forest service attendant. Immediately, he commanded us to get off the mountain and return to the safety of the road.

When we reached the roadway, my grandfather turned to the young forest service person and firmly stated, ""I've a good mind to run you in to the sheriff for not meeting your obligation for battling this fire." His response was, "What are you saying?"

Grandfather reminded him of what he had said to us a brief time before. Grandfather asked him how it felt to be confronted in the same insensitive manner in which we had been approached? Grandfather was not attempting to be mean spirited, but he did want the young person to see the error of his attitude.

The conversation ended abruptly because a good number of rattlesnakes were already beginning to reach the roadway. We rushed to our cars and drove away from the portion of the road that was soon almost covered with more snakes than I hope to see the rest of my life.

This experience taught me that authority misinterpreted cannot only corrupt a person's attitude, but also place others in real danger. There is something we can learn, if we are willing and open to grow, in every experience of our lives.

Bobby Way & a Large Rattlesnake

When I was a teenager many of my family members fished along the upper Madison River near Ennis, Montana. On one occasion, my cousin Bobby Way and I were walking across a wide field covered with tall grass heading for one of our favorite places to fish on the Madison River. As we walked, we encountered a very large diamondback rattlesnake that had 22 1/2 beads on its rattle. That snake was over 5 1/2 feet long and about as round as a quart jar. Its distinctive buzz gave us warning that we were infringing on its territory. For some time after this encounter Bobby and I were much more careful where we put our feet. By the time we stopped fishing and returned along the same route we had come to the river, Bobby and I had almost forgotten to be on guard against additional snake encounters.

Even so, our memory of that large snake still lingers across these many years.

Fishing Barry's Meadow

It was curiosity that caused my grandfather, brother and me to discover one of our favorite places to fish when I was a child. It was called Barry's Meadows. Our uncle King Oliphant was a very good fisherman even though he did not like to eat fish. He caught fish when few were able to even get a bite. One year he and a friend discovered a new creek that was loaded with large cutthroat and eastern brook trout far up a dirt road leading from the upper Big Hole River near the Pintler Wilderness of Montana.

Grandfather seemed called to discover new places and enjoyed new experiences. Curious about uncle King's new discovery, the next weekend grandfather decided that we should check out this new fishing spot. Uncle King gave grandfather a rough, hand-drawn map of how to get to this new stream since he was not available to

lead us there. Somewhere near the end of uncle King's directions we went a little astray. In one place we turned right when we were supposed to turn left. Soon the rarely used dirt road led us to a beautiful creek that we assumed was the same creek uncle King had described. Later we learned our creek was not the same stream my uncle had fished. Even so, we were pleased, for the fishing was very productive. Because of our curiosity, Barry's Meadows became one of our favorite places to fish.

Although grandfather was passionate about the adventure of fishing, he taught me that fishing was not just about catching fish, but a deepening act of discovering more about the world in which we were privileged to journey. Grandfather's passion for adventure led us far beyond the normal limits of those who merely went fishing.

Grandfather's tendency was to find out where a stream came from and where it ended up. Even though fish were much in evidence throughout Barry's Meadow where we had parked our car, grandfather encouraged us to explore with him the vast expanses of the stream. Thus, it was not surprising that each morning grandfather would wander many miles up or down the creek just to see what he might discover.

About 5 or 6 miles down the creek, we came to a large meadow that held 7 small lakes covered with Lily pads. The fish in these lakes were eager to feast upon our offerings. Most of the fish were eastern brook trout. The eastern brook were striking in color and strong fighters. Once in a while we caught cutthroat trout.

It was not long before we discovered that the largest trout were to be found in the very deep channels that ran between the lakes. We found that the smaller trout bit our hooks differently than the larger fish. The smaller fish pecked at our bait, but the very large fish struck our bait with abandon in one tremendous gulp. Many of the fish were over 2 lbs. In those days the limit was set at 15 eastern brook or 10 lbs. of other trout and one fish.

The thick grass along the connecting lake channels was often so high that we had to be careful that we did not slip into the sometimes-hidden waterways. When we walked between the lakes, the ground felt much like we were walking on a trampoline. On one occasion I decided to determine how deep the water was in one of the channels. I let out line from my reel with a heavy weight attached. The water was over 80 feet deep. We soon decided that the 7 lakes were really parts of one large lake that had been covered with a very thick mat of floating vegetation. We were truly walking on water.

We returned to this meadow and lake on many occasions. In time we found a shortcut to and from the meadow by following a game trail. Often, we saw elk and deer along the trail. Once we saw a bull moose walking along the edge of the lake. We also found many blue grouse in that area.

On several occasions we camped overnight in grandfather's station wagon. We cooked over an open fire and sometimes buried under the fire a large bundle of fish wrapped in aluminum foil. The next morning, much like sardines, we could eat the flesh and bones of these fish. These trips with grandfather were extra special.

Inevitably on the way home from each fishing trip grandfather asked us if it was OK for us to stop for a milkshake or a malted ice-cream soda. I do not recall that we ever refused his offer. To this day, this treat is a very fond memory for Donald and me.

The only time I was ever checked for my fishing license was at Berry Meadows. The game warden could not believe that we were returning home with less than our limit

of fish. The warden searched our car thoroughly. We reminded him that we were satisfied with those we had and needed no more.

Donald and I are hoping to fish Barry's Meadows at least once more in our remaining years.

Scouting

Donald and I were very involved in Cub and Boy Scouts. After achieving my Webelo rank, I entered an active Boy Scout troop. Campouts, camperees and service projects were common occurrences throughout my scouting years. Some of the more notable experiences we shared were: participating each summer in scout camps at the Nez Pierce Scout Camp near Butte; being tapped out and inducted in The Order of the Arrow during summer scout camp in 1951; snow shoeing 10 miles in to scout camp each winter; almost drowning during a campout due to water weeds tangling my legs while swimming in a lake near Warm Springs, Montana, discovering a dinosaur in a washed out ridge near Warm Springs; losing a Christian Science Scout master to death due to appendicitis, falling off a cliff during a scout outing; camping on Mt. Flescher when the temperature was over 20 below zero; collecting elk and deer antlers that we made into neckerchief slides, belt buckles and jewelry; going on the 1953 Irving Ranch National Scout Jamboree; being awarded my first spinning reel by winning a scout fishing derby; and not receiving my Eagle rank because of the constant changing requirements of the merit badge(s) for citizenship.

Each year on the 4th of July our troop marched in the annual parade in Butte. Prior to the parade we practiced marching in step, standing straight and keeping our eyes forward. Rex Clark, our scout master, wanted our troop to add to and not take away from the excitement of this yearly event.

Celebrating the 4th of July

The city of Butte believed that the annual marking of our nation's Independence Day should be one of the major highlights of each year. Our Boy Scout troop always marched in this parade. Following the always spectacular parade of many beautiful floats, marching bands, prancing horses, and well-represented service and military organizations, most of the citizens and visitors of Butte traveled to the Columbia Gardens for a massive outing and picnic. Prior to darkness, most everyone returned to view an extensive fireworks display set off from "Big M", a tall peak on the northwest corner of Butte.

One 4th of July our family decided to go camping and fishing on the Ruby River rather than be a part of the traditional annual Independence Day celebration in Butte. We had a great time catching fish, cooking our catch along with hamburgers and hot-dogs, roasting marshmallows, making smores, and watching the embers of our campfire begin to fade.

Many campers in our campground were shooting fireworks most of the day. Fireworks of most kinds were legal at that time. Long strings of powerful "Zebra firecrackers", cherry bombs, sparklers, and Roman candles were especially popular. Just as we were preparing to enter our tent for the night, a man rushed over to my father and asked him if he could drive his daughter to a hospital. She had been shooting fireworks and one had gone off prematurely in her hand. Dad drove this family to the nearest hospital and later returned to our camp ground and assisted them to pack up their camping gear so they could take their daughter on to the larger Community Hospital in Butte. In the middle of the night, those of us who were still awake, overheard dad telling mother that three of the girl's fingers had been blown off and her index finger hung by a piece of flesh. From that time onward our family members were no longer allowed to hold lit fireworks in our hands. Even so, Don and I took pleasure placing fire crackers under tin cans, lighting them with a punk, and seeing how high they would fly.

One day while camping, we found a dead porcupine. We discovered that when we threw its dry quills into our campfire, they made a popping sound much like ladyfinger fireworks. There were not many quills left on that porcupine by the time we went home.

We learned that life is one adventure after another filled with adventure, discovery and danger.

God's Fireworks

Shortly after Jeane, Michael, Bonnie and I moved to Boulder, Colorado, we decided to watch the 4th of July fireworks from a hill near the Boulder power plant where we could view the firework displays of Boulder, Longmont, Louisville, Lafayette, Broomfield, Thornton and Denver all at once. It appeared that the splendor of fireworks were erupting everywhere we looked. All around us persons were almost constantly expressing their joy and wonder as the rockets burst forth with awesome displays of colors and shapes of many descriptions. Initially, we felt that nothing could be more wonderful and exciting.

About then, lightening began to appear in the distance almost as a backdrop to the firework displays. Soon sheets of lightening lit up the heavens dwarfing the bursts of light that a few moments earlier had held so many of us in amazement. In my mind the words of a famous hymn began to sound as the claps of thunder almost drowned out the booms of rockets being sent into the sky around us. "The heavens were telling the glory of God!" Our human investments in grandeur were awesome, but truly put in perspective by the elements of God's ongoing creation expressed in nature.

A Life-Changing Fall

In 1951, when I was 13, my scout troop assisted the Montana Fish and Game Department in a portion of their annual game count along the Big Hole River near the small town of Divide. Our troop was divided in half so that we could cover more ground and count more wildlife. Any game we counted would assist the Game Department to approximate how many animals might exist in a much larger portion of the land around us.

Our half of the troop was assigned a section of land that ended in a series of fingers surrounded by cliffs that fell away to the river valley far below. Dan Clark, Bucky Loomis and I were assigned one of the cliff areas in which the troop had suspected a herd of deer resided. A small shelf just below the crest of the land allowed the three of us to slowly creep along one side of the cliff area, counting deer as we progressed. As we neared the end of our assigned area, Bucky leaned against a large boulder. Little did he know that the boulder was unstable. In an instant the boulder rolled out into space, but not before Bucky was knocked off balance and into me. In mere seconds Bucky and I found ourselves flying out into space and bouncing off of the sides of the cliff below us. For a moment I remember Bucky and me being slowed by a tree that grew out of one of the cracks in the side of the cliff. In those brief seconds I was reminded that life is momentary, lent and precious. A short time later I recall awakening at the foot of the 100+ foot cliff. Somehow or other we had both survived the fall. As my head began to clear, I saw Bucky wipe his hand across his bloody head. Then he passed out.

The next thing I remember was drawing near to our campsite along the Big Hole River. The other half of our troop had already completed their game count and had arrived in camp. Two of this group saw me carrying Bucky. Then they saw our bloody heads and clothes. They began to laugh, for they thought that we had covered ourselves with Catsup. Then they realized the serious nature of our condition. First aid was administered to stop the bleeding. In a brief time, the assistant scout master was rushing us as fast as his car would travel to the nearest medical facilities in Butte, Montana.

The emergency attendants gave us a series of shots and scrubbed our wounds with a stiff bristled brush and antiseptic soap to remove the sand and the dirt which had become imbedded in our bodies due to our fall to prevent infection. I do not remember having x-rays for possible broken bones nor stitches to close the numerous gouges across my body which are still evident today. Bucky had experienced severe head injuries and permanent brain damage. I do remember dropping Bucky off at his home and then going by my home only to discover that no one was at home. My assistant scout master assisted me to get into my bed. He left a note explaining what had happened and for my mother to check on me. For many days after, it became a routine to cover my body with salve and in the morning to peel the sheets away from my body. Some of my wounds took over two months to heal. Sand particles found their way out of my body for many years after this accident.

It soon became evident that I had a great fear of heights. Anything higher than a footstool caused me to shake all over. Sitting in a chair was traumatic and climbing a staircase was overwhelming.

That which I had once taken for granted was now devastating. Fear of height had become a phobia in my life.

It was the invitation of my scout master, Rex Clarke, that assisted me through my wilderness of fear of heights. As the summer was drawing to a close, Rex asked me to join the scout troop and him at The School of Mines swimming pool. Rex patiently took me under his wing. Reluctantly, time and again, I followed Rex to the edge of the water until I could finally stop shaking and eventually jump over the edge of the pool into the supportive water.

Then, over time, with much encouragement and support, Rex assisted me to walk out on the low diving board where I was once more encouraged to face that which so threatened my well-being. Inevitably I would fall in before I reached the end of the diving board. Soon, I was jumping in by myself.

Before the day was over, Rex helped me to climb the ladder that led to the diving platform high above the water. It was there on the high diving platform that I began to once more believe that I could truly conquer my mistrust of heights; especially as I dared to plunge into the depths far below. On that day, the care, encouragement, and patience of my scout master had deepened my faith and taken me a long way toward overcoming my fear of heights thus undergirding me for future challenges and heights that I would inevitably face.

A brief time later, after reflecting upon the few moments that it took for Bucky and me to fall a considerable distance from the heights of a cliff to the bottom far below, I came to truly appreciate the preciousness of life, the loving support and grace of others around us and the tremendous worth of each moment.

1953 National Scout Jamboree

In 1953, I attended the National Scout Jamboree at Irving Ranch, California. In preparation for this jamboree our troop held a series of campouts on Mt. Flescher during which we collected many antlers shed by deer and elk. Out of these antlers we made neckerchief slides, belt buckles, and a variety of jewelry items that we planned to trade on the jamboree grounds. In addition, as we boarded the train to begin our exciting adventure, each scout from Butte was presented by the Anaconda Mining Company with a large display of samples of Butte minerals to trade.

This trip was an adventure of a lifetime filled with many new experiences for most of our troop members in attendance. During the first day and night we journeyed by train, The Great Northern, across the beautiful Rocky Mountains of Montana and Idaho into the flat plains and rugged Cascade Mountains of the state of Washington. When we reached Seattle, we took a bus to the Port of Seattle where we boarded a boat for a tour of the waterways and locks of Lake Washington. We then boated to Bremerton where a large number of US. Naval ships were dry docked. We were privileged to tour and eat lunch on the U.S. Navy Battleship Missouri. It was huge and reminded me of a floating city.

From Seattle we boarded the luxurious ship, Queen Elizabeth and traveled the inter coastal waterway to the strikingly clean city of Victoria, British Columbia. Along the way, numerous sparkling waterfalls tumbled from cliffs high above us. Dolphins, whales, and birds of many descriptions seemed to appear and disappear along our

passageway. We were greeted by a Scottish bagpiper as we descended the gangplank into Victoria. By bus we toured some of Vancouver Island, stopping at the awesome Buchard Gardens, filled to overflowing with flowers of every description and beauty. We swam in a large outdoor pool and ate lunch in a magnificent hotel near the dock prior to reboarding our ship to return during the night to Seattle. While sitting in the back of the ship, I saw for the first time the glow of endless numbers of luminescent sea creatures swirling in the wake of our ship's passage.

The next morning, we boarded a train, The Southern Pacific, to travel through tall forests, along clear rivers, and the strikingly beautiful coastlines of Oregon and northern California. When we reached San Diego, California, we were bussed to a large naval base where we were treated to a noisy helicopter ride around the bay and then to a quiet, amazing ride aboard a Navy blimp above the airfield.

As we were returning from a walking tour of San Diego following our evening meal, I saw, for the first time in my life, a TV in a department store window. Some of our troop almost missed our bus because we were amazed as we watched "All Star Wrestling."

That evening we pitched our tents on the Jamboree grounds of Irving Ranch.

The following morning, we headed across the border to Tijuana, Mexico. Endless booths of hand-crafted wares were on display everywhere. Bargaining was the expected method of transacting a purchase. I discovered that I was good at bargaining. Since I had a very limited amount of money to spend, I bought only a few things at very reasonable prices: a big sombrero, a harmonica and a serape. Some of my friends spent most of their remaining cash on items they felt they could not live without. They were pleased as was I.

We returned to the Jamboree grounds. There we met scouts from all over the world. Our Montana contingent was surrounded by scout troops from Pennsylvania, Georgia, Texas, and Japan.

Throughout the Jamboree grounds there were huge tents established solely for the purpose of trading items with other scouts. Our antler neckerchief slides, belt buckles, jewelry, scout badges, jamboree pins, and Montana scout neckerchiefs were much sought after. Many of the scouts in my troop had discarded their mineral samples as unwanted items, but later, I discovered that the Japanese scouts would trade their ivory chopsticks, fans and neckerchief slides for mineral samples. I also discovered that the Pennsylvania scouts would trade for the 20 silver dollars I had brought from Montana. Silver dollars were uncommon in Pennsylvania, as were paper dollars in Montana. I returned to Montana with more money than I had when I left.

Often scouts from other troops would come to our troop's campsite to trade their wares. On one occasion, scouts from Georgia came to our campsite to trade for our antler offerings. One of their troop members noticed a large box filled with antler tips that were almost discarded by our troop members because we did not have time prior to leaving for the jamboree to figure how to put them to use. I brought them with me in hope that I would find some use for them. The Georgia scout asked what they were. I thought I would humor him, so I told him that they were "rackjabbit antlers". I called them "rackjabbit antlers" because I could not remember "jackalopes". Instantaneously, my "rackjabbit antlers" became much wanted items. One scout offered me a five-foot-high pile of whitetail deer antlers for one "rackjabbit antler". That evening

I found a saw, cut off the tips of the whitetail antlers and traded them to some of the Georgia scouts the very next morning. I discovered "rackjabbits" were rare beasts indeed.

Visiting the Seattle Pike Street Market

Among the many places in Seattle to which I enjoyed going was The Pike Street Market on Puget Sound. Vendors of all kinds can be found there. Hustle and bustle seemed to permeate the atmosphere of that market. I took much pleasure listening to the babble of the fish vendors as they assisted customers to choose a fish from the huge display and variety of fish bins before them. Then, when the right fish had been selected, the assistant theatrically threw that fish across many bins of fish to a person who weighed, wrapped and priced the fish for the customer.

If I wanted fresh produce, vegetables and fruit of all kinds, they were also available in this market. Many varieties of trinkets and souvenirs were waiting to be purchased by vacationers who desired a memory of their visit to the Pike Street Market. A meal of fresh seafood was also waiting for those who wanted something to eat. I particularly enjoyed sitting along the dock and eating clam chowder freshly made each morning.

I have fond memories of Jeane and our two small children enjoying a cup of chowder at this market place. I found a visit to the Pike Street Market was a treat for me even if I chose not to buy anything. Observing the multiple offerings and watching the interaction of the vendors and their customers was always fascinating to me.

The Olympics

Every four years when the winter Olympics comes around, I am reminded that for a select few, who are privileged, talented, and fortunate enough to compete in the Olympics, one of their mountain top experiences may come as they hear their national anthem resounding across the airwaves, reminding them of their individual and collective investments of time, discipline and achievement.

For many the Olympic experience serves as a reminder of the enduring ties which they have with all of humanity.

Their kind of commitment captures my imagination.

It compels me to recall what it was like for me to pursue such a high level of self-discipline, preparation, concentration and persistence as I speed skated in Olympic trials in the hope of going to the Olympics.

With a few other hopefuls, I spent many hours late at night training at Clark's Park in Butte. The rink was very large for it covered all of the infield and outfield of a full-sized baseball field. I recall how sharp my skates had to be after the ice-skating rink had been finely sprayed with a fire hose until the rink was smooth as glass. Often the

temperature was well below zero, but it was only when we started walking home that we became readily aware of the extreme cold.

Limited finances, school work and the death of my father turned me in a new direction.

In the high moments leading to the Olympic experience, many are awakened and transformed by a sudden awareness of the fleeting window of privilege and opportunity that is theirs.

Sam Neeley

After my father died in 1953, I began working for Sam Neeley as a roofer, common laborer and carpenter's helper. Sam was very kind to allow me to start working for him then for I was only 15. He paid me the going rate of an adult because he said that I did the work of an adult. I had to belong to the union for Butte was a union town. After a year Sam put me in charge of his roofing crews. Many of the persons he had working for him tended to drink too much. A short while after I was placed in charge of Sam's crews, I had to let several men go because they were too drunk to come to work or they came to work too unstable to be working on a high roof. Some of them were working each summer only long enough to draw what they called "rocking chair" wages (unemployment benefits). After a specified amount of time, they were no longer available to come to work until the next summer. It wasn't long before I sorted out the men on the roofing crews who really wanted to work and hired persons on whom I could rely.

Thereafter, only one time was I called back on a job because something did not turn out right. In that instance someone had stepped on a nail and failed to seal that puncture of the roof. A leak often showed up two or more weeks after a rain. Two of us searched the roof for possible leak areas several times. Finally, I found the source of the leak by sprinkling Easter egg dye on pools of standing water right after a rain. When the sun came out, the dye collected at the nail hole. No more leaks appeared after a simple patch sealed the hole.

Often, Sam allowed me to work Saturdays so that I could earn additional wages. Sometimes, he found work for me to do, even when many of his other workers had to wait for more jobs to be secured. Many times, when I was working on one roof, I would discover a building nearby that needed a new roof. I called upon the owner, often measured the roof and gave an estimate for a possible new roof. Sam's only complaint was that I was getting too much work for the number of men he had working for him. Soon, I convinced him to buy more equipment and hire a few more crews to cover the work he could have. Sam was hesitant, but he experimented with a few additional pieces of equipment and soon learned that in a very short time he not only had paid for his new equipment, but was financially growing as well.

When Sam learned that I was going away to college, he encouraged me not to go. He confided in me that he wanted me to work for him the next two years and buy his business from him. I did work for him one more summer, but informed him that roofing and carpentry was not what I felt called to do the rest of my life. On the last day

when I stopped roofing, Sam told me that I would soon forget him and all that he had done on my behalf. I assured him that this would not be so. Sam was a special mentor who taught me much about the ethics of hard work.

A 1928 Hudson

My first car was a 1928 Hudson. 25 of my classmates and I pooled our resources and purchased it for \$87. None of us had \$87 nor the price of tags or registration, but together the near impossible became reality. Insurance was not even considered necessary in those times. I am not now sure in whose name the car was registered.

That which appeared unlikely, often becomes that which blesses most richly.

All 26 owners of our 1928 Hudson had little doubt why we were buying that car. It had class and served as a gathering place.

Much counsel and many important decisions were made in and around that car. It also provided transportation for those who could buy gas, for those who had a driver's license, and for those who could convince the rest of the owners of their real need to use the car.

Two-part owners took an auto mechanic's class. The maintenance of our car allowed them to meet some of the class requirements. Their need blessed all of us. Periodically we all pitched in for oil and spark plug changes. Once we also had to buy two new tires. Other than that, our Hudson was low cost.

Some used the car to get to school, some to keep warm as they did their school work, and others to prepare for tests.

Still others used the car to get to work, to go on picnics and to ball games, to go fishing and hunting, and to go on dates.

Our quartet used this car to get to a variety of places where we were invited to sing; places such as service clubs, nursing homes, radio and TV stations, and even at the State Prison.

Our car served twice as a moving van.

Our car looked good, but its real worth was most apparent when our 1928 Hudson was put to work serving a variety of needs and concerns of each of us and the world about us.

My 1929 Model A Ford Coup

In 1955 I bought a 1929 Model A Ford Coup for \$50. This was the first car that I owned all by myself. I recall learning to drive, first on a tractor; then in a field in a 1938 Chevrolet; and finally in my 1929 Model A Ford. I passed my driver's test on my first try.

I used my Model A Ford mostly around our farm in Hamilton. I drove it whenever we went to get firewood, to go fishing and hunting, to go to town, to work on someone else's farm, and to explore the forests around us. Even in the coldest weather, I never

had difficulty starting my Model A. That car went a long way on a tank of gas. The gas tank was positioned right behind the dash board and over our outstretched legs. Most always we carried a spare gallon of gas with us so that we could get home or to a gas station when we ran out of gas.

One time Donald and I were driving up the mountain behind our farm on a morning when the dew hung heavily upon the ground. Since the Model A was so light, it tended to slip on the wet ground, so Donald got out and attempted to push it up the hill. Some more help was needed, so I set the automatic gas feed on the steering column and got out and helped push. All at once the car hit a dry place and away it went on its own with Donald and me chasing after it. Fortunately, it was going uphill and the gas feed had been set low, so I was able to catch up with our driverless car before it crashed into something.

Another time I got it stuck in a bog. Our D2 Caterpillar almost pulled the rear axle loose from the Model A before the car popped out of the mud.

One time Donald shot a large elk on the mountain behind our farm and decided to bring it home in the rumple seat of my Model A. The elk was almost as big as the car. It took some doing to remove it from the rumple seat.

That car was very durable and could be repaired very simply.

They don't make cars the way they used to.

Chickens

Early each spring mother ordered baby chickens from a distant wholesale farm supply store. At that time baby chicks cost \$5.00 a hundred. The wholesaler always sent 20 extra chicks with each order of 100 to be sure that 100 chicks were alive when they were received in the mail. Each year when we lived in Hamilton on the farm, mother placed an order for 500 chicks. Few chicks died, so we usually had nearly 600 little chicks to raise. When they arrived, she placed them in a series of brooders that had light bulbs in them to keep the chicks warm. She fed them chicken mash and cracked corn until they were able to fend for themselves. Then they had free range of the farm after they were let out each morning. They often invaded our very large garden. Each night we shut the door of their large chicken house to protect them from skunks, bears, and mountain lions. I do not recall any chickens ever being killed by the wild creatures that wandered across our land at times. On several occasions the guinea hens and geese let us know that predators were invading the area around the chicken coop and barn.

As soon as the chickens were large enough, Donald and I were assigned the task of sorting out the roosters from the hens. Over the course of several days, we killed, plucked and cleaned the roosters and some of the hens in preparation for mother to can or freeze meals for later in the year. Our fingers grew so tired from picking feathers that we could hardly open them by the end of each day. This was one task I did not enjoy. We also had plenty of chicken and eggs at our meals throughout the summer and fall. Donald really liked fried chicken. He still does. Mother believed that Donald could eat chicken until he burst.

We also had ducks, turkeys, guinea hens and geese. Throughout the spring, summer, and fall the ducks and geese enjoyed swimming in a pond that we had dug with a bulldozer. In the spring the turkey hens built hidden nests near Sawtooth Creek that flowed through our land. There they laid their eggs and raised their yearly brood of little ones.

Even though we ate most of the birds that we raised, I do not recall ever having one of mother's many pet geese for dinner. Mother's geese would come to her call, yet they ignored us whenever we attempted to get them to come to us. In most instances we avoided them because they sure could bite even through thick clothing.

The farm in Hamilton supplied many of our needs.

Our Cow Bessie

On the Hamilton farm we had a milk cow named "Bessie". Bessie needed to be hobbled whenever she was being milked or she tended to kick up her heels along with the milk bucket and anything else in the vicinity. One day, when I came home from college on vacation, I went out to the barn to visit with my brothers, Donald and Lawrence, better known as "Chappy." Donald was milking Bessie, but forgot where he had placed the hobbles. Thus, he tied a rope to Bessie's hind legs and threw the other end of the rope over one of the barn's rafters. While he was milking, he had Chappy hold the loose end of the rope so that Bessie wouldn't kick up her heels and kick over the milk bucket. When I came into the barn, Chappy forgot to hold the rope. Swiftly, Bessie kicked cow manure all over him. In frustration he ran out of the barn and stormed into the house. He told mother, "Look what Donald did to me!" Since mother had just finished mopping the floor, she chased him out of the house and then turned the hose on him to wash the manure off of him. He then changed his clothes in the barn. That had not been a good day for Chappy.

The Horse with Sticks

One morning, when my sister Joyce was young and we lived on the farm in Hamilton, the dog was anxiously barking when Joyce ran into the house announcing, "There is a big horse in our front yard with sticks in its head!" We went outside to see what she was talking about. There in the front yard was a bull elk with large antlers. Up to that time, Joyce apparently had not seen a bull elk close enough to learn that bull elk have antlers.

Since our farm was located very near the Selway Wilderness, it was not uncommon to see elk feeding and traveling across our acreage.

Logging

It was on our farm in Hamilton that I first started logging to add to our family's limited budget. A neighbor was clearing some of his land of an extensive apple orchard and some large yellow pine trees. He needed someone to help remove them so that he could have more pasture land to feed his cattle. We received \$1 per tree that we cut down and hauled away.

When Donald and I cut down the apple trees we hauled most of the wood to our home for firewood. At our farm we used a large buzz saw that ran off the fly wheel of our tractor to cut the apple wood into stove lengths. Some of this apple wood would have made beautiful lumber and furniture.

Many of the yellow pine stumps were over 3-5 feet across. We hauled most of the logs to nearby sawmills and thus earned additional money to add to our family's livelihood. We hauled the larger limbs to our home to use as firewood.

When we moved to Colorado my previous experiences with logging came in handy when a friend needed help removing some trees that were endangering some of the buildings on his properties. I also removed two large crown willow trees, one large Russian olive tree, a portion of another Russian olive tree and two elm trees that were likely to fall on my house.

Then when a plague of pine beetles killed most of the lodgepole pine trees surrounding my son's cabins, I assisted my son to remove many trees that were threatening his cabins. We removed additional trees to help limit the damage that a possible forest fire would surely do. Some of these trees were over 100 feet tall.

Past experiences of our lives are seldom wasted. Each experience can add to those that are yet to be.

Peeling Logs at Buckhorn Camp

In 1998, Jeane and I learned of a need at the Buckhorn Camp of the Rocky Mountain Conference that we felt we could help meet. The camp was in much need of a resident manager's facility. The board of directors of the camp felt that this need might be met in large part by recruiting a series of volunteers and by using many of the tall lodgepole pines on the grounds of the camp.

The work that caught Jeane and my attention was peeling logs for the construction of the building. So, for one long weekend, Jeane and I traveled up Rist Canyon to the Buckhorn Camp with tools and bedrolls in hand to assist with this endeavor. The trees had already been cut down and delimbed and were needing to be peeled and dried before they could be used for the cabin's construction. Jeane, another volunteer and I peeled five 45+ foot logs while a 20-member group of Air Force Academy Cadets peeled four.

Before we were finished peeling logs, our efforts had produced five 45+ foot logs for use as main beams for the ridgetop and the support structures of the roof of this beautiful resident cabin.

Peeling logs is not as simple as we first imagined. We found that our cloths were soon covered with pitch; our hands were ingrained with sap; and our muscles were sore from new patterns of use not familiar to them. Even so, it felt good to contribute our efforts in construction of something that will serve campers for years to come.

When the resident manager's home was completed, it was satisfying to know that we had lent our efforts to a much-needed addition to the comfort of the Buckhorn Camp's management team.

To complete this project, I joined a half dozen volunteers to fill a 1/4-mile ditch that connected the new construction with a distant septic system. It took many shovels full of dirt to make a slight dent in this effort. As we were preparing to break for lunch, I discovered that there was a D8 Caterpillar owned by the camp sitting idle near one of the camp's buildings. I asked why we were not putting it to use. The coordinator told me that they had no one available who could run it. I asked if it ran. When I learned that it did, I suggested that the rest of the crew go to lunch while I spent a few minutes seeing what I might do with this wonderful tool. In about an hour, I had filled the entire ditch. Our crew was thus enabled to do other manual labor needed on the grounds.

What a difference the right tools can make!

Boxing for the Golden Gloves

For several years while I was in high school, I boxed in a series of tournaments across Montana. I trained at and boxed for the Four North Main Boxing Club in Butte, Montana. My coach, Jim Sullivan, was very dedicated to assisting boxers from Butte to grow in self-confidence and discipline and to excel in their endurance and boxing defensive and offensive abilities. Jim insisted that we run everywhere we went, except in buildings. This went well with my training in ice speed skating and cross country running. Time was allotted for weight training, the medicine ball, the light and heavy punching bags, and sparring with assigned partners. As each person progressed in his abilities, he would be assigned to increasing skill training and more experienced sparring partners.

Whenever any of us would become too cocky, Jim would put us in the ring with a person by the name of Pachico who had already won the championship in his weight division in the National Golden Gloves Tournament in Chicago. Pachico was tough and mean. One 3-minute round with Pachico was more than enough to teach many of us humility.

The highlight of my career in boxing came when I was entered in a regional tournament in 1954 for those who would go on to Chicago for the National Golden Gloves finals. I did make the finals in that regional tournament in the fly weight division, but lost my last bout by a split decision. I later learned that my final opponent held the Navy championship in our weight classification.

That year Butte was well represented at the National Golden Gloves Tournament. Jim Sullivan's brother Steve and Pachico of our club won their respective weight division championships.

Following the regional Golden Gloves tournament, I began to really grow in height and weight. During that year I grew 10 1/2" in height and I went from 94 lbs. to 160 lbs., the weight I weighed when I was married over 12 years later.

My increased weight, the death of my father, work, and school demands all contributed to my decision to end my boxing endeavors.

Boxing did much for my sense of self assurance, self-confidence, self-discipline, and my dedication to real humility.

Hunting Rabbits

Rabbits were plentiful in the hills around Butte. One Christmas Donald and I received single shot Remington 22s. My gun was very accurate. I often wonder how many miles that rifle and I traveled in our pursuit of rabbits. I found cottontail rabbits along stream banks, in the rock ledges of the surrounding hills, and in willow patches across the prairies. Most often I shot jackrabbits as they sat beneath clumps of sagebrush or as they sprinted across the snow fields of the open prairies. Usually, I discovered snowshoe hares in the evergreen forests. A twitch of their ears or their dark eyes against the snow revealed their presence to me as I walked slowly through the woods.

A box of 50 shells produced many fine meals of rabbit prepared by my mother following our hunting trips.

One day as I was walking home from school, I noticed a garbage can that had a double barrel Springfield shotgun protruding out of the top of some garbage. The stock was broken, but all of the rusted metal parts appeared to be accounted for. I knocked at the door of the house where the garbage can was located. The man who answered the door told me that he no longer wanted the shotgun and that I could have it. I asked him what he wanted for it. He said it was mine for the taking. He said that if I had \$10, I could also have several boxes of shot gun shells, a hunting vest, a hat and a web belt that held twenty shells. I ran home with my newly acquired 12 gauge shot gun and borrowed \$10. I returned to the home of the owner, gave him the \$10 and insisted that he write a note that the shot gun was his and that he had given it to me along with the additional shot gun materials for \$10. For many years I had that note among my prized possessions.

A library book on restoring shot guns and much labor enabled my shot gun to show its true beauty and potential. Over the course of a year, using steel wool, two coats of bluing and several attempts to carve a new stock with a minimum of tools I finally took my shot gun rabbit hunting. A jack rabbit was the victim of my very first shot. That rabbit was about 10 feet away when it decided to sprint from the sage brush behind which it was hiding. Instantly I aimed and shot at it, much as I would have with my 22 rifle. After the cloud of smoke from the black powder shell cleared, I discovered that the jack rabbit was little more than a ball of fluff. A tremendous sense of respect for the power of a shot gun at close range became self-evident to me in that brief moment. For years I alternated between my 22 rifle and 12 gauge shot gun whenever I went rabbit or grouse hunting.

Throughout the years many ducks, geese and upland birds were added to my larder because I was so accurate and felt so comfortable with my double barrel gun. It was the only shot gun I owned. Then one winter while I was hunting geese, a shot blew a hole out the side of one of the two barrels of my shot gun. Perhaps snow had plugged that barrel or it had simply worn out. Needless to say, I was greatly saddened. It had become a vital part of me throughout my many hunting seasons. Periodically I inquire where I might have it repaired. For some time, it has remained in my gun safe, unrepaired, but much respected. Now my son has it and is pursuing the feasibility of repairing it.

My childhood single shot 22 rifle became a Christmas present early in the life of my son, Michael. It was his first rifle. Soon it became a cherished part of his life and education in the proper use of fire arms. It proved to be as accurate for him as it was for me. It felt right and blessed to pass on to my loved one a tangible part of that which had brought meaning to my life experiences. It has now become a gift from my son to his son. Joshua also has learned about guns and gun safety with this single shot 22 rifle.

My 270

In 1951 I bought my first big game rifle. For months I saved money I earned from selling newspapers, scrap metals, bottles, and shoveling sidewalks so that I would have enough to purchase my rifle. Jack O'Conner was the gun editor of the Outdoor Life sports magazine and a major influence in my decision to buy a 270 rifle. I decided that if he could accomplish all that he wrote about with a 270 then that would be the caliber of big game rifle for me. Initially, my mother was not pleased that I was purchasing a big game rifle so early in my life, but I was determined and did buy my 270.

Many hunters argued that the 270 was good for deer and antelope, but they claimed that an elk or a moose was too large to hunt with a 270. They agreed that a 270 was a flat shooting, long range rifle, but they did not believe that it had enough power to do more than wound large animals. I believe that my experiences proved them wrong. Over the course of my hunting lifetime, I have thus far managed to bag 17 antelope, 72 deer, and 39 elk with my 270. My brother, Donald has also shot several animals with my 270.

In most instances one shot was all that was necessary to put meat in our freezer. On one occasion I shot a bull elk three times behind the ear before it stayed down for good. I knocked it down each time, but two times it refused to stay down. I think that its adrenaline was keeping it going. My 270 has served me well and paid for itself many times over. I believe that placement of shots is far more important than the ballistics of velocity when it comes to hunting. Our family has been richly blessed with healthy wild game meat. Elk has been the favorite of most of my family. Deer meat from Montana has also received a high mark.

I often think about how many hunting trips and miles my 270 has been with me. It has been with me on opening day of hunting season high above the valleys and meadows far below as I watched the glimmer of dawn breaking and the endless stream

of the lights of 4-wheel drives carrying hunters to their chosen hunting destinations. My 270 has been with me in raging snow storms on lofty mountain peaks. It has been with me as I watched a mountain lion lapping water from a stream in a valley I had just crossed. It was with me as I watched herds of deer and elk working their way up steep ridges to the safety of aspen groves and thick timber on the benches of snow-covered mountains. It was with me as the light of a fading night caught me far from my campsite in the valley below. It was with me when a bull elk caused the hair on the nap of my neck to stand out straight when that elk bugled in the trail closely behind me as I was making my way off the mountain in the dark. It was with me when a pack of coyotes checked out our campsite as we laid in our sleeping bags with only a canvas wall between us. It laid across my knees as I rested from a long climb and as I surveyed the beauty and multi-colors of a warm fall day and watched two cowboys attempting to roundup a stubborn stray bull. It journeyed with me as I attempted to carefully slide down a steep snow-covered slope with a heavy side of elk tied to the pack on my back. It was with me when I was camping and big horn sheep hunting on Pikes Peak for 18 days. It offered me a degree of assurance as I returned down the only trail available past the place where a bull moose had charged me and chased me around a tree five times. If my 270 could speak, it could tell you of many more adventures we have shared together.

Long Shots

Most of the shots that I took at deer, elk or antelope were under 100 yards with a very few exceptions.

When I was teaching high school in Denton, Montana, I opened deer season hunting with the Bob White family. As I was leading them out to several hunting sites that I had discovered during bow season, I spotted two buck deer running across a wide harvested wheat field. We got out of Bob's truck and watched the deer as they bounded across the field. Bob challenged me to try for one of the deer. Since I had two deer permits, I decided to see how accurate my gun was at a very long distance. I shot at the first deer and was even more surprised than Bob was when that deer collapsed. The deer was over 430 yards away. I had hit the deer at the bottom of his heart. His rib bones had been extended in such a manner that I had not hit a bone where the shot entered and where the shot exited.

Sometimes hunting requires a bit of luck, that is for sure!

Another time while I was hunting near Gypsum, Colorado for elk, my hunting partners and I had not seen a legal elk for three days. On the morning of the fourth day, Shelby James and I were watching two hunters crossing the crest of Greenhorn Mountain several miles away across a wide canyon that separated our hill from Greenhorn. We called the hill we were on "Doe Hill" because we often saw doe deer and cow elk on it. As we watched, I noticed an elk moving slowly across the hillside way below the hunters we had been observing. That elk was the first legal elk we had seen and it was all of the way across the wide canyon. Shelby suggested that I should try a shot. He said if I missed, he would then try a shot. Shelby watched with his

binoculars. Immediately after I shot, I could not see that elk any longer. Shelby told me that I had hit it and it had fallen behind one of the few bushes on that portion of the slope. With our binoculars, we watched the area for at least five minutes before we decided to cross the canyon and claim the elk. It took us almost 40 minutes to go down our hill and climb to the barren slope where the elk had been traveling. We found the elk dead behind the very bush that Shelby had noted. I am not sure how far that elk was from me when I shot, but I do know that it was a very, very long distance away.

My 270 rifle has been a very accurate rifle throughout my hunting career. Truly my 270 has been one of my prized possessions.

Hunting in Texas

I learned some new ways to hunt when I was living in Texas. I had never hunted doves before, but when a member of my church invited me to go dove hunting, I decided to take him up on his offer. About 2:00 p.m. we traveled west of Dallas and arrived at our hunting site about 3:00 p.m. A half hour later doves began to dart across the sky. A good number of hunters had set up in the fields around us and their shots warned us that birds were coming our way. I succeeded in knocking down the first dove that came near my station. It took another dozen shots before I bagged my next bird. Our limit was 14 doves. I began to doubt that I would come near securing my limit of doves. Soon hundreds of doves began flitting across my station. Somehow or other I managed to even bag two birds with two shots from my double barrel shot gun from one flight. Even before shooting hours were up the two of us were heading home with our quota of doves.

After I skinned out the breast meat of my 14 doves, I invited Jeane to help me cook them. After some deliberation, Jeane asked me if the 14 dove breasts were from 14 birds or 7. Over the years Jeane has become much more knowledgeable.

When I mentioned to one of my associates on the staff at Highland Park Methodist Church that in Montana, I had enjoyed deer hunting, Rev. James Palmer invited me to join him on a deer hunt on a lease that he had east of Dallas.

When we arrived just after dark at a cabin on his lease, we met with two more persons who shared the lease. We ate a brief meal and then sat down to strategize where we would hunt in the morning. Jim assigned me a tree stand a short distance from the cabin.

Before daybreak Jim led me to my blind and left me there with instructions to remain there until he came after me. Then he wished me good luck and left. I did not see him again until he came after me just before dark. My tree blind consisted of a wooden platform, an enclosed railing, a folding chair and a piece of carpet.

I had never sat all day in a tree blind, nor had I any idea what sounds a deer might make in the dry leaves as it traveled near a tree blind. I listened intently and soon heard something moving through the leaves. I just knew that a deer was traveling in my direction. To my chagrin, an armadillo appeared on the trail some twenty feet away. Early in the morning a lively squirrel decided to scamper up one of the trees supporting my blind. When he spotted me, he began to chatter loudly letting all of the world know

that I was there. Later in the afternoon, a blue heron decided to land on one of the branches near my location. He too decided to squawk when he saw me and let the world know where I was. I never saw or heard a deer throughout the day and was pleased to come down from my high platform when Jim arrived. He then asked me why I had not come back to the cabin for lunch? I told him that I had followed his instructions to remain in my stand until he came for me. He had forgotten his instructions. On the way back to Dallas we spotted a herd of deer alongside the highway. I do not believe that any of the deer were bigger than a medium sized dog. I doubt that any of them weighed more than 50+ pounds.

On several occasions I went duck and goose hunting with some of the doctors of the church where I served. They had a lease on Lake Dallas a short distance from town. Their blind consisted of a large platform that floated on sealed 55-gallon drums. These drums were anchored with huge blocks of cement and long cables that tied them to the shore. The blind was camouflaged with willows inserted into chicken wire that had been nailed to a frame attached to the platform. A long bench ran the entire length of the back portion of the blind. A table with a three burner Coleman stove, a pot of coffee and a kettle of soup took up space at one end of the platform. This platform accommodated up to six hunters at a time. I was blessed to be their guest on several trips. We rode out to the blind in a 14-foot boat that had a space for it to be hidden under the blind.

For one day each year the blind had to be removed from the lake. This was quite a chore.

When the ducks and geese began to arrive, one of the doctors served as the person who would tell us when we were to shoot. Often, we could hear the birds long before we could see them. Some of us would use our duck or goose calls until we were sure that the birds were coming our direction. Then we would use our calls to softly chuckle or we would stop calling all together. We found that the fast-flying teal would often fly directly into our decoys before we were aware that they were coming. Many of the mallards flying in from the far north country would circle out of the clouds far above us. The pintails appeared most wary for they circled our blind many times before they dared to get into shooting distance. Geese often landed at the far end of our decoys. We never failed to come home with our limits. I learned that Texas was the wintering grounds for most of the ducks and geese of western Canada and the far northern states.

I was thankful for those who allowed to experience some of the hunting opportunities of Texas.

Gravel Mountain Elk

During the fall of 1971, I hunted elk with one of my neighbors, Nole, and two of his friends on Gravel Mountain west of Granby, Colorado Reservoir. During the first 3 1/2 days the weather was warm and the elk were nowhere to be found. We did see several deer, one of which was a very large timber buck that we spotted high above timberline.

The evening of the fourth day it began to snow hard and the wind began to blow. One of our party became lost in the midst of the blowing snow. He wandered in the opposite direction from our truck. Two of our party remained near our vehicle and built a large fire. I set out in the direction that our lost hunter had gone. Some distance away I found his tracks in the snow and eventually found him. I told him that he was going the wrong way. He insisted that he knew the right direction. I told him that I had come from our truck and that I was heading back to the warmth of our vehicle. Reluctantly he followed me. By this time over a foot of snow had fallen.

The next morning as we were returning to our hunting area, we discovered elk tracks that crossed the road in the fresh snow about a mile above our destination. Nole and his friends decided to travel on to the place that we had initially intended to start hunting. I told them to let me out of the truck so that I might follow the elk tracks. I intended to meet them later that day where they had agreed to park.

The elk tracks led me through a patch of timber to a long meadow and stream that I had hunted two of the previous days. As I carefully entered this meadow I spotted 4 elk drinking out of the creek some distance away. I decided to get as close as I could before I took a shot. As I was creeping through the timber near the meadow I heard two persons talking to one another. Before I could spot the elk once more, they were spooked and ran in the general direction of Nole and his friends. I never heard a shot from that direction so I decided to continue following the elks' tracks.

After a while I saw a flash of a fleeing elk and discovered where the elk had bedded down watching their backtrack. A half hour later I once more followed their tracks. About an hour later I momentarily spotted the elk as they fled once more further up the mountain. Two more times they spotted me before I was able to get a shot. Each time they would circle to my left before they stopped to eat, rest and watch their backtrack. By this time the top of Gravel Mountain was only a short distance above me. I decided to make a wide circle to my right before I reached the top of the mountain. Just before the crest of the peak I carefully circled back to my left hoping to spot the elk before they wandered over the top. To my surprise I spotted an elk on the edge of a small bench watching its backtrack. It never knew that I was there until I shot it. Then the real work began as I struggled to gut the elk, pull it up on a large stump and hang streamers from the trees around it so that I might return with some help to get it to our truck. Once more it was beginning to snow.

Rather than attempt to return the circuitous route where I had followed the elk, I decided to travel straight down the mountain hoping to reach a fire trail or road. Just before I reached a road I stepped over a log spooking an elk almost under my feet. I am not sure who was most spooked, the elk or me. After my heart stopped pounding, I climbed a brief rise and came out on a road that had been driven on that morning. As I was brushing some of the snow off of my coat I heard a jeep heading my way. The driver stopped when he reached me and asked me if I wanted a ride. I told him yes, but I was not sure exactly where. When I described the place where our hunting party's truck was parked, the two people in the truck informed me that was where they were headed for their camp was nearby. I was relieved that I would not have to walk many miles back to our truck. It turned out that my benefactors were the two persons who had initially spooked the elk I had finally shot.

After reaching my hunting party's truck and waiting some while for their return, I decided to wander in the direction where Nole said that he intended to sit. Just before I reached Nole I kicked out another elk that ran in his direction. I heard a shot and soon found Nole gutting out his elk. We dragged his elk back toward the 4 wheel drive. A small, but steep hill suggested to us that one of us should seek the help of the rest of our hunting party before we attempted to pull Nole's elk up that hill. Nole told me where the other two hunters had gone, so I set out to find them. Once more, just before I reached another of our hunting party, I spooked an elk in his direction. Fortunately, another elk was added to our larder. The other member of our party joined us as we dragged a second elk to our truck.

By the time we returned to our camp with the two elk already loaded in our truck, we decided that it was too late for us to retrieve my elk. That evening one of our party headed for his home in Lakewood so that he would not miss work the following day.

Early the next morning Nole, his remaining friend and I retraced my route back to a firetrail that wound its way part way up Gravel Mountain near the place I had shot my elk. Nole's friend decided to remain with the truck, so Nole and I pushed our way through deep snow to the top of Gravel Mountain. At first I found it very difficult to locate the bench where my elk awaited us. Fortunately I spotted one of the many streamers that I had hung in the trees surrounding my elk that was almost completely covered with snow. Nole and I struggled to pull it to the edge of the steep decent we would have to travel. About that time Nole informed me that his bad knee would not allow him to pull the elk with me any further. It was up to me to pull that elk. Down the mountain we went, sometimes with me pulling the elk and other times with the elk dragging me along. One time I had to let go of the rope, least I become injured. I let the elk toboggan down the hill without me.

Sometimes I had to assist Nole down the mountain. I spent most of the day dragging and tugging the elk in the direction of our waiting truck. When daylight began to fade, I suggested to Nole that we place streamers in the trees around the elk and leave it there awaiting our return the next morning. I went on ahead hoping to reach the firetrail where our truck was waiting. I told Nole to follow my trail in the snow.

To my surprise and relief, a short distance from the elk I reached the firetrail. I returned to my elk, told Nole of our good fortune and drug the elk the remaining distance to the firetrail. Then it was time to determine where the 4 wheel drive was waiting, for snow had covered any tire tracks. I decided to go up hill. Once more the good Lord must have been watching over me because I located our truck with Nole's friend fast asleep in it. We drove down to where Nole and my elk were waiting. When it was determined that Nole and his friend would be of little or no assistance in loading my elk, Noel's friend decided to pull forward and attempt to back his truck so that the bed of his truck would not be so high above the elk we hoped to load.

As he pulled forward, he slipped off the firetrail and slid some distance down the hill. He had failed to see the edge of the firetrail. Fortunately he had not rolled the truck. When I reached him, I found him visibly shaken. It was then that I learned that he had only one eye. I asked him if he might allow me to try to get his truck back on the firetrail. Reluctantly he agreed. He had no winch, but I did bring with me a very strong, long rope. I tied my rope to a tree above the truck in the direction I hoped to drive his truck.

The other end of the rope I attached to the bumper of his truck. I shifted the 4 wheel drive into it's lowest gear and slowly turned the truck so that it mostly faced up hill. Then in an arching circle I drove it slowly up the hill. Once more God's grace shined upon me for after slightly less than an hour I managed to drive the truck once more up onto the firetrail.

I backed the truck up to my elk and somehow loaded it into the bed of the truck. I believe that I earned every pound of that elk. I insisted that I drive back to camp. Camp never looked so good.

Yampa River Bucks

In 1971 I hunted deer with Steve Strecker near the Yampa River a little west of Craig, Colorado. Deer seemed to be plentiful, thus without much difficulty we filled our deer tags. Since this hunt had been so successful, my neighbor, who had been unsuccessful, asked if he might join me during the 1972 deer season. Since we had gone elk hunting together in 1971, I told him, "yes," knowing that I had already invited Bob and Bill Emanuel to hunt with me.

About a month before we were to go hunting, Nole asked if he could bring his son with him. Because I had a large tent, I once more said, "yes." Then Nole called to ask if his daughter might join us if he brought his own tent. He indicated that his daughter was feeling neglected. Once more I said, "Yes."

A few weeks later Nole called to tell me that he was also bringing one of the persons who worked with him. I told him that it was up to him. Before I knew it, Nole had invited another 17 persons to join us. Needless to say, I was a bit upset. Things were getting out of hand even though the hunting area was extensive.

Then Nole asked me if I would be willing to purchase all of the food necessary for this large crew. He indicated that he and those who were coming with him were needing to attend a business retreat out of town shortly before our hunting trip. He told me that they would more than compensate me for my efforts on their behalf. Reluctantly I agreed if Nole would meet with me and the Emanuels to plan the menu, arrange for each hunter to assist with the camp chores and be sure that they had their own camping gear, eating utensils and transportation. At our planning meeting I gave Nole a map so that he could let his hunting crew know where we were going to camp and hunt. The evening before opening day we were all to gather for the supper at our campsite.

Two days before our hunt, I rounded up the food, cooking utensils, ice chests and my personal hunting equipment. My station wagon was stuffed. I called the Emanuels to be sure they were ready. It was at this time that they asked if another person, Mike Young, from our church senior high youth group might join us, because his father had decided not to take him hunting. I agreed to invite Mike, for what was one more person among such an overwhelming group.

Prior to and after the time for dinner, a parking lot of vehicles gathered: some with trailers attached and others with tents or camper shells. Only the Emanuels and Mike Young assisted me to gather wood for our cooking fire and help me prepare the

meal. When the food was ready, everyone in camp appeared with plates in hand, expecting me to serve them. Before all were served, some campers were already expecting to be served seconds. I reminded them that all had not yet been served and that others were still arriving, and that except for the steaks, there would be more than enough for seconds.

Before the meal was over, many of the hunters had returned to their tents, trailers and campers. I asked Nole to ask them to return to the campfire so that we might assign camp chores, meet one another, collect each person's share of the cost of the camp food and plan where we were going to hunt the next day. Nole returned with some of the hunters and indicated that others were still setting up their camps or already in bed. I felt chaos on the horizon.

I discovered that most of those gathered did not intend to assist with camp chores, nor pay their share of the cost of the camp food. I told Nole that this was unacceptable. I reminded him that they owed me for the food that I had purchased on their behalf.

The next morning I prepared food for those who were willing to pay for their share of the food. Even Nole had not yet paid for his family's share. A very disgruntled group of unfed hunters scattered that morning to go hunting. When I returned from the morning hunt, I discovered that many of Nole's friends had sacked the food supplies with no consideration of the planned menu. Still they refused to pay for even the food they had already eaten. They also complained because they had only tagged 7 deer that morning, even though most of them had taken shots at deer. I had never agreed to be their guide nor did I guarantee them a deer.

After those who had paid for their meals ate lunch, I spent the rest of the afternoon loading the remaining food into my stationwagon where I could secure it from further plunderings by Nole's inconsiderate associates. I then joined the Emanuels for the mid-afternoon hunt.

For the first time I had a scope on my rifle. On all of my previous hunts I had only an open site. Near a cliff that overlooked the Yampa River, I jumped a large buck. When I looked through my new scope, all I could see was fur. The deer was too close for me to determine where I might shoot him. As the deer began to bound away, I finally looked under the scope and shot. The deer went down, but immediately bounced back up. It jumped off the cliff into the Yampa River and began swimming for the opposite shore. It died just after it reached dry land.

Soon I was attempting to discover a way to retrieve my buck. At this point the river was too deep to cross. I hiked up stream until I found a crossing place. There I removed most of my clothes and left them with most of my hunting equipment. I carried only a rope and my knife. I waded into the cold water and worked my way down stream to the deer. Along the way I found two large logs that had floated there from the forest far upstream. I needed these logs to help float my buck across the river. I decided not to gut the deer until it was safely across the stream. I lashed the logs together with a part of my rope and then tied the deer to the logs. I pointed the logs slightly upstream hoping that they would reach the opposite shore when I pushed the logs out into the river as hard as I could. At the back of the logs I kicked my feet as fast as my legs would move. Somehow or other I managed to reach the shore where a road came down to the bank. I pulled the deer up onto the shore, gutted it and then headed up stream to

reclaim my clothes and hunting gear. Just as I returned to my deer, the Emanuels drove down the road on which I was standing. I was happy to see them. We loaded the deer into their vehicle and returned to camp.

After another confrontation with the hunters who still refused to pay for their food, I prepared the evening meal for those who did pay. Only 9 persons paid for their food: the Emanuels, Mike, Nole's family, two of those Nole had invited and myself. That evening Mike, the Emanuels, Nole and his son tagged their deer. The next morning Nole and all of his invited party left for their homes. Eleven of them had shot deer. The Emanuels, Mike and I also left.

After I returned home, I asked Nole to once more attempt to persuade his hunting party to help foot the bill for the food I had purchased on their behalf. They refused. I then suggested that Nole and I divide the remaining food and costs. He took the food but chose not to share the costs.

The next year when he asked to join me on a deer hunting trip, I told him that I had other plans. I never went hunting with him again. I had learned my lesson and paid my dues.

My Game Cart

In most instances the deer and elk that I shot were some distance from my vehicles because I found that I was more successful when I hiked a mile or more away from the nearest road. When the animal was large I found it necessary to cut it into portions that I could attach to my backpack.

Several times I observed persons who had carts that enabled them to transport their game animal from the place they shot them to their trucks. Finally I decided to build a game cart of my own.

I secured my first game cart at a garage sale. It had been made to pull a small boat with a bicycle to and from a small lake in the neighborhood. The bicycle wheels on this cart were sufficient for hauling a medium sized deer, but when I attempted to transport a full sized elk, the wheels and axle collapsed. I not only ended up backpacking my elk off the mountain, but also the remains of my cart.

By the time of the next hunting season, with the assistance of my friend, Eddie Miles, I bent and welded conduit pipes according to the dimensions and shape of a sturdy game cart I had designed. I made sure that my game cart had sufficient bracing and an axle that would support an elk that might weigh as much as 600-700 pounds. The wheels were narrow motorcycle wheels found at a garage sale. I secured a strong axle at a junk yard. It was well that my game cart was ready the next time I went hunting because during that season my cart ended up hauling two large deer and three elk of my hunting party. In most instances one person has been able to pull this cart because of the ball bearing inserts that I had added that greatly assisted the maneuverability of my cart. I transported this cart on top of my vehicle or in the bed of a truck. Over the years I have found this cart to be durable and helpful for moving many things besides game animals: logs, firewood, garbage cans, cement bags, spare tires, tools, grandchildren, etc.

Necessity and observation are truly the mothers of inventions.

Matchless Mountain Elk Hunt

One year, just before a scheduled elk hunt, I learned that my usual hunting partners were not able to join me due to a series of unexpected events. Briefly I wrestled with the advisability of going elk hunting by myself, for elk hunting requires much more effort in most instances than hunting deer or antelope. At that time in pursuit of elk, I had a tendency to walk far away from roadways traveled by most hunters. My legs were strong and my determination to explore new ground to secure an elk was even stronger. Since I was all packed and had already purchased my hunting license, I finally decided to go despite the possible danger and Jeane's reluctance to see me leave alone.

I camped in the back of my station wagon and spent most of my time hiking the back country of Taylor Park above Gunnison, Colorado. Each evening I would check in with another hunter who was camping near my chosen site and was also hunting alone. He tended to hunt the mountain across the valley from Matchless Mountain.

Each morning before daybreak I began my climb up Matchless Mountain hoping to arrive at timberline just before the light of the sun began to reach into the darkness of the trail I followed. High above timberline I could use my binoculars to spot animals moving up from the valleys below into the high ridges surrounding me. As the sun crept over the vast vista below me, on a few occasions the movements of deer and big horn sheep drew my attention to trails and resting places that were not apparent except from the vantage points that I discovered in my wanderings. On two occasions I came face to face with big horn sheep that were just as surprised as I was.

One morning I awakened to discover that the weather was changing from that of an Indian summer to the bitter cold of an impending winter storm. I decided that climbing the trail into the high mountains would help me get warm, so off I went. Since it was so cold, I kept moving even after I reached timberline and my usual places to use my binoculars. After I had circled the top of the mountain several times in the midst of a chilling wind, I decided to slip back down the mountain into the surrounding timber where I would be more protected. Before I reached the timber, I spotted two elk moving just above timberline in my direction. Quickly, I slipped into a ravine that led me closer to where the elk would cross my path. I waited until I was sure of my shot before I pulled the trigger of my 270. Although fatally wounded, my chosen target turned up the hill moving directly toward my hiding place. About fifty feet away it slowly crumpled to the ground and died. As I rose to begin the task of removing the elk's gut, I suddenly became aware that the remaining live elk had returned to the place where I had shot my elk and was moving up the ravine to where his companion lay dead. As he approached the dead elk, he snorted and appeared to be trying to get his companion to get up and move on down the trail. Then when he discovered my presence, he laid his antlers against his back and trotted up the mountain and over the crest of the ridge I had earlier descended. Even today I am strangely moved by the visual memory of that experience.

When it came time to begin moving portions of my elk to my station wagon far below, I soon realized the tremendous chore I was undertaking. I removed the two hind

quarters and drug them across the snow to the trail that would lead me to my vehicle. When I reached a steep meadow above my car, I decided to take a shortcut by sliding straight down the slope. The snow was slick and too soon I realized that I had best let the two hindquarters slide on their own down the hill until they reached the bottom. I also slid, almost out of control, until I reached a spot where I could once more regain my footing. By the time I reached my station wagon, I was worn out. I was too tired to lift the elk quarters into the back of my stationwagon.

As I was pondering what I should do, the person who was camping near me came down off the mountain where he had been hunting. He assisted me to load my elk quarters and then he suggested that we return back up the trail to secure the rest of my elk least the snow bury it so that it could not be retrieved. Although tired, I trudged back up the mountain to timberline. By that time a blinding blizzard was blasting across the open ground above timberline. With some difficulty I found the remainder of my elk and packed the tenderloins, meat from between the ribs, liver and heart in a large backpack for my fellow hunter to carry. I then attached the remaining 200+ pound front quarters, neck and head to my pack frame and we headed down the mountain. By the time we reached my station wagon, we were numb from the cold and so tired that the two of us had difficulty loading my heavy load into the car.

We both were driving two wheel drive vehicles and barely reached the main road due to the accumulating snow. My fellow hunter decided to head for Gunnison while I decided to chance the shorter route home over Cottonwood Pass. Only 9-12" of snow covered the road as I ascended the pass, but as soon as I began my decent to Buena Vista, the drifting snow soon reached the top of my bumper. Since there was no where to turn around and the road was steep and full of switchbacks, I found myself fully committed to traveling on, hoping to reach civilization. That which would normally have taken me less than 45 minutes to travel took me over 3 1/2 hours.

My stationwagon was the last vehicle to cross Cottonwood Pass that winter. I was never so glad to reach a town in my life. My fingers and arms were sore and very tense from holding onto the steering wheel and keeping the car on the road. That day no cars had traveled that road before me.

It snowed all of the way back to our home in Colorado Springs. One house below our home, one of my back tires blew out with such a loud bang that several neighbors came to their doors to see what had exploded. I often wonder what might have occurred had that studded snow tire blown out on my way down Cottonwood Pass.

Truly the Lord was watching over me.

Never Alone

One year while elk hunting, on a Sunday afternoon, I drove to a high point from which I had hoped to use my spotting scope to discover where my hunting partner and I might have the best chance for success.

Shortly after I had parked my 4 wheel drive, I began to hear a steady hissing sound.

To our dismay we discovered that one of my almost new, heavy duty tires had incurred a small leak due to an encounter with one of many sharp rocks along our way. Of necessity we put on my spare tire.

Hesitant to drive any distance without an additional spare tire, I drove to the nearest town only to discover that the kind of help we needed was not available on Sundays in Gypsum. We were assured that help could be found about 28 miles away in Glenwood Springs. Thus I drove to Glenwood Springs only to learn that our hoped for help would not be available until Monday morning.

Disappointed and a bit frustrated, we returned to our campsite. During this period of time it was not easy to remember that no matter how prolonged our wait, how profound our frustrations and doubts, no matter how much we had planned to be about other things, the promise of the gospel is that we are never alone in our grief, for God is ever with us no matter how trying our circumstances.

Early the next morning our tire was repaired in Glenwood Springs.

Dick's Last Deer Hunt

It was my privilege to take Rev. Dick Plants on his last deer hunt. Dick was dying of cancer.

When Dick was asked to make a list of things that he wished to do before he died, one last deer hunt was on the top of his list.

Most of the ministers of the Rocky Mountain Conference did not hunt and many of them frowned upon those that did. Even so, Dick, Rev. Jim Cavender, Rev. Billie Bowden and I had been hunting together for three deer and elk seasons. Prior to Dick's last deer hunt, Jim and Billie had been transferred to Wyoming.

I was pleased that Dick's wife asked me if I might take Dick deer hunting one more time.

Dick's health was deteriorating quickly, but when I asked him if he was up to going deer hunting with me, he told me that he would sure like to give it a go.

Opening day found us in familiar hunting grounds north of Gypsum, Colorado. I assisted Dick to a location a short distance from our camp where he could sit and watch for deer as they wandered to and from their bedding and feeding areas.

I then served as a bird dog pushing deer out of their hiding places and hoping they would follow the trails near Dick's location.

Shortly before noon I saw a herd of deer heading toward Dick. Then I heard a shot. Through my binoculars I could see the broad grin of triumph etched across Dick's face.

I hurried to his side and helped him to gut out a fine 4 point mule deer.

As I was dragging his deer to my station wagon, another 4 point buck arose from its hiding place. In no time at all both of us had our deer and were joyously heading home. Dick was pleased and relieved. One of his major wishes had been fulfilled. God's grace had shined upon us.

A few months later, Dick passed on to be with those who had gone before him.

Michael's First Antelope

There is something very special about introducing a loved one to the wonder, awe and sadness of hunting. I shall never forget my son, Michael's first antelope hunt. Early in the year, he and I had applied for our permits. He could hardly wait to learn of the results of our applications. Daily he would check the mail box only to be disappointed when no reply was found. Then finally the big day arrived. I was still at work when he telephoned to share his good news that he had received his very first antelope license. He wanted to know if it would be all right for him to open my envelope to see if I had also received a permit. I said, "Yes!" My license was there. That evening we wrote to Mike Bohart, a rancher near Calahan, Colorado (about 40 miles from our home in Colorado Springs) to gain permission to hunt his land. The next week Mike Bohart let us know that permission was granted.

When the big day arrived for us to go hunting, Michael was awake much before the appointed hour. Jeane prepared us a big breakfast and an even bigger lunch. Then she hesitatingly bid us, "Good luck!" We arrived at the Bohart Ranch well before dawn and had to wait with others until the appointed shooting hour before we were allowed to check in.

That morning, from a distance, Michael and I saw several herds of antelope. None of them were close enough for him to get a good shot. Late that morning we spotted a lone buck antelope feeding near a bank of hills about a half mile distant from our vehicle. It had already seen us and was watching us every time he raised his head from securing a bite to eat. I suggested that I remain where the antelope could keep an eye on me to distract his attention from Michael. I encouraged Michael to walk along a game trail that would take him out of the sight of the antelope behind a bank of hills. I told him to note where the antelope was in relation to the hill he would quietly climb. I told him to peek over the crest of the hill to be sure that he was where he could make a good shot. Only when he was sure of his shot was he to take the safety off. Once more we checked to be sure that the antelope was still there. It was. Michael began his stalk. Time went by and I began to wonder where Michael had gone. Then I saw the antelope raise its head and look toward the hill behind which Michael was to shoot. After a while the antelope went back to feeding. Still no shot rang out. Another 10 to 15 minutes went by before finally I heard Michael shoot. Immediately the antelope went down. I began walking toward the downed antelope. Only then did I see Michael walking quickly to his first big game animal. When he was sure that it was really dead, he set down his rifle and began running toward me shouting, "I got him! I got him!" This was a special moment. Then he ran back to his antelope. We dressed his antelope, drag it to the car and loaded it in the back. For a while we hunted for an antelope for me, but I was relieved that my license went unfilled, for this was Michael's day. When he showed his mother his antelope, there was something different in his voice. A new sense of self assurance had become apparent. He had placed meat upon his family's

table and had done so with one shot that allowed his antelope not to suffer. I was proud that he was concerned and touched by the life that he had taken.

No Shot Antelope

In 2009, it was time for Michael's son, Joshua, to hunt. His successfully completed Hunter's Safety Card allowed him to apply with the Colorado Division of Fish and Game for antelope, elk, deer and moose hunting licenses.

Early in June we learned that he, his father and I each successfully drew deer, elk and antelope licenses. Joshua could hardly wait to go hunting.

The previous Christmas I had given Joshua my 30-06 rifle as a gift.

During the late summer the three of us sighted in our rifles, gathered our hunting gear and finally secured a place near Yoder, Colorado, to hunt antelope.

Opening morning of antelope season found the three of us driving into the land on which we had permission to hunt. As we approached the only water pond on this land, a herd of antelope fled from a gully near the water and eventually slid under a fence on the neighboring land. Soon we discovered that this herd of antelope was the only herd to be found on the land we were allowed to hunt.

I suggested that Michael and Joshua should look for a place to hide close to the pond. They felt that there were few place to hide near the pond, so they decided to settle into a shallow gully about 800 yards away.

I decided to search the remainder of the land in hopes of discovering additional herds of antelope. About an hour later I climbed a hill that gave me a chance to look into the land into which the herd of antelope had fled. To my amazement I discovered that the herd had recrossed the neighbor's fence and was slowly working their way back to the pond on the land we were allowed to hunt.

I scurried down the hill to Michael and Joshua and informed them of what I had discovered. I did not have time to seek another spot to hide apart from Joshua and Michael because an antelope peered over the hill right after I had reached their location. Within a few minutes the whole herd appeared, moving slowly toward the pond of water.

For over six hours we were pinned down by the watchful eyes of the antelope. We never got closer than 400 yards of the nearest animal. Soon the antelope moved around a small knoll out of sight. We then attempted to approach them by keeping the knoll between us and them. Michael and I wanted Joshua to have the first shot.

By the time we peaked over the knoll, the antelope had moved a long way across the prairie from us. We waited until about an hour before dark and then returned to our vehicle to return to the main road. From the main road we were able to spot that antelope herd once more, but our allowed shooting time was about to expire. We decided to return the next morning and to station ourselves closer to the pond in the hopes of filling our antelope tags.

As we were traveling between Yoder and Ellicot in the dark, an antelope ran into the side of Michael's four wheel drive. Knowing that an antelope had hit his vehicle, Michael slammed on his brakes and pulled over to the side of the road. Joshua and I got out and surveyed the roadway behind us. I cleared a piece of the fender out of the

roadway and with Joshua discovered the dead buck antelope on the edge of the road. Since I had the only buck license, I was persuaded to tag the animal. Thus I had my no shot antelope.

We loaded it into Michael's vehicle and drove the short distance to my daughter's home in Colorado Springs. There Joshua received a lesson in cleaning an antelope and removing its hide. Apparently the antelope had broken its neck, for there was not much damage elsewhere.

Because Michael was concerned about his vehicle, we decided to forego hunting the next morning and returned to our homes in Boulder. Needless to say, Joshua was disappointed.

To make matters worse, when it was time for us to go deer and elk hunting Joshua turned up sick. Therefore Michael and I decided not to go hunting until the next weekend. Then Joshua discovered that he was needed to fill a position on his high school varsity team, even though he was a freshman, because the person who normally filled that position broke his hand during the previous weekend football game. Thus the 2009 Colorado hunting season ended without Joshua even having a chance to fill his tags.

We are already looking forward to next year.

Michael's First Deer

The same year that Michael shot his first antelope, he also shot his first mule deer. In October we joined Bill Keck and traveled to a campsite near Gypsum, Colorado. On the first afternoon of opening day of deer season I managed to tag my deer below Greenhorn Mountain. Consequently I was able to devote my full attention to helping Michael and Bill to locate deer for them to tag. As the day began to turn into evening, it appeared that we might have to wait another day to try once more for them to have a chance to shoot their deer. I left them scoping the surrounding hills and began clearing rocks from the faint roadway leading down the hill to our campsite. I had cleared several hundred yards of the path when I spotted three buck deer standing on a point of land below me. Quickly, I ran up the hill to let Michael and Bill know about my discovery.

Michael and I returned to the spot where I had first sighted the deer while Bill followed a game trail that took him down through the trees a short distance from us. Fortunately the deer had not wandered far from the place they had been. They were on the crest of a hill. Carefully Michael aimed and shot. The deer disappeared into the steep gully below them. We trailed Michael's deer and found it, gutted it, and left it to cool away from the dust of the roadway near our campsite.

The next morning we helped Bill spot a deer that he tagged and then we went to retrieve Michael's deer. When we arrived at the stump over which we had hung the deer, it was not there. We could see where it had been dragged away. We followed the drag marks and soon discovered Michael's deer. Something had begun to eat a portion of the deer's hind leg. Deer hair was scattered for about 6 feet all around Michael's deer. Mountain lion tracks were much in evidence.

Apparently we had scared the lion away from its morning's breakfast. I told Michael that I was sure that the Fish and Game would allow him to get another license so that he could try for another deer. He reminded me that this was his first deer. We agreed that we would cut off the leg of the deer that the lion had been eating and leave it there. We then carried the remaining, lighter portion of the deer up the hill to the truck.

I am sure that every time Michael looks at the antlers of his first deer he is reminded most of the lion that almost took his first deer away from him.

Mountain Lions

When possible my brother, Donald, and I would hunt elk on the mountain behind our farm in Hamilton, Montana. Our farm was on the edge of the Selway Wilderness. From the farm house with our binoculars we could often see elk feeding high up on the mountain. Don and I would hike up the mountain hoping to get a shot at one of these majestic animals. Most of the time the elk would see or smell us coming and disappear into the many clusters of thick trees and brush.

One morning we cut the tracks of a mountain lion. The snow was deep and the lion had climbed a tall yellow pine that was at least 50 feet from the next nearest tree. We had hoped to get a shot at this mountain lion. For over an hour we searched the branches of this tree, but never did we see the mountain lion. There were no tracks leading away from that tree. We even examined the lion's tracks and found no evidence that it had backtracked away from the tree. We listened for any sound that it might have made, but we never heard anything out of the ordinary. Somehow or other it had disappeared into thin air.

One time while retracing our tracks in the snow near Lewiston, Montana, with my brother, Donald, we crossed a set of tracks of a mountain lion that had followed us as we hunted deer along a winding ridge above a series of aspen groves. We must have spooked it as we turned around to return to our truck, for we could see where it bounded over twenty feet in one leap as it left our trail. Several times it must have leaped twenty or more feet from one set of tracks to another. It is little wonder that mountain lions can kill deer and elk with much consistency.

Another time while I was hunting near Gunnison, Colorado, in the Taylor Park area, I sat on a ledge high above a meadow where I hoped to spot an elk. About a half an hour before dark I spotted movement along the creek that meandered through the meadow. With my binoculars I was able to see that a mountain lion was lapping water from the creek much like a house cat might. Later that evening it was necessary for me to cross that meadow in the dark as I made my way back to camp.

Since that time I have seen several mountain lions in my wanderings in a variety of locations, even within the city limits of Boulder, Colorado.

Michael's First Elk

My son, Michael's first elk hunt was in Taylor Park.

My hunting partner, Bill Keck had a 14' Ambassador trailer that provided us with shelter and a warm place to eat and sleep in a campground called Dinner Station. Three persons fit in that trailer very comfortably.

On opening day, before daylight, we climbed high above timberline so that we could watch for elk moving up from the valleys below as many hunters entered the woods to begin their morning's hunt. As dawn began to break, we could see the lights of hunters' four wheel drives far below moving along the dirt roads. Our climb to our mountain lookouts had brought us warmth despite the bitter, cold weather. After we stopped climbing and claimed a place where we could sit and watch in anticipation of the possibility of seeing elk moving up the ridges of the canyons below us, all too soon cold air began to penetrate the many layers of our hunting clothes. We could hardly wait for the warmth of the sun to rise above the surrounding mountain tops. Dawn seems to be the coldest part of most mornings. Keeping warm occupied much of Michael's attention that morning. Throughout the morning we kept watch, hoping that someone would push an elk or two in our direction. This was not to be.

After we ate our lunch, we moved to another ridge where we could see thousands of acres spread out in the valleys below us. We remained there until almost dark and then slowly followed a steep game trail that led us back to our waiting GMC.

The next morning we climbed a more distant mountain, hoping to discover where the elk might have taken shelter from the hordes of anxious hunters. During the night the weather had turned even colder than the day before. Since Michael could only hunt that morning due to his need to board a bus in Gunnison to return to school the next day, we found a place where we could sit and watch several canyons and meadows hoping that Michael would have a chance to shoot his first elk. The cold was almost unbearable. I hoped that Michael would not become discouraged with elk hunting, despite the cold.

Before we knew it, it was time to start moving toward our vehicle so that Michael would be on time to board a Greyhound bus to return home. As he boarded the bus, he told me that he was sorry that we had not shot an elk, but that he had had a great time despite the cold. He wished Bill and me well in our continuing efforts to hunt elk, and he looked forward to our next elk hunt together. That night his mother met a very tired young man at the bus station.

The next year we decided to hunt elk near Gypsum, Colorado, just below Greenhorn Mountain. Bill and I were very familiar with this area, for we often hunted deer there. We had often seen elk whenever we hunted deer, but because of a split elk and deer season, we hunted elk near Gunnison and deer near Gypsum. For the first time in several years we were allowed to hunt deer and elk during the same season. Bill and I decided that we would hunt near Gypsum.

During several of our previous hunts we had named some of the surrounding hills. One hill we called "Doe Hill" because we often saw doe deer and cow elk on it. Another hill we called "Spotting Hill" because we could use our spotting scopes on this hill and see the surrounding country for almost 360 degrees. It was near "Spotting Hill" that Michael shot his first deer.

Early during the second morning of our elk hunt, we spotted a herd of seven elk running down Greenhorn Mountain toward "Doe Hill." Michael and I decided that we

would run up "Doe Hill" and attempt to get a shot at the elk that were now climbing "Doe Hill" just out of our sight. As I stopped to catch my breath, an inspiration struck me. I sensed that this herd would travel across "Doe Hill" and run down the opposite side. I told Michael about my thoughts. He decided to continue climbing. I ran down the mountain to our vehicle where Bill was waiting. We drove around the hill just as six of the seven elk came running across the dirt trail. Bill and I managed to load our guns and each to shoot an elk. About that time I was wishing that Michael had run back to the truck with me. The remaining four elk were running in circles around their dead leaders. They scattered as we moved toward our fallen elk.

Just as I reached my elk, I heard a shot from the top of "Doe Hill." Then through my binoculars, I saw Michael raise his arms in a victory sign. As pleased as I was about getting my own elk, I was many more times pleased that Michael had managed to get his first elk. By the time Bill and I had cleaned and loaded our two elk and began driving back along the trail over which we had come, we spotted Michael coming down the mountain dragging his elk. In a very brief time we had his elk loaded and returned to our campsite to hang, skin and bag our elk. The cool air and the shade of surrounding trees soon cooled the flesh of our elk. Jeane and Michael's sister, Bonnie were very proud to discover that Michael had shot his first elk. Bonnie often says that elk is her favorite meat.

Michael has shot several elk since his first elk, but I doubt that any of them have been so special.

Wildlife Photography

One of the hobbies I enjoy is photographing wildlife. The first time I remember having a small box camera of my own was when our family was going to Glacier Park.

Shortly after we entered the park, a long line of cars was backed up, slowly creeping forward because of a bear jam. A sow grizzly and three cubs were the main attraction. When we drew near to the bears, Donald opened the door of our car and almost pushed me out so that I could get a good, close-up picture of this bear family. Although frightened because of my proximity to the bears, I did manage to get a good picture. This was my first wildlife photo. I still have this photograph. On that trip to Glacier I took many photographs of wildlife, especially of grizzlies, for they were very prevalent in those days in most of the campgrounds we visited.

Since that trip, early in my childhood, I have taken many exceptional photographs of wildlife in all seasons including: elk, deer, antelope, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, mountain lions, wolves, marmots, pica, squirrels, pheasants, grouse, ptarmigan, blue herons, sandhill cranes, geese, a variety of ducks and fish to name a few. My experiences bow hunting taught we how to draw near to wildlife without disturbing them so that most of my pictures were taken with ordinary lens. I have framed and given many of my photographs as gifts to friends and family members through the years.

When I was serving as one of the ministers of Lakewood United Methodist Church, I helped form a photography club that met monthly to listen to the input of expert photographers. Following these presentations we were given the assignment of

taking twenty pictures that followed the advice of our expert presenter. At the next meeting of our photography club we viewed and critiqued slides and photographs that our club members had taken. We then had another expert presentation with another follow-up assignment. We also set up a lab where we developed many of our black and white photos. The inputs of this club's presentations greatly enhanced my ability to take quality photographs.

Since my first box camera, Pentax, Nikon and Olympus cameras and a growing number of enlargement lens have become a part of my photographing excursions. Picture framing and mat cutting have also become a part of my photography hobby.

Someone once said that a picture can speak a thousand words. Some of the photographs I have been privileged to take reveal something new to me each time I view them. Many of these photographs bring me back to the time, place and circumstances when I was fortunate enough to take these pictures.

Pikes Peak Big Horn Sheep Hunt

In 1981, despite the odds, my hunting partner and I drew permits to hunt big horn sheep on Pikes Peak. Only ten permits were issued that year for Pikes Peak and Bill and I drew two of them. When we went to the mandatory education class held by the Colorado Fish and Game Department we learned that some persons had been putting in for permits for over 18 years and had not drawn one. Some how or other the luck of the draw granted us permits on our very first try.

Although we were permitted to shoot a ram that had 1/2 curl or better, Bill and I decided to pass up rams that had less than a full curl since we would be allowed only one big horn sheep ram once in a life time in Colorado. We backpacked to the farthest west ridge of the seven primary ridges on Pikes Peak and set up a base camp. From there we hunted from dawn to dusk each of 18 days. On the fifth day, using my binoculars, I spotted a ram that had over a full curl of horn. The problem was that it was just inside the Colorado Springs off limits watershed. Over the course of the next week I spotted that ram from time to time, but it never left the protected area.

Wildlife was very much in evidence on Pikes Peak. Bill and I often saw deer and elk that would easily have made the Boone and Crocket records. We also saw coyotes, fox, blue grouse, squirrels, eagles, and buzzards.

On one occasion after Bill and I had hiked one of the long ridges, Bill decided to rest near a large rock while I explored another finger of that ridge. I was gone for almost two hours and upon returning noticed buzzards circling high above the place where I had left Bill. As I approached Bill's resting place, I noticed that the buzzards were circling closer and closer to the ground. By the time I saw Bill, still sleeping, I realized that the buzzards must have thought that Bill was fair game, for they were about to land next to Bill when I rushed to Bill and warned that he had better look more alive or surely the buzzards would be having him for dinner. I don't remember Bill sleeping outside of our tent the rest of our trip.

One day I spotted a ram across a canyon that had almost a full curl. I was tempted to shoot it since it was the only large ram outside of the one in the watershed

that I had seen. I could see one side of its massive horns. I was glad that I had waited until I could see the other side because that side of the ram's horn was badly damaged and broomed. Later that day I led another sheep hunter to the spot where he could take a shot at that ram. It turned out that that ram was the only ram taken by a hunter that year on Pikes Peak.

After Bill left to return to work, I remained on Pikes Peak for another four days hoping to fill my big horn tag. On the evening of the third day, after a very long hike, I was returning to my campsite.

About a mile from my tent I had to descend a steep place that was covered with large rocks. As I stepped on one rock, my weight dislodged it from its resting place. It slid down the slope and dislodged additional rocks causing a minor rock slide. I knew that I had best attempt to get off that rock. An approaching piece of green grass between several large rocks appeared to be a safe place for me to land. As I began to remove myself from my rock toboggan, the shift of my weight spun my launching pad around so that I was now facing uphill. Fortunately I was in mid-stride when another sizable, dislodged rock hit me in both of my knees just below the knee caps. Had I been firmly planted, I doubt that my legs could have taken the blow that would have surely resulted. I did land on the strip of grass and remained there for some time in much pain hesitating to roll up my bloody pant legs to see what damage the rock had done to my knees. When I did examine my legs, I discovered that my legs were badly cut and bruised and that both legs appeared to be deformed at the ball joints just below the knee caps.

It took me several hours to hobble to my tent and sleeping bag. I was still in my sleeping bag when my son arrived in my camp to assist me to carry my camping gear to our car. Fortunately, we had prearranged that day to be the day when my son would join me. Michael was surprised to find me still in camp. I told him what had happened. We packed up and began a long, painful hike to our car. Although I should have gone to the doctor right away, I didn't. Slowly, I recovered. Some years later I had orthoscopic surgery done on one of my knees to remove some of the scar tissue and torn ligaments that had resulted from my encounter on Pikes Peak.

I was greatly dismayed that one of the strongest parts of my body could be damaged so noticeably in only a brief moment. That which we take so for granted may be the very place where we are most vulnerable.

[A Blood Clot](#)

On March 1, 1999, I had orthoscopic surgery on one of my knees to repair a torn meniscus tendon. Ten days following that surgery I returned to my doctor for my post operation checkup. I reported that all was well except for a pain deep in my calf muscle of the leg that had not been operated on. My doctor indicated that the pain was probably due to the fact that I was taking my rehabilitation exercises too seriously. I was a bit concerned because my sister, Barbara had died of a blood clot on January 17, 1997, following surgery. Later, on November 8, 1999, my brother, Lawrence died also of a blood clot following surgery.

On April 1st I returned to my doctor with a leg that was badly swollen and the color of a Polish sausage. He sent me immediately to the nearby Lutheran Hospital. There it was determined that I had a massive blood clot throughout my leg.

After some discussion it was determined that I would have a new procedure done that vacuumed the clots from my leg. Six hours later I was lying on an x-ray machine with a multitude of doctors and nurses present as observers. A probe with a very small vacuum, an instrument like a miniature rotor rooter and a tiny camera connected to monitoring screens and computers was inserted into my leg artery. Throughout the procedure I watched the monitors and heard the varied discussions of the doctors and observers. I was then moved to 6th floor, which I happened to know was the Hospice floor of the hospital. Fortunately, there were already too many patients in the room that they had me scheduled to occupy. I was then moved to the 5th floor, but that room was also overbooked. Finally, they moved me to the 3rd floor and a private room. For the next four hours, I discovered that only a nurse and the gurney attendant, not even my doctor or the main desk, knew where I was in that hospital. There I stayed for 7 days during Holy Week and Easter. My associate ended up delivering the sermons I had prepared for the worship services of the church I was serving.

During my recovery time I was placed on a very potent medicine and not allowed to move least a hidden blood clot rush from my leg to my brain, lungs, or my heart.

My first night's nurse was a nurse in training. She entered my private room with a penlight flashlight in her mouth as she attempted to draw blood from my arm. Since I was in a private room, I asked her why she did not turn on the lights? She told me that she needed to practice using the penlight should she be called upon to be with a patient in a multiple patient ward.

After 5 attempts to draw blood in the dark, I asked her to get someone else to draw my blood. I was not happy being her guinea pig. She reported that she was responsible for the patients in a given number of rooms. I told her that I would not have her punch any more holes in my arm. Someone else would need to draw my blood. I never saw her again.

The next morning the cleaning lady entered my room and asked me to roll over so that she could change my bed linen. I told her that I was not to move due to the dangers of a blood clot. She insisted that I roll over. I told her that she would have to check with the nursing station. She also never returned. From that day on, I received wonderful care from the hospital personnel.

Seven days later I was blessed to leave the hospital. I was put on coumadin for 6 months and had to have my blood checked twice each week to determine the right dosage. I was pleased when I no longer had to take coumadin. Ever since the procedure, my ankle tends to swell whenever I am on my feet too long.

[The Montana Gilpatrick Ranch](#)

In 1997, quite by accident, my brother, Donald and I discovered the Gilpatrick Ranch. Donald and I had put in for a hunting license for Montana. We were successful. We were entitled to hunt one buck deer. We were also informed that we could enter a

drawing for additional deer doe permits. Accidentally, I entered one wrong number on my doe application. Instead of being allowed to hunt near Harlowtown, Montana, I had applied for a doe permit to hunt just north of Lewistown in the Snowy Range. I had never hunted there before. Donald and I were both successful in securing our requested permits. After we arrived in Montana, we found that there were additional permits available that we could purchase at licensed sporting goods stores. Donald and I each secured one more doe permit. It was as we were filling out our application at the sporting goods store that I discovered that I had applied for and received a permit for the area north of Lewistown.

The next day we were both successful in tagging our doe deer near Harlowtown. We decided to see if I could find a place to hunt to fill my doe permit near Lewistown. Early in the morning we drove north to explore the area of the Snowy Range. From the highway we spotted deer feeding on a distant hill. All we needed was permission to hunt that land. We drove up the nearest dirt road that led to a distant ranch house. There we met an elderly woman, Mrs. Gilpatrick. It turned out that I had taught and coached several of her great grand children when I was teaching in Denton, Montana. After we asked permission to hunt her land, she asked, "How many permits do you have?" I told her, "Only one." As it turned out, she had hoped that we had more than one permit, for herds of deer were everywhere.

When I asked her where her land began and where it ended, she informed us that we did not need to worry about getting off her land, for she and her son owned all of the land for miles surrounding the dirt road on which we had traveled. She told us that eventually the dirt road would lead to a gate that entered the BLM land and then the national forest. She assured us we would surely get our deer long before we arrived at the BLM land. She requested that we not shoot deer that were among her many herds of black angus cattle or near any of their ranch buildings. We assured her we would be very careful.

As we drove down the road we saw many herds of mule and whitetail deer. We decided to drive until we reached the BLM land and then to return to shoot a deer. When we reached the gate to enter the BLM land, Donald and I decided to explore some of that land also. After a brief drive up a rocky canyon over a seldom used dirt road, we turned around to head back to the Gilpatrick land. Before we arrived at the gate, we encountered a large whitetail buck that seemed determined to pass in front of our truck. We slowed down to allow him to pass. He then ran up a logging road. We followed him to see where he might go. When we reached a wide spot in that road, we spotted three large mule deer does standing beside some aspen trees. I decided it was time to fill my doe tag. I took my gun out of its case and stepped out of the truck as Donald drove on up the logging trail. When I shot my deer the whole creekbed exploded with over fifty or more deer. We loaded my doe in the back of our truck in less than ten minutes due to Donald's deer cleaning skills and because we were able to backup right to the deer.

When we returned to the place where we had met Mrs. Gilpatrick to thank her for our successful hunt, we met her son John. He shared with us some of the difficulties of maintaining a ranch and making a living due to the increasing regulations that the government was seeking to enforce especially around predators such as mountain lions, bears and wolves. As we ended our conversation, we asked if we might check

with him for permission to hunt his place again should we be fortunate enough to be granted another Montana hunting license. This inquiry has led to many deer hunts on the Gilpatrick Ranch. For some years we have also been blessed with the privilege of renting a wonderful cabin on the Gilpatrick land. We are indeed thankful for Mr. Gilpatricks' kindness that allows us to hunt his bountiful, beautiful land each year.

Moose

In 2006, I hunted elk near Winter Park, Colorado. This was my first time to hunt in this area, so every day was a new adventure of exploring and discovery. Each morning we arrived at a new location well before daybreak. We began our hunt by following a path or game trail up a valley or mountain so that we would be some distance away from the nearest road long before first light. In the dark it was difficult to get much of a picture of the land in which we were traveling. As dawn began to arrive, and despite the frost and the snow, our movement tended to generate warmth as we anticipated the possibilities of a new day of hunting.

Soon meadows, ridges, tree lines, side valleys and even game trails began to become apparent. Birds began to sing and the flowing stream changed its tune as it tumbled first down steep rapids and then across wide meadows.

Since I was in new territory I found myself wandering further and further up the pathways hoping to become familiar with the new land. I did see a number of deer in my travels, but elk seemed to allude me even though I saw a fair number of tracks where they had once been.

As I was nearing the end of the trail over which I was traveling, something in me told me to look behind me. It might have been a sound I heard or a sixth sense I felt. I turned around only to discover a large bull moose in full charge. I jumped off the trail and got behind a large evergreen that fortunately had branches all of the way down to the ground. In the next few moments I saw the moose up close and personal. I never knew that I could run so fast. That moose chased me around the tree three times one way and then two times the other way. I could almost feel his breath and I definitely could see his eyes glaring at me as he thrashed the tree that separated us. Finally, he turned away and trotted down toward the creek below us. His parting shot was a series of grunts as he looked back over his shoulder at me.

Since he had my back trail blocked, I decided to go further up the valley before me. Soon the walls of the valley narrowed leaving only a few feet between me, the stream, and the cliff wall on the other side of the creek. I sure did not want to be cornered in that location. I looked back down the route that I had traveled. I turned around wondering where that moose might now be. When I drew near the area where the moose had charged me, I found the hair on the back of my neck standing on end. I was hyper alert. I did not see that moose again, but I did see one more that day and another the next morning. In 2007, I put in for a moose license. I was not successful in securing a license.

This was not the first time that I had been chased by a moose. When I was 10 or 11 my family was camping and fishing on the Ruby River in southwestern Montana.

Each morning family members wandered up and down the river fishing and enjoying the scenery and wildlife. As I fished my way down the river, I discovered a young bull moose that was determined that I was infringing on his territory. I climbed the nearest tree hoping that he would wander on. But he didn't. Each time he disappeared from my sight, I began to think that I could leave the security of that tree. Every time that I began to climb down to go on fishing, he would return and crash into the trunk of the tree and trash the branches just below me. All day long he kept me up that tree. Along about night fall I heard my father and brother calling my name. I responded, but attempted to warn them about the moose. Soon I could see my father and decided that I would once more attempt to climb down out of that tree. Fortunately, the moose had moved on. I am not sure how many fish I caught that day, but the memory of that moose will linger with me the rest of my life.

Additional Close Encounters

In 1989, Jeane and I traveled to Yellowstone Park early in September to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. We had intended to travel to Australia, but our finances would not allow us to spend that much. Because our budget was limited and we were making alternative plans, on the spur of the moment, we decided to visit Yellowstone in the fall.

We intended to stay in available housing, but we found that our chosen time to go to Yellowstone was the same time that droves of senior citizens chose to travel there also. Fortunately, we had packed our backpack tent and thrown in warm sleeping bags. Because available housing was already booked on the first night we arrived in the park, we ended up pitching our tent in one of the campgrounds in the Tetons. That night it snowed and turned very cold. Our tent kept us warm, but the minute we open the tent flap, we discovered that our warm coats were very much needed.

Before we toured any more of the park we made arrangements to sleep in the historic Old Faithful Inn. That night's rest was disturbed by the constant banging of the steam pipes that heated our facilities.

Fortunately, we were able to secure housing in a small cabin in Mammoth Hot Springs near the west entrance to the park. It was there that I decided to photograph herds of elk that had gathered near our cabin. I arose early and began to take pictures of bull elk that were jealously guarding their harems. One six point bull was very impressive, so I attempted to take a few pictures of him with my telephoto lens and Nikon camera. Unfortunately, I moved between that bull elk and one of his herd hidden in a ditch behind me. Immediately the bull charged me. I took cover behind a large cluster of trees as he took out his frustration on some of the branches opposite me. While he was pursuing me a four point bull attempted to run off with a few of his herd. To my relief, the herd bull turned his attention to the four point bull. Later when I had the film in my camera developed I recalled taking five pictures that are still some of my best shots of a bull elk.

In 1998, I joined Glen Spaur, a member of the church I was serving, on a pheasant hunt in eastern Kansas. We stayed at his nephew's house while we were

there. One day we helped his nephew brand, inoculate and test his herd of 38 longhorn cattle. I was surprised how gentle most of his cattle were with the exception of one cow that charged anyone who entered the corral. With the help of an electric cattle prod, we finally got that cantankerous cow to enter the stall that held the cattle tightly while all necessary procedures were accomplished.

His nephew knew most of the land owners and had permission for us to hunt on their land. Most of the pheasants had already been hunted hard for over three weeks before we arrived. Thus we found them well hidden or extremely flighty. We had our share of long distance shots and enjoyed our new surroundings.

We were amazed by the number of whitetail deer we discovered in most of the creek beds and timber belts.

One creek bed seemed to have a goodly share of pheasants, but they tended to run and fly well before us out over a rise on the opposite side of the creek. The next day I suggested that Glen and his nephew walk the creek bed as I hiked along the hillside opposite them. I hoped to cut off the pheasants' escape route and get some shots. Instead of pheasants, a herd of doe whitetail deer were pushed out of the cover surrounding the creek. They rushed up the hill no more than thirty feet from me. A few minutes later a beautiful five point whitetail buck deer rushed up the hill after the fleeing does. As he almost reached the crest of the hill, he spied me and turned around bounding down the hill straight for me. He must have seen me as his competition and he was ready for a fight. I had no where to take cover. For a second I wondered what the Kansas Fish and Game Department would do if I shot that buck in self defense? To my good fortune the buck skidded to a stop about 20 feet away and must have changed his mind about any further aggression. He turned and charged after the does he thought he needed to protect.

Rutting season is a time of real danger for those who enter wildlife's domain.

[Rocky Mountain College Paid Jobs](#)

When I entered the beginning of my freshman year in undergraduate school at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, I had \$380 in my checking account and a small scholarship granted by my high school parents/teachers association. Upon registering for my first classes, I was told that freshmen could not work their first year. I told my assigned counselor that I might as well go home, for I would not be able to pay for my second semester unless I was allowed to work as soon as I could find a job. An exception was made for me to work. A job as a custodian was secured for me on campus. It paid 75 cents an hour. This would hardly do, but I took it and looked for additional paying opportunities. During much of my undergraduate years, in order to pay my expenses and send some money home to my mother, I held a variety of income producing positions: custodian, floor proctor, campus flower agent, campus laundry/dry-cleaning agent, dishwasher and cook, and craft salesperson. I became the campus agent for laundry/dry-cleaning and flowers by personally contacting many laundry/dry-cleaning and floral establishments and asking them what they would pay me if I secured much of the campus trade for them. Most did not take me seriously, but

several did. I returned to the campus and contacted class mates in each dorm to become assistants in my venture.

For the next four years I coordinated most of the floral and laundry/dry-cleaning on campus. During my sophomore year I also served as a student librarian.

Rare Books

While attending Rocky Mountain College, during my junior and senior years, I served as a student assistant for one of my professors, Dr. Posner. Dr. Posner initiated an English club of which I was an active part. We read and discussed one literary work a week.

It was Dr. Posner who introduced me and some of my classmates to rare books. He invited us to join him at a rare book auction that was being held in Billings. It was there that I had the privilege of holding and reading excerpts from several rare books. Several of my classmates purchased a book or two. Since I had little money to spend at that time, except on tuition, I was not among the successful bidders.

This introduction to rare books stimulated my interest in reading and seeking to own a few first addition books and at least a manuscript or two. Future auctions, estate sales and garage sales have allowed me to contribute several first additions and rare books to Perkins School of Theology. I am amazed how many people have rare books that they have little or no appreciation for their value to our rich heritage. Many of these books are often discarded or placed in boxes and places where mildew and decay are inevitable.

While writing my senior English paper on the concept of love in Robert Browning's poetry, I was introduced to the Huntington Estate Library near Pasadena, California. Some years later I was excited to visit this library and to enjoy viewing, reading and turning the pages of a few of the original works of some of the important English and American writers. I believe that the Huntington Library has more original English and American manuscripts and first edition publications than any other library in the world. It was there that I viewed one of the velum manuscripts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and one of the original manuscripts of the Goutenburg Bible. On the day that I was there, a filmed copy of the Dead Sea Scrolls was donated and presented to the library so that persons from all over the world could have access to translate these important Biblical documents. As I viewed some of these originals, I felt like I was in the presence of the Michaelangelo or Charlie Russel of written works.

Quake Lake

In the summer of 1958, and throughout my junior year at Rocky Mountain College I worked in a variety of positions for a new Safeway that was built near our campus. I began as a parking lot attendant who directed traffic for the two weeks of the grand opening. Then I became a shelf stocker who ordered and made sure that the

shelves of my products were well supplied. Soon the manager came to me and asked me to become a checkout clerk. I went to a special school at National Cash Register Co. for three days to learn how to use and maintain most of the machines that Safeway used. Since I was going full time to college, night shift was a perfect time for me to work. In those days Safeway closed at 10 p.m. Often I was assigned the responsibility for closing the store.

One morning my manager called and asked me what had happened the previous evening? I recalled being awakened during the night as my bed shook and slid a few feet across the floor of my dorm room. Since I was from Butte, I had experienced earthquakes before. But I had never experienced a quake as powerful as the one that occurred that night on August 18, 1959. I told my manager that an earthquake had taken place a short time after midnight after I had returned to my dormitory.

He hung up the phone and soon called me back after he listened to the news on the radio. He asked me if I might have some time free that morning to help him organize a major cleanup of a great number of items that had fallen off of the shelves during the quake. I told him that I would be there as soon as I could be. When I arrived, I found cans bent and jars broken, fresh fruit and vegetables, and household goods all over the floors. Of necessity, we closed the store to the public until some order was restored and cleaning could be done. Amazingly, by 2:30 p.m. we were able to open the store to customers who were most desperate, especially for cleaning supplies. Shortly thereafter, our store was functioning almost as usual with less quantities of stock on the shelves and a few less checkout stands being manned because some of our clerks had cleanups to deal with at their own homes.

Even though the epicenter of that earthquake was more than 100 miles away from Billings, the power of the quake that formed Quake Lake, a short distance from Yellowstone Park, was very apparent in many distant homes and communities.

Our family had often fished the Madison River in the very canyon where the huge flow of earth and rocks rushed across the valley to form Quake Lake. Dozens of people were injured and 29 persons were killed in the Rock Creek campground where Quake Lake now exists.

There were many locations that I would not have been surprised to discover that the earth had slid down the mountain as a result of a major earthquake, but the tilted meadow that rolled down this hill and across the valley was truly surprising to me. One never knows in nature what is hidden from our sight, just below the surface around us.

[Working for Atlantic Oil Company](#)

Early in the summer prior to my senior year, I applied for a position with The Atlantic Oil Company as a geologist. My classes in geology at Rocky Mountain College assisted me to be selected from a list of 26 applicants. My interest in geology came naturally to me due to my constant interest in nature and the influence of my grandfather's background as senior sampler in the mines of Butte, Montana. During my time with Atlantic I organized and cataloged their drill sample warehouse, helped plot

potential drilling sites and took samples at several working drill sites. A drilling platform sure can get cold, chaotic and noisy.

One of the most creative bosses that I have worked for was my supervisor at Atlantic. His name was John Sweet. An example of his creativity was his effort to assist his employees to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of what each of us were contributing to our common goal and to encourage each of us to intentionally continue to keep abreast of that which was new in our various areas of expertise. John did this by requiring each of his employees to join others in the regional office each day prior to our coffee breaks for a 15 minute presentation of one of those who worked along side of us. Each employee, including John, the geologists, leasing agents, secretaries, custodians, field personnel, etc. in our regional office was assigned a time to make a presentation on that which was new in his or her field of endeavor.

Near the end of my senior year, due to cost cutting measures, Atlantic's regional office in Billings was combined with and moved to the Casper, Wyoming office. John Sweet, my boss, wanted me to move with the company to Casper. I discovered that some of my associate friends at Atlantic with new families would be laid off as they combined the two offices. My associates needed Atlantic's position more than I did. I turned down John's generous offer. I told him that I would remain in Billings and finish my senior year of college. It was then that he joined others in suggesting that I should go into the ministry.

Bowling

In 1959, I bowled on the Atlantic Oil Company bowling team. My average was 188, but most on this team averaged slightly more than 200. I learned much about bowling from my teammates. Despite having low handicaps we won first place in our league.

When I taught school in Denton, Montana, recreation opportunities were few and far between. A bowling alley was the primary entertainment with the exception of hunting and fishing. Each Saturday I bowled eight or more games. My highest game was 287 and my average exceeded 200.

When I joined the Lakewood United Methodist Church League, I averaged 169. My bowling had deteriorated due to the lack of practice. One consolation was that my handicap was larger than it had ever been. Our team came in first one year, second one year, third two years, and fourth two years. While bowling on the Lakewood team I discovered that many of the church's major decisions were determined at the bowling alley.

I found that bowling was an opportunity for fellowship, competition, exercise and sometimes decision making.

Aurora Borealis

During the Christmas vacation period of 1959, my Junior year at Rocky Mountain College, in Billings, Montana, I was only able to be with my brothers, sisters and mother in Hamilton, Montana, 344 miles away from Billings for only 3 days.

A sense of responsibility and a need for additional income by working at Safeway, cleaning a three story building on campus, and serving as a dorm proctor, made it necessary for me to return to Billings well before the Christmas recess was over.

Reluctantly, I returned the day after Christmas, feeling a bit sorry for myself. Initially, work kept me from feeling alone, neglected and a bit deprived.

I found a bit of my self pity was set aside when I gathered with some of the foreign students who had not even experienced the luxury of spending 3 days with their families during the Christmas recess.

When time would allow, I would gather with one of my friends, David Suh, who was from South Korea. All of his holidays were spent on or near the college campus.

On New Year's Eve David invited me to share a meal with him at a lawyer's home that David was house sitting.

Following our meal together, we both reflected upon difficult moments in our lives.

His father, a Presbyterian minister, and his mother had been murdered when his village had been invaded by the North Koreans.

He spoke about what it was like to be an orphan.

He reflected his deep appreciation for a mentor who enabled him to journey to a new land, to new friends and to secure a college education at Rocky Mountain College far from his native land.

I told him of my own loss of a father to a mining accident and the encouragement of grandparents who insisted that I go on to college.

While we were sharing together, through the front picture window we could see large, fluffy snowflakes gently floating to earth, drifting in small clusters to the soundless movements of a melody which only a gentle breeze seemed to hear, settling in sparkling mounds upon the lawns, trees and roadways all about us.

No traffic was moving and a peaceful stillness seemed to engulf our surroundings.

Then, one of the marvelous wonders of the north began to reflect more of the vibrant beauty of God's creation, as Northern lights of many colors danced among the soft pulsating snowflakes.

Suddenly, the whole earth seemed full of God's glory and our feelings turned from despair to wonder and awe.

We discovered that the Spirit of God had already been at work, even when we were not yet aware of God's presence.

Among the snowflakes there appeared undulating flashes of color: reds and yellows; greens and purples; pinks and pastels of many hues.

On several other occasions I had seen the Aurora Borealis displaying its handiwork across the heavens, but never had it been so spectacular.

Never before or since have I been so struck by the sheer wonder of God's transforming gift revealed in the vivid display of that awesome night.

I doubt that I would have experienced anything quite as amazing as I was privileged to discover had I not returned early from my Christmas recess.

David's hospitality and reflections, combined with the awesome beauty of nature, challenged and changed my perspective of my life obligations, wrestlings and opportunities.

I discovered that some of our greatest blessings come to us unexpectedly in the midst of trying times.

I reflected upon my reluctance to return early to work, and then I marveled how we had been so fortunate to have been invited, even due to necessity, to be present and prepared to receive such a rare display of God's awesome wonders.

In this we discovered that God's Spirit addresses people where they are, and seldom where they wish they were.

We need only be open, expectant, and willing to receive God's blessings, even when they are encased in feelings of loneliness, loss, and reluctance.

[Hitchhiking Home from College](#)

Throughout my college career, I never spent more than my checkbook would allow me to spend, but I seldom had more than a couple of dollars to spend on anything other than bare necessities.

During major holidays, whenever I could find time to visit my family in Hamilton, my concept of "bare necessities" was stretched to the limits of my checkbook. Most often I was forced to hitchhike if I wanted to be home for the holidays. I seldom found it difficult to get a ride, even if the ride brought me only to the next town along my journey. I met many interesting persons by hitchhiking.

I found that it was very important where I chose to hitchhike. Truck stops and places where traffic needed to slow down near pullouts were good places. The edge of towns were also good as long as the cars had not already begun to speed down the highway.

One time I was picked up by a sailor who was going home on leave from a base in Georgia. He had bought a used Lincoln Continental and was bringing it to his home in a small town near Seattle, Washington. As soon as we had traveled to the next town where he filled the car with gas, he asked me where I was headed. I told him, Hamilton, Montana. He told me that he was going through Missoula and could drop me off there. I was pleased. He then asked me if I had a driver's license. I told him, "Yes." He asked me if I would mind driving a ways, since he had been driving straight through from Georgia and he needed some sleep. I told him that would be O K with me. I slipped behind the wheel and almost immediately, he fell asleep. During daylight, Montana had no speed limit, except that which was safe and prudent. I made very good time between Laurel and Boseman and once more between Butte and Missoula. That Lincoln Continental rode smoother than any car I have ever driven. One time I discovered that I was going over 100 miles and hour. I slowed down to 80. When I reached Missoula, I woke up the car's owner. He could not believe that he had slept the entire time. He was very appreciative and so was I.

RMC Outdoor Amphitheater Construction

While I was serving as the chairperson of the Christian Fellowship on campus at Rocky Mountain College it was determined that our campus was in need of an outdoor amphitheater. Some open ground behind Losecamp Hall, the indoor chapel of our campus, was selected as the construction site. To keep in harmony with most of the buildings on campus, it was decided that sandstone quarried from the rim rocks near the campus should be used.

An old gentleman, who had helped quarry and construct several of the buildings on our campus, volunteered to assist Chaplain Art Buehl and me as we led a few others in this effort. Quarrying sandstone was a new experience to us. We also found transporting and learning to shape our quarried sandstone was not only a labor of love, but also a skill not unlike that of Michaelangelo's. At the quarry we used large sledgehammers and large chisels to extract the sandstone from the rim rocks. On campus we used small sledge hammers and smaller chisels to carefully shape the stones. The shaping of the sandstone appeared to be so easy as we watched our stonemason mentor demonstrate his former trade. We, who had much to learn, almost destroyed the first stones we attempted to shape. In time, with much guidance, we began to learn this fading art form. Soon each stone was mortared in place and an altar began to take shape. Then support stones for benches were carefully shaped. An attractive marble top for the altar was secured from the discards of a funeral home. Finally, large dry tree trunks were trucked from the mountains to be planed and used as benches. Almost a year after we had begun this project, we were blessed to hold our first worship service in our new outdoor amphitheater. This amphitheater has been used for numerous special events ever since including: worship services, weddings, anniversaries, assemblies, pep rallies, and many songfests.

It is always special to learn something new. It is also special to share hard and creative work with others. Living takes on additional meaning and purpose when we are allowed to be a part of something that contributes to the ongoing lives of others; something that will far outlive us.

Drama

It was in the third grade that I began to discover my interest in participating in drama. Our class wrote and presented at school assemblies a series of plays for each major holiday throughout the school year. Most often I had a speaking or singing part in these productions. Then in high school I tried out for the school plays and secured parts in most of the productions of the drama department. In my sophomore year I was elected to The National Thespians. As a Thespian I served in a variety of leadership positions.

At Rocky Mountain College I continued my interest in drama, sharing at various times in dramatic productions as an actor, a director, a stage hand, a set and costume designer, and a ticket distributor and salesman. In my freshman year I was nominated for and elected to the Alpha Psi Omega Drama Fraternity. For the next three years I was elected to serve in several leadership positions in this fraternity.

During Easter break each year our college drama group would prepare a production and tour a series of Montana and Wyoming communities. One production stands out in my mind. We were presenting "The Robe" in Livingston, Montana. The stage in an outdoor amphitheater had been created by binding a good many 8' folding tables together. It was when Hal Allen, as Marseilles, and I, as Octavia, were on stage that the stage bindings began to come loose. In a matter of seconds, the table tops that Hal and I were standing upon slid away from one another. It was something like riding on a skateboard or a sailboard. Because we knew that the show must still go on, we began to ad-lib as if this was a part of the planned production. We spoke of earthquakes and how they moved us in differing ways. Following our lines, an intermission was already scheduled. The tables were reassembled and bound more tightly together. I recall that was the year that we were served ham in every home in which we were guests, in every church that hosted us, and in every restaurant where we ate. It was on that tour that I learned what the phrase, "hamming it up," meant.

I directed several plays when I taught in Denton High School and numerous plays throughout my years of ordained ministry.

Memorization never came easy to me, but most aspects of dramatic productions seemed to be inherent within my soul.

Christmas Plays

Some years ago, when I was serving as Minister with Youth at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas, because of my interest in drama, I was asked to direct a Christmas play prior to Christmas each year. These productions required much work and surprisingly, they always were well received.

If you have ever directed a play or pageant or assisted with one, you know that each rehearsal: with lines not yet memorized; with costumes and sets not ready; and with endless distractions and demands, most evident and growing; you inevitably begin to doubt your sanity for agreeing to lead others in their attempts to reflect the Christmas message.

The grace of God and the order of God's universe are often tested during dress rehearsals which most always underline and exaggerate the numerous weak spots of most dramatic productions. But each year, somehow or other, the Christmas play would come together, and the Christmas message would be shared, and those in front of the curtains would affirm a job well done, and those behind the scenes would give a well deserved sigh of relief following the final curtain call, amazed with the transformation which had occurred between dress rehearsal and the final production.

It was between the second and the third acts of our first Christmas play that I was invited to come up onto the stage. Following a brief speech, several of the youth, on

behalf of the cast, presented me with a wrapped expression of their appreciation. Words were one thing, and a tangible gift was another.

It was during this brief moment of gift giving that I found a portion of my concept of ministry innocently challenged, significantly tested and vitally changed, for throughout my life I had been taught that, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Up to that moment, I dare confess, that much of my ministry was based on what I could give, rather than what I needed to be open to receive.

Between the second and third acts of that Christmas play, I almost refused to receive the gift which the cast had so carefully selected, purchased, wrapped and offered for my life and ministry. The material offering was an outward and visible expression of their love, appreciation, and need to be of worth and blessing with others.

Fortunately, something within me told me to receive their gift in the spirit of the grace extended and I did and in so doing I affirmed their precious worth and blessings in my life and the lives of so many others. In that brief, silent moment of receiving their love offering, I was taught the deeper meaning of giving through receiving, even as I received a reflection of their God investments for life.

[The Sugar Beet](#)

While I was in undergraduate school at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, early one Saturday morning a classmate and I decided to go duck hunting east of town. Since neither of us owned a car, we hiked and hunted along the Yellowstone River until we were about eight or nine miles out of town. After eating the two apples we had carried with us for our lunch, we started back toward town.

About two miles out of town, we crossed a sugar beet field. It was then that my classmate, Veryl, decided that he was too hungry to go on without something to relieve his hunger pangs.

Veryl asked me if I had ever eaten sugar beets. I told him I had not. He then pulled and peeled the biggest beet he could find. Despite its pulpy taste, Veryl chewed on that sugar beet all of the way into town until it was gone.

Then thirst began to take over. Many gulps from a garden hose along the way momentarily relieved our thirst.

Shortly it became apparent that much water and the sugar beet pulp stirring in Veryl's stomach did not go well together.

Fortunately along our route we passed a hospital, for Veryl's stomach was drastically stretching, causing him much pain due to the swelling caused by the mixture of water and sugar beet pulp.

As the doctors in the emergency ward pumped out Veryl's stomach, it became very apparent that a person must be careful how he or she attempts to fill the screams of the intense hunger within.

[Hunting Ducks on the Yellowstone River](#)

During my first year at Rocky Mountain College, when time would permit during duck season, my roommate, Ron Bond, and classmates: Deke Johnson and Reid Stevens and I would go pheasant, duck and goose hunting.

One morning we decided to cross a portion of the Yellowstone River to reach an island where endless numbers of ducks were landing. Each of us had brought waders and several gunnysacks of decoys. As we waded out to the island, the water was up to our knees. We scared the huge flock of ducks off of the island with the awareness that they would more than likely return shortly after we had set out our decoys.

Soon we were ready for the ducks to arrive. With the ducks came a fierce wind, snow and a freezing temperature. As we were nearly done shooting, we realized that the water had been steadily rising due to a growing number of ice flows that had broken loose upstream. We collected our decoys and began to cross the river. The water was now well up on our legs as we started to return to our car.

As Ron and I were crossing, a very large ice flow broke loose from the head of the island upon which we had been hunting. We hurried as fast as we dared, but the ice flow caught up with us, forcing us to throw ourselves over its edge and to float with it down the river. We attempted to work our way to the shore side of the ice flow. In a very short time we discovered that it was necessary for us to get off of this ice flow, for a large cottonwood tree had fallen across the water. We were in danger of being pushed underwater if we did not take our chances to vacate the ice flow before we reached this barrier called a sweeper.

Ron and I slid off of the ice flow only to discover that the water was over our heads. Fortunately we held onto our bag of decoys that bobbed us to the surface and pushed us close to shore a short distance before we reached the cottonwood sweeper. Due to the freezing weather, almost instantly, our clothes and boots were covered with ice. Ron and I moved as fast as we could toward our car. We moved along a barbwire fence that separated us from our destination. If some wire had not been broken at one place in the fence, it would have been very difficult for us to crawl under the wire due to the heavy ice on our clothes and in our boots.

When we reached the car Deke Johnson already had the heater going full blast. We removed our heavy, protective coats, but our boots were almost impossible to remove. In a short time, the heater worked its wonders and we were able to pull our legs and feet out of the ice in the boots. Then chilblains began to bring us such pain that Ron and I found ourselves putting our feet back into the snow to slow down the warming of our legs' blood vessels.

As soon as we returned to our dorm room, Ron went to bed to get warm, but because I feared that our shotguns might rust, I took them apart, wiped them and oiled them throughout and then put them back together.

As I was cleaning the shotguns, I was listening to the news. It was only then that I discovered that it was 17 degrees below zero and the wind was blowing over 70 miles and hour. The chill factor must have been extremely high.

We were very fortunate and amazed that none of us came down with pneumonia or even a cold.

Pheasant Feather Flowers

During the fall, while I was in undergraduate school at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, Ron Bond, Deke Johnson, Reed Stevens, and later, David Jones, my roommate and I often used our limited free time to go bird hunting. Montana was richly endowed with a goodly number of ducks, geese, Hungarian partridges, grouse and pheasants. We managed to harvest our share of Montana's abundant game birds. Since pheasants were numerous, we were often seen behind our dormitory plucking the feathers from the pheasants we had bagged. One day one of the dormitory mothers, Elsie Hand, saw us discarding the feathers from our birds in a garbage can. She was from South Dakota where pheasants were even more abundant. She was also very skilled in a variety of crafts. When I first arrived on campus, Elsie had taught me how to sew a much needed quilt for my bed. She insisted that David and I bring some of the pheasant feathers we were discarding to her so that she could teach us to use them to make beautiful pheasant feather flowers. From that day forth we seldom threw away the beautiful feathers of the birds we harvested, thanks to Elsie Hand, our tutor.

During the course of my college career, I made endless numbers of corsages and boutonnieres for the dates of those who were attending proms and special events at Rocky Mountain College.

I have also taught many persons in the churches I have served to create pheasant feather flowers to present to their loved ones and to beautify their homes. I even taught a group of African missionaries to make flowers out of the feathers of birds native to their nations. One missionary wrote to me to tell me that she had taught many of the members of her community to make flowers of feathers. She indicated that some of those she taught were gaining a sizable portion of their income as a result of selling their feather flowers to tourists who were visiting their mission.

I am always amazed to realize that what I am sometimes tempted to cast away as insignificant may, with some degree of creativity, training and motivation, eventually be recognized as something of significant worth and beauty.

Taxidermy & David Jones

One of my roommates while I was at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana, was David Jones. He came from the high plains near Great Falls, Montana. He was a good student and we shared many common interests.

We both enjoyed bird hunting and collecting Montana agates whenever time would allow us such outings. Usually we would slip out early in the morning in the fall during hunting season about 15 miles east of Billings, before class and the demands of other responsibilities and hunt ducks, geese, pheasants and grouse on farmlands along the Yellowstone River where we could usually count on at least a limit of ducks.

Since we had access to a freezer and a kitchen on campus, we were able to share much of our bounty in meals we would prepare with friends and faculty members from time to time, usually on Sunday evenings when no other food was provided in the dining hall.

David and I took up taxidermy so that we could preserve samples of many of the birds we harvested. It was not surprising that we began to attempt to collect a male and female of every legal bird we hunted so that we could share our taxidermy results with classmates whenever they visited our dorm room. In time our dorm room began to resemble a museum of stuffed birds.

At Rocky Mountain College it was customary at the end of the fall semester to hold an open house throughout the dorms of the campus. I believe this open house was intentionally planned in part to be sure that dorm rooms were clean at least once during the school year and also to introduce classmates to the vast diversity of ways persons' personalities were revealed through their dwelling places.

There was little doubt about what David and my room revealed about our personalities and interests. We had over 27 pairs of game birds on display when just about every student and faculty member on campus visited our crowded dorm room. Most of our taxidermy items were full size mounts. Some were mounted on rocks and tree branches. Others were suspended on fishing line from the ceiling tiles of our dorm room.

Since we could only legally hunt male pheasants, we attempted to mount them where they could be put to practical uses. Some of them became bookends with the head and breast mounted on one bookend piece and the back and tail feathers on the other bookend. Still other pheasants were mounted as part of lamps David and I created from knurled wood, petrified wood and agates we collected during our hunting excursions. Many of our pieces of taxidermy art were sold or presented to classmates and faculty members for use in their dorm rooms and homes or as gifts they gave to their loved ones. I wouldn't be surprised if some of these creations are not still in the possession of classmates or their relatives even today.

My mother had a pair of the pheasant bookends that I had given her as a gift one Christmas. I am amazed that I did not keep at least one of the many pieces of taxidermy that David and I displayed. Yet I am thankful for my brother, Donald's thoughtfulness in claiming for me a mule deer buck mount that I had presented to my grandfather for him to enjoy until his death.

I now wonder why I did not continue to do taxidermy pieces after I left undergraduate school? Perhaps, it is because throughout my life, one creative outlet has made way in time and energy for another.

Sand Painting

I never considered myself to be an artist with a brush and a pallet, but my creative abilities appeared in numerous ways that often surprised me. For instance, many times in my travels across the United States I found myself collecting containers of sand. I discovered that some sand was very soft and absorbent in texture while other sand was hard with sharp edges. Over time I found that most of the sand I collected was made up of many variations and shades of pastel colors. Later I learned that reds, yellows, oranges and browns came from iron deposits in the surrounding rock formations and that greens, blues and purples most often came from the copper, jade

or crystal deposits. Black sand came from volcanic and coal deposits and white and pink sands often came from marble deposits. My interest in geology added to my interest in collecting sand.

One day I was watching a program that showed Native American Indians sand painting. I learned that for many years most of their sand paintings were temporary, almost rigidly traditional, and used in coming of age ceremonies and rituals of healing. It was only later in some Indian nations that sand paintings became more permanent and used as a source of income in the tourist trade.

I learned how they used glue in their tourist trade sand paintings to secure sand to their picture boards; how they determined what sand they would use as their base color; and how simplicity and open spaces were essential to keep the weight of the multiple layers of sand from overwhelming their sand paintings.

My first attempts at sand painting were copies of patterns of Indian sand paintings. In a brief time I decided that I felt more alive when I designed and sand painted patterns of fish, wildlife and scenery. I also recognized that my many containers of sand needed to be expanded if I was to have enough variations of colors and textures to complete my sand paintings at the level of quality that I desired. The pastel colors of the sand that I collected and used gave a pleasing softness to my paintings. There is something very tactile and fulfilling in working with sand. I have found sand to be a wonderful media for drawing out the creativity of my spirit. Although I have created only a limited number of sand paintings, I am well pleased with the results of my efforts.

Stained and Etched Glass

One spring at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs I planned and coordinated a series of arts and craft classes for persons of all ages. One of the classes was a 6 week series on creating stained glass taught by Dr. Dorsey Kelley, a retired Methodist minister. The class that I taught on creating pheasant feather flowers dismissed a half hour before that of Dorsey's class. Thus I was able from time to time to visit Dorsey's class for the last 15-20 minutes of his class. During one of my visits Dorsey invited me to try my hand at creating a stained glass item. In a very brief time I discovered that creating stained glass items came naturally to me.

I found great pleasure creating items that reflected the light and rays of the sun when I hung them in our home windows. Before that class was over, I had also created a small stained glass window.

Many church school teachers in churches I have served received small stained glass items in honor of their dedicated service.

I have been blessed to assist the creativity of church school adults and children to create church stained glass windows that have been installed in Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church. I have also assisted others to create windows that add beauty to the entranceways of their homes.

In time I discovered how acid glass etching could enhance some of my stained glass works.

Windows that I have created are presently displayed in our home and those of family members, our children, neighbors, friends and a few church members.

I have found that being a small part of the creative processes of God's handiwork is very fulfilling.

Tex Evans

While attending a mission retreat at the Diamond S Ranch in southern Wyoming I had the privilege of meeting Tex Evans, who was serving as a missionary to the Henderson Settlement in Kentucky. Tex was a very gifted story teller. He was one of the guest speakers at this mission retreat.

One morning while we were taking a break, several of us took a hike into the hills surrounding the camp facilities. While hiking we discovered a very large diamondback rattlesnake along side our trail.

When we returned to the meeting hall, we were still talking about the snake which had caused us to shorten our hike and be more cautious and diligent along our way. Tex Evans overheard our remarks concerning our encounter with this large rattlesnake.

It was not surprising when Tex used our encounter with the rattlesnake as the basis of his message for his next input. He told a story about how he and his brother were milking a good number of cows on his father's farm in Texas. He said that one morning the two of them were busy and focused on milking the 200 plus cows in his father's barn. Then out of the corner of his eye he saw a very large snake slithering across the floor of his father's barn. Not wanting his father to be upset if one of his milk cows was injured by this snake, he picked up a board and hit that snake right behind its head. Surprisingly it broke into a good number of pieces, each about 9 or 10 inches long. Not wanting the barn floor to be cluttered with all of these pieces of snake, he and his brother began carrying an armful of pieces outside the barn. There they stacked them like cord wood. Upon reentering the barn he discovered that snake had come back to life. And where the pieces of snake had been removed and piled outside the barn, were ears of corn filling the gaps. Once more he took the board and hit the snake a blow. Again it broke into many pieces much as it had before. Time and again after he and his brother had carried arms full of snake out of the barn and stacked them alongside the barn, they would return to discover that snake crawling across the floor with increasing numbers of ears of corn filling the gaps of missing pieces of snake. "Finally," Tex Evans related, "there was only a head and a tail of that snake with numerous ears of corn in between slithering out the door of the barn." Tex then revealed to us that he had a picture of the barn in which it all had happened to prove it was so.

He then reminded us that half truths, that appear as the truth, are often the most difficult truths to unravel and disprove.

Serving Geraldine Methodist Church

Following our graduations, my roommate, David Jones and I had intended to spend the summer touring many of the national and state parks of the northwestern part of the United States. We knew that summer might be the only time in our lives that we might be free to assume such an adventure. As it turned out, David discovered that he would have to take a math class during the summer if he was to be accepted into medschool. I was now on my own.

Just prior to my graduation from Rocky Mountain College in 1960, Roger Robinson, one of the District Superintendents of the Montana Conference of the Methodist Church, invited me to serve as summer supply pastor at Geraldine Methodist Church in Geraldine, Montana. Initially, I looked over my shoulder to see to whom he was making this request.

Somehow or other Roger had learned that I was possibly available to consider his offer. He also knew that I was going to teach school the following fall a short distance down the road from Geraldine. He must have sensed something about my future life calling that I did not know myself. He was inviting me to explore the possibility that God was calling me to serve as an ordained minister.

This was not the first time that others had sensed the possibility that I was destined to become an ordained minister. While going to Rocky Mountain College, I was elected vice president of the "Sky Pilots," the pre-theolog group on campus. Another time, Rev. Vandemark, one of the early pioneer ministers of Montana, left me one of his personal study bibles in his will with the expectation that I would go into the active ministry. I had only met and introduced Rev. Vandemark when he made a presentation at the Christian Fellowship on campus of which I was the chairperson. I had not intended to be anything more than an active lay person, not an ordained minister. Little did I know. God had other plans for my life.

After much deliberation I agreed to serve Geraldine Methodist for the summer even though I was not even sure exactly where it was and if that congregation would agree to have me serve them. I was to fill in for a minister who needed to go on sabbatical for the summer. He intended to return to serve Geraldine Methodist in the fall.

Late on the Saturday evening prior to my first Sunday service as supply preacher, I arrived at the door of Paul Rudeen. Roger said that Paul was to give me necessary keys and assist me to settle into their new parsonage. Paul informed me that there were no keys for the church building nor for the parsonage, for there were not even keyholes in the doors of the buildings. At that time in history, everyone in that location left their doors unlocked. He did take me on a tour of the church and parsonage. The church building was a typical rural church structure with a bell tower, a simple entrance and a worship center with stained glass windows on both sides of the sanctuary. The parsonage was new and very large with a modern kitchen, a dining room, a large front room, several bathrooms, and many bedrooms and storage closets both upstairs and throughout the full basement. My initial tour of the parsonage was the only time that I was to open the doors of many of the rooms of the parsonage during my time in Geraldine. I had no need of these spaces for I needed only the use of the kitchen on rare occasions and one of the bedrooms in which to sleep.

Invitations & Discoveries

After I had completed the benediction of my first worship service at Geraldine, a flood of women rushed forward before I could walk to the back of the church to greet those in attendance. Initially, I wondered what I had done that would cause this reaction following the service. It turned out that the women were wanting to be among the first to invite me to their homes for a meal. I expressed my appreciation and found that there were few meals where I was not expected to share a breakfast, lunch or dinner with a family of the church's membership. That summer there were few members' farms and ranches I did not visit.

During my first meal in a home in Geraldine, I discovered why I had so many invitations for meals. It turned out that there were a good number of single daughters, granddaughters, nieces, and neighbors' daughters about my age. I was single. I was very careful not to express an interest in any of their young women.

Each time I was about to leave, I was handed a steak, a roast, or some hamburger to prepare for one of my future meals. Fortunately, there was a large, empty freezer in the basement of the parsonage. The freezer was almost full by the time I was leaving Geraldine, for I seldom was at the parsonage, except at night, to prepare a meal.

Following the second worship service I conducted in Geraldine, I was encouraged to call upon three bachelors who had not been in attendance for the past two Sundays. They were normally very active.

That Sunday afternoon, following a meal at one of the homes on the road that led to the bachelors' acreage, I decided to pay them a visit. I had been warned to watch out for one of the brothers, Orville, who tended to drive his car down the middle of the road whenever he was out and about. The three 80+ year old brothers, Orville, Oscar and Ollie, lived about 18 miles down a dirt road from the church. On my way to their cabins I met Orville. Sure enough, he was taking his share of the road right down its center. I pulled over into the barrow ditch and slowly he passed by. Since I did not know where he was going, I went on to his brothers' cabins and visited them for a while. They told me that Orville was going in to town to pay me a visit at the church.

I arrived at the church just as Orville was pulling in to the church parking lot. During our visit I learned that the 3 brothers owned 58 sections of fertile land on which they raised wheat. A section of land is 360 acres, a mile square. Each fall they would plant 29 sections of wheat and leave 29 sections of their land fallow to control weeds and collect moisture. They tilled and planted their land each year, but they hired commercial cutters to harvest their crops.

Later that summer I visited them once more at their farm. They shared two log cabins. They had an outdoor pump for their necessary water, wood stoves to cook their meals and keep the cabins warm during the winter, Coleman lanterns for their lights, a copper tub for their baths, and an outhouse for their bathroom. On their land they had numerous large metal granaries and 20+ large barns in which they stored their grain and their previous years' Ford cars, trucks, tractors, and equipment. Each year they

had a standing order for the Ford dealer to deliver three Ford cars, 3 trucks and 3 tractors to their place. They never exchanged their previous year's vehicles for their new ones. Instead they parked them in their electrically lit barns among those of previous years. When necessary, they built a new barn to store their growing accumulation of vehicles. They had over 40+ years of very low mileage vehicles in the barns they had built. The tractors had more miles on them than their trucks and the trucks had more mileage than their cars. I've often wondered what happened to their vehicles and land after the brothers passed away.

In the community of Geraldine I discovered that the center of most communication occurred at the local post office and at church. Everyone had a post office box and most everyone gathered at the post office prior to and following their mail being sorted into their post office boxes. It was there that the latest news of the day was discussed and future plans were forged.

Be Careful What You Ask For

One Sunday following worship, a number of church members were standing around their cars in the parking lot discussing the news of the day before they returned home. A few of us were noticing that the church building was needing some upkeep. Before we left that morning I was asked to make a list of things that church members had suggested needed to be done to upgrade our church building and grounds. By the next Sunday a list was agreed upon and the two weeks before harvest and roundup were set aside as volunteer work days at the church. The outside and inside of the church were repainted; the bell tower was repositioned and the bell was rehung; the windows were recaulked; a few boards were replaced where some flickers had pecked holes; the pews were refinished; the floors and chancel furniture were refinished; and the roof was repaired. By the second Monday the church building looked almost new.

A couple of members made the mistake of asking me if there was anything else that needed to be done. I am sure that they felt that everything had been done. I had noticed that whenever it rained, our dirt parking lot was a series of puddles and mud. I suggested that some gravel would greatly improve our parking lot. Several members took their trucks and front-end loaders down to a gravel pit near the Missouri River and during the next two days the parking lot was transformed. A sense of fulfillment and pride filled the church the rest of the summer.

A Ministerial Surprise

It was two weeks after I arrived at the Geraldine Methodist Church in Western Montana that I received a call asking me to hurry over to one of our member's farms so that I could rush him to the hospital in Fort Benton.

It was only then that I found that the pastor serving that congregation was the primary emergency transportation for most of the members of Geraldine Methodist Church.

It turned out that Paul had cut off three of his fingers in a sickle bar he was sharpening. He needed immediate emergency medical attention.

Needless to say, I was chosen to do what I could.

I am not sure what I would have done if it had not been for the first aid training which I had received in Boy Scouts.

Pressure on the stubs of his severed fingers kept him from bleeding to death. I treated him as well as I could for shock and rushed him for further treatment to the nearest medical clinic that happened to be about 30+ miles down a graveled road to Fort Benton.

When we arrived at the small clinic, the doctor gave him a shot, cauterized his stubs and sewed a flap of skin over the ends. After treatment, in a very short time, Paul was ready to return home minus 3 fingers, weakened, but stoically assuming that he would immediately go back to the work which had brought him so much pain.

Some things had changed, but Paul was ready to do what he could with the givens of his now present abilities and circumstances.

I too had learned to make the best of that which initially seemed life challenging and almost overwhelming. Prayer, faith, and a willingness to try to do what I could on behalf of another person began to show me some of the processes through which God's Spirit can work.

It was three weeks later that I received my next request to transport someone to the medical facilities in Fort Benton. About 2 in the morning I received this call.

One of the women from our church was calling to inform me that her labor pains were coming more frequently and that she needed to get to the hospital as soon as possible.

Sleepily, I asked her why her husband was not available to transport her to the hospital.

She told me that due to the late spring, he was out disking their fields so that he could plant their crops.

My Boy Scout first aid training had never prepared me for the possibilities of this request.

A few minutes later I arrived at their home only to have her tell me that her water had broken.

Now perhaps it would be well for me to tell you that at that time in history I was young, unmarried, and only experienced in delivering livestock.

The 30+ miles of dirt road to Fort Benton were far from smooth and on many occasions, when contractions came, this mother-to-be announced that she was sure that her baby was going to come before we would reach the doctor's assistance.

I am not sure who was most nervous, her or me, for I had delivered calves, but never a human baby. Needless to say, fear and trembling and out and out panic caused me to attempt to reach the doctor's office in record time.

Fortunately we arrived at the clinic before the baby arrived and the doctor was waiting. Quickly we helped the mother-to-be inside. I parked the car and headed for

the waiting room where I discovered that a baby boy had already been delivered. In about an hour I drove the mother and baby back to their home in Geraldine.

The risks had been many, but despite the dangers, miracles had taken place: the baby's birth had waited until we had reached the hospital; the mother had endured innumerable pains of giving birth; one of the many deer along the roadway had not jumped into the path of my speeding car; and the doctor was there and waiting.

Needless to say my life had been changed; my understanding of ministry had been expanded; and somehow or other I was growing in my willingness and capacity to be open to the ever-changing future and the challenging leadings of the Holy Spirit in the experiences and circumstances of my life journey.

Beginnings

The very first baptism which I performed was a baptism by immersion in a spring creek in Montana.

I was serving as interim pastor in Geraldine, Montana.

The son of one of one of the long-time pioneer church families asked if I might baptize him in the stream on his family's ranch where his brother, father and grandfather had been baptized.

At that time, I weighed 160 lbs and Jim, who was 6' 6", must have weighed at least 350+ lbs.

Following our worship service at the church, family members and friends from the Geraldine Methodist Church, gathered at Jim's family ranch on the stream's bank for this special occasion.

Jim and I waded to the edge of a deep hole and then I invited him to lean back into my arms so that I might baptize him by immersion.

I dunked him three times in the cold, clear flowing stream: once in the name of the Creator; once in the name the Redeemer and once in the on-going presence of the Holy Spirit.

Each time I dunked him, he slipped forward into the deeper and deeper water.

Each time I walked forward so that I might continue to support him as I dunked him once more.

When I dunked him the third time, the rushing current pushed him beyond my reach into water well over his head and surely mine.

For a moment, I thought that he might not only be my first baptism, but potentially my first funeral also.

I am not sure who was happier when he bobbed to the surface gasping for the breath of life, him or me.

Soon he joined his loved ones and friends on the river's bank.

After he changed his wet clothes, we gathered for a wonderful meal his family had prepared for this special occasion.

Only on the occasion at my farewell gathering as I was completing my time of ministry at Geraldine Methodist Church was I able to confess to him the immense fear I had held for his life.

Filling In

Among my responsibilities as a summer supply pastor at Geraldine Methodist Church, I found that I was invited by various ranchers and farmers to serve as an additional hand wherever I was needed. I discovered that those who called upon my assistance on their ranches and farms contributed to the necessary funding of my small salary while I served their church. My labor and their additional contributions allowed Geraldine Methodist Church to continue paying the salary of their regularly appointed pastor while he was on sabbatical that summer.

For two weeks during harvest, I drove a combine. Each morning before daybreak, I joined a crew near the wheat fields we were to combine. We filled our fuel tanks, put aboard our lunch, water and snacks and checked our rigs to be sure that they were ready to go. Then we started our combines and entered the first field to begin cutting. It was amazing to me to see how fast a half section of land could be combined when five combines followed one another up and down the long fields. Often deer, pheasants, grouse, coyotes and even a family of mountain lions burst from the fields we were cutting. We never stopped cutting from dawn to dark as we moved from one field to another. Grain trucks would drive along side us so that we could empty our combines' grain hoppers as we continued cutting. We ate and drank as we cut wheat. At the end of the day, we gathered at one of the farm houses for a big meal that the women had been preparing all day or maybe all week. We washed the dust off our faces, hands and arms with plenty of soap in basins that had been set outdoors for us. I was usually asked to offer a prayer and then we proceeded around large tables heaped with mounds of food and drinks. I recall one lady asking me if I did not like her food because I only took one overloaded plateful that day. I was so tired that I only wanted to get back to my bed to sleep before I was to face another day of dust and jarring bumps.

That summer I plowed fields, cleaned granaries, mended fences, and put up hay.

I particularly enjoyed assisting with roundup on one ranch: branding and inoculating cattle, castrating some young bulls, and sorting out and loading on trucks those that were to head for market.

Some years later in Kansas, I shared once more in the tasks of a roundup of longhorn cattle.

The Power of a Sermon

The summer I spent in Geraldine, I also discovered the power of a sermon when I preached a sermon about the speck in another's eye and the log in our own. Often I had heard church members rehearsing the terrible things about larger communities such as Great Falls, Helena, Billings, Boseman, Missoula and Butte. During my sermon

I recalled many of their criticisms. At the end of the sermon I dared to mention my dismay with the huge potholes in the roadways of Geraldine. No one was more surprised than I was the next day when four road graders were busy grading the graveled roads filling their many holes. Geraldine only had one grader. The city council had been moved to borrow several graders from surrounding communities.

Geraldine's Returning Pastor

At the end of the summer, as I was about to leave Geraldine, I met Geraldine Methodist Church's returning pastor and wife. I greeted them and thanked the pastor for allowing me to serve his pastoral charge. His first statement to me was, "What have you done to my church?" I did not understand his question. He told me that it had never looked so good. I told him about some of the work volunteers had done. He told me that they had not done anything like that before. I suggested that they readily responded to the need to upgrade their church building when I merely suggested that it might be done. I told him about the sense of satisfaction they felt when their church building reflected their many efforts.

The returning pastor then asked me if I had forgotten anything before I left. I told him, "No!" He asked about the full freezer of meat I was forgetting. I told him that the meat had been given to me by many of his parishioners and that it now belonged to him, for I had no need of it. He said that they had seldom done anything like that for him and his wife. I reminded him that he was not a bachelor.

Just before I drove away, I told him about the second service that I had been conducting each Sunday at the Square Butte Ranch headquarters. I told him about the wonderful country church building that the owners, Bill and Mildred Strand had built so that their ranch hands could attend worship on their ranch. I am not sure that he was very pleased to hear about this new addition to his responsibilities.

My summer in Geraldine was filled with endless growing experiences that not only challenged me, but allowed me to understand the challenges, joys and sorrows of those who lived on the farms and ranches of Montana's high plains.

As I look back at that summer of ministry, I believe that Geraldine Methodist Church was a wonderful place to get my feet wet in the work of becoming an ordained minister.

Teaching at Denton High School

During the year following my graduation from Rocky Mountain College I taught at Denton High School. Denton High had 137 students and I taught English to every student in the school. Since one of the scheduled new teachers failed to arrive to fulfill his teaching commitments, I took on additional responsibilities: I taught an additional class in math; became assistant coach for the athletic department; directed school plays; and became the school librarian.

During my year coaching at Denton High School, I found that success in high school sports was very important to the identity of most of the small communities in that part of Montana. The Methodist church, the post office and the bowling alley were also very important gathering places for the citizens of Denton. In most instances the whole community attended the sports events of Denton High. That year Denton was blessed with talented athletes. Denton High won the state championship of 8 man high school football. They came in second place in their division in basketball and first place in track. A few years later in 1965-68, I coached 3 winning basketball teams at Highland Park Methodist Church and 3 more church basketball teams at Lakewood United Methodist Church in 1970-73.

In the English classes I taught at Denton High School, I found that a good number of the high school students were lacking in reading and writing skills and had often been passed on to the next grade despite their lack of the necessary skills to succeed in the next grade level. Some of the students had grown accustomed to not turning in assigned homework or listening in class. Their test scores showed that they had little or no comprehension of the material for their grade level. Their past history revealed that they assumed that they would be passed on to the next grade and eventually graduation in spite of their inability to face the real world commitments that they would be expected to assume.

I found that I was among the few teachers in their high school career to express heart-felt concern to their parents on behalf of their children's future. I encouraged parents to give special attention to encourage their children to fulfill homework assignments that I tailored to assist them to grow in their abilities to prosper in life. Most of my students were bright, self motivated, supported and encouraged by their parents in their education. Even so, at mid-semester I found it necessary to post failing grades for some students, even seniors, who refused to attempt to apply themselves to even turn in simple assignments or to listen during class. At the end of the semester five seniors were among those who received failing grades. The school principal suggested that I should change their grades so that they could graduate. I told him that we were not doing these students a favor by ignoring their refusal to take responsibility for their part in their education. I suggested that I would be willing to teach a makeup class during the next semester for those who were willing to apply themselves to learning. The five seniors who had received failing marks during their first semester signed up for this make-up class. Four of them began to apply themselves to their assignments and passed. They even showed marked improvements in their other classes. Sadly, one senior chose to skip classes during much of the first three weeks of the make-up sessions, so I asked the principal to meet with me and her parents to explain why she would not graduate with her classmates. I was reminded of the familiar saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink."

Before the year was over I was pleased to write recommendations for a good number of the graduating seniors who were applying for entrance into a diversity of colleges and trade schools. Even though many of these students would eventually inherit sizable sections of fertile farm land, most of Denton's graduates were seeking to leave the farms to pursue their future careers in urban settings. Their choices in that period of history reflected the pattern of choices of many of the youth of the farming communities of Montana. Consequently, many of the family farms have been bought up

by huge corporations that have little or no interest in the welfare of the small communities across Montana.

Bow Hunting

During the fall when I was teaching at Denton High School, I decided to try my hand at bow hunting. Whenever I had time, I would go over to the football field and set up a target to practice shooting my arrows at various marked off distances. I began at the ten yard marker. When I became proficient at that distance, I moved on to twenty yards, thirty yards, forty and finally fifty yards.

When deer season arrived I felt confident that I would be tagging a deer. The first deer I had the opportunity to attempt to shoot was walking a bit over forty feet away. I shot over it. The next deer was blessed when I forgot to draw the arrow back with the bowstring. Then buck fever really arrived when a nine point buck strolled some 20 yards away as I was preparing my blind in a new area. I commenced to drop all of my arrows on the ground as I fumbled to reach them before the buck noticed me. He escaped. Over the course of the next two weeks I saw this same buck five times. Each time he was across a major, sheer walled gully and about 150 yards away. By the time I found a way to cross the gully, the buck was gone or he had crossed to the side of the gully from which I had just come. In the course of my bow hunting career seeking deer, I shot over, under, in front of and behind several deer. I never managed to tag a deer while I was bow hunting.

That same year when rifle season arrived, I was sure that I would tag the nine point deer that I had seen while I was bow hunting. Hunters in our area were allowed two buck deer tags during deer season that year. Early during the first morning of rifle deer season, I shot my first two point buck for the tender meat it would provide. The rest of that morning I assisted two of my friends to attempt to get their deer. Bob White's wife had never shot a deer. Bob and I decided to serve as bird dogs pushing the brush, hoping to chase a deer in her direction. His wife was on the other side from me along a narrow line of trees that ran along the bottom of a wide gully we were walking. I pushed six deer in her direction. Two of them were bucks. I warned her that they were coming her way. When they came out the other side of the tree line, I heard her shoot. Then she yelled that she had only wounded the buck she had shot. She yelled that it was the last one to re-enter the line of trees. Momentarily, all six of the deer appeared. I assumed that the last deer was her deer. She asked me to shoot it least we have to trail it a long way in the hopes of securing it. I shot and the deer went down. As the remaining five deer ran up a hill before me, I was surprised to see the other buck fall. All at once we had two bucks down. Bob and his wife only wanted one buck between them, so it became necessary for me to tag one of the bucks, even though Bob had an unfilled tag that he could have used. My deer season was over.

Later that afternoon I wandered over to the gully near where I had fairly consistently seen the nine point buck. There he was, about 100 yards away. When I arrived, he looked up from his grazing and our eyes met. He stood there for some time

before he wandered off. Perhaps I will remember him more because I did not shoot him than if I had.

A Calling, Challenge and Change

While I taught at Denton High School I was an active layperson in the Methodist Church. I served as a lay leader, a lay speaker, the youth choir director and as a substitute preacher.

Before I completed my first year of high school teaching, members of Denton Methodist Church, Geraldine Methodist Church, college friends and clergy acquaintances encouraged me to go into the ministry even when they knew that I had been accepted to pursue my doctorate degree and had been offered a full teaching fellowship to begin the next fall. Their persistence encouraged me to apply to 4 seminaries even while I silently hoped that one or more of my applications would be turned down, thus giving me an excuse to pursue my initial intentions to secure my doctorate degree so that I might teach college students.

Many church members and friends wrote recommendations required for me to be considered for entrance in seminary. To my surprise, despite the lateness of my applications, all 4 of the seminaries notified me that I met their entrance requirements and would be accepted in their degree program.

I then contacted the graduate school where I had been accepted as a doctorate candidate and asked my advisor what chance I might have for a future teaching fellowship if I attended seminary for one year to determine if ministry was truly my life calling. He indicated that I would have a good chance to secure a teaching fellowship during the following year should I decide to drop out of seminary.

Consequently, since I was impressed with students who were currently graduating from Perkins School of Theology, I notified Perkins of my intentions to accept their invitation for me to pursue my ministerial education at Perkins.

Mountain View Methodist Church

The summer prior to my going to Perkins School of Theology, I served Mountain View Methodist Church in Butte, Montana, as a summer supply pastor. I had become an accredited Lay Speaker. Rev. Roger Robinson, the district superintendent felt that this experience would be helpful in my future career of ministry and he was in need of someone to supply this pulpit while the conference attempted to unite several congregations in Butte to make them large enough to finance and continue serving those gathered.

Butte, a mining town, had gone from a community of 70,000 people to one of 35,000 in the previous two years, due to a significant change from underground mining to open pit mining. Open pit mining required many less miners than needed underground.

Much of Butte was established around ethnic clusterings and churches tended to follow this pattern. Mountain View was a congregation largely made up of elderly, English members who maintained their church building very well. Although dwindling in numbers, Mountain View members were reluctant to even consider joining with one of the other 7 Methodist churches of Butte. Even so, I found that one of the expectations held by Roger Robinson was that I would begin moving Mountain View Church toward uniting with at least one other Methodist church.

It was at Mountain View that I discovered how powerful a bronze plaque could be. I believe that the sheer number of bronze plaques at Mountain View Church could have paved much of the sidewalks leading to its doors. Each of these plaques not only represented a person or persons being remembered, but they also served among tangible barriers to the possibility of uniting with another church. Previous weddings, funerals, baptisms, fellowship experiences and loyalty to ethnic identity challenged any attempt to encourage Mountain View leaders to even discuss the possibility that Mountain View Church might eventually find it necessary to join with another Methodist church.

This was my introduction to how difficult significant change can be in the ongoing journeys of a church.

[The Texas Zephyr](#)

In order to travel to Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas, I secured a ticket aboard the Texas Zephyr. As I boarded the train, I discovered that this was the last trip for the Texas Zephyr between Butte, Montana, and Dallas. My train ride was an historic adventure not only as I pursued a new course in my life journey, but also it was an historic closing of a significant chapter in railroading. For this last run between Montana and Texas railroad dignitaries and newsmen were loaded aboard antique rail cars to celebrate and record this final passage. I found my seat on one of the old rail cars called a smoker. At each end of this rail car there was an enclosed room where those who smoked could go to avoid smoking in the main car. I also discovered that the seats in this rail car could be made to face forward or backward by merely pressing a lever under the seat.

Because this was an historical passage, persons aboard the train could indicate that they wished to stop the train wherever they chose to photograph numerous scenic sights and stations along the way. By listening to those who had traveled this route many times before, I learned much about the history of the region through which we traveled. Our journey took at least twice the time that it normally would have taken.

One rail car had not been included on this trip. It was the dining car. Thus, when it was meal time, the train ride ceased for a brief time in the nearest town and all aboard strolled to the unprepared cafes to secure a meal. One stop lasted more than an hour so that everyone could be fed. One news person wrote, "They don't run railroads the way they once did." Little did he know how true his statement would become. Railroad schedules, maintenance and service have noticeably fallen by the wayside.

It was fortunate that I had allowed extra days before I was expected to begin my graduate studies at Perkins School of Theology.

My Introduction to Highland Park Methodist Church

In the fall of 1961, I traveled to Dallas to attend Perkins School of Theology, one of the graduate schools of Southern Methodist University.

Because I arrived several days early before classes began, I decided to explore some of the large Methodist churches for which Dallas was noted.

At that time, the largest Methodist church in the world was located on the southeast corner of Southern Methodist University's campus.

As I began to tour the facilities of Highland Park Methodist Church, right away, I met two members of the church that I had served in Geraldine, Montana. Bill and Mildred Strand, owners of a huge ranch in Montana, were vacationing in Dallas and decided, like myself, to visit some of the large Methodist churches of Dallas. We decided to stroll through the church facilities together.

While still on the first floor of the main building, we came upon John Sweet, my former boss at Atlantic Oil Company. He was also wandering through the buildings of Highland Park Methodist Church. John joined Bill, Mildred and me as we explored these vast facilities. We enjoyed one another's company.

It was not until we reached the 2nd floor that we found anyone from the staff of this great church. Elvin Geiser, the assistant business manager of Highland Park Methodist Church, greeted us and assisted us to learn much about the ministries of this huge congregation.

As we were completing our tour, I found myself suggesting to Elvin that if there was ever an opening on the staff of this church, to let me know.

Coincidentally, the minister with youth had just been appointed to a new church and an opening in the youth ministry was available. I applied and soon found myself appointed to serve on the staff of Highland Park Methodist Church and to attend Perkins School of Theology at the same time. For the next three years, this is what I did.

These two challenges taught me to prioritize and focus my time and energies for both demanding responsibilities.

This proved to be wonderful training for my future years of very active ministry.

Sing Song

Perkins School of Theology is located on the campus of Southern Methodist University. At SMU there was an annual singing competition between the fraternities and another among the sororities.

In 1964, 18 of us from Perkins decided to enter this singing competition. Because theologs were entering this event, the lawyers also decided to enter a group of singers. There were no rules to keep graduate student groups out of this competition.

At the end of the competition our seminary singers found ourselves in first place. This did not make several of the fraternity groups happy, for in former years two of the fraternities had consistently taken first and second places in this competition.

I believe that our Perkins' singers won because we had more mature voices; our voices blended well; over half of us sang weekly in Seminary Singers; we wore colorful pullover sweaters; and we moved in unison throughout our song, "No Man is an Island."

One of our number, Julian Rush, assisted us in two short rehearsals to become a cohesive group. Many of the fraternities and sororities had practiced for many months for this annual competition.

Jeane's sorority, Delta Gamma, won the women's division with a melody of songs of Hans Christian Andersen.

[A Chaplain for the Dallas Cowboys](#)

Tom Landry, the head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, was a member of Highland Park United Methodist Church. Members of Highland Park UMC served as unofficial chaplains of the Dallas Cowboys.

In Dallas it was customary for prayers to be offered prior to each football game. Members of Highland Park UMC would take turns praying at the Dallas Cowboy home games. Following the prayer, we would be invited to enjoy the game, usually in the box seat of one of the owners.

No matter how talented a person was on the Dallas Cowboy team, Tom did not put up with misconduct on or off the field, nor with the lack of playing as a team member. Some potential stars found themselves off the Dallas Cowboy team when they lost sight of how each individual impacted and reflected the character of the team wherever they were.

Tom was a very caring person. Whenever a member of the Dallas Cowboys needed pastoral care, if that person was not active in a church, Tom Landry would often call upon one of Highland Park's staff to be of assistance. Consequently, those of us who were called upon came to know many of the members of the Dallas Cowboys because of this association.

Tom Landry was not only an excellent coach, but he was a willing teacher within the youth department of Highland Park UMC. Each spring I would invite him to teach a bible class for 7th grade boys. Often his classes had 70-100 boys in attendance. I dare say that most of the 7th grade boys paid more attention in his class than they tended to the rest of the year in the church school classes taught by other lay persons.

I was privileged to serve as an unofficial chaplain of the Dallas Cowboy football team from 1965-1968.

[Serving as a Chaplain in Training](#)

During 1963-1964, I took a course at Parkland Hospital as a chaplain in training with Dr. Ken Pepper as my instructor. Rev. Pepper, a Baptist minister, was the primary chaplain at Parkland. As I look back over my many years of ministry, I believe that my training at Parkland was among the most practical instruction for ministry that I experienced while I was pursuing my seminary studies. This year-long course was not just a lecture or reading course of study. It was a hands on involvement in relating to persons who were going through a vast variety of medical procedures.

Each morning we were assigned two floors of patients who needed ministerial visits by one of our chaplains. Sometime each afternoon or evening we viewed, with doctors and nurses in training, an operation in progress. Each day we interviewed one or more of the medical doctors or served as an intake chaplain in the emergency ward. Once we viewed a full autopsy being performed. Each evening before we left the hospital all of the chaplains in training would gather with Dr. Ken Pepper to share and gain feedback on ministerial visits we had made that day. We learned much about ministry from one another.

Parkland Hospital was the primary emergency hospital of all of the Dallas vicinity. Patients came from all walks of life: rich and poor; famous and unknown; home owners and homeless; religious and non-religious, people of color and white people; urban and rural; residents and non-residents; young and old; those with broken bones and people with undiagnosed illnesses; people with insurance and those without insurance; walk-ins and those requiring stretchers; and many who came by ambulance and some who came in their own forms of transportation.

This huge variety of backgrounds of patients was excellent preparation for dealing with the real needs, issues and concerns of members and non-members of churches and communities I eventually served.

[Among the Patients I Served](#)

Among the many patients I called upon at Parkland Hospital was Mary Bell White. Several of her doctors had asked me to go to her room for she was wanting someone to pray with her. Praying with someone was surely something a chaplain could do. As her doctors were about to leave they left me with a brief bit of advice concerning her health. They told me that her heart was very weak, much like jello. Thus, I should not do anything that might upset her or cause her to get too emotional.

That very morning I went to pray with Mary Bell. For a brief time we visited with one another. I discovered that she was 87 and had experienced good health for much of her life. Her long-time pastor had buried her husband over 30 years previous to our visit. She knew that she was in God's hands at all times and found great comfort talking with her creator. She told me how badly she missed praying with others since she could no longer attend church services due to her heart condition. As I was leaving, she asked if I might pray with her. I had almost neglected the very reason I had come to be with her.

As we began to pray I noticed that Mary Bell was becoming more animated as her voice rose in volume and as her waving arms began to be lifted high above her. For

a moment I thought that she might fall out of her bed. Then I remembered the warning of the doctors who had sent me to her room, "Do not do anything that might upset her or cause her to get too emotional!" In the midst of this prayer I began to believe that I might bring about her death. I shortened and closed my prayer with an "Amen!" It was then that I discovered that Mary Bell was only beginning to pray. With each "Amen!" Mary Bell became more emotional. I decided that after the next "Amen!" I had best leave. I did.

I avoided going to Mary Bell's room for the next two days. The head nurse told me that Mary Bell had been asking if I might join her in prayer once more. I was thankful that she was still alive even though I somewhat dreaded to pray once more with her lest I contribute to her death.

As I entered her room, Mary Bell told me that she was very pleased that I had come. Then she said, "Young man, you have not been around us colored people much have you?"

I told her, "No mam." I explained that I had come to Dallas from Montana where we had few opportunities to be with colored people with the exception of Wendow Glenn, one of my classmates in grade school and high school. I told her of the fear that I had. I told her that I had not wanted to be the one who caused her to have a heart attack and die as we prayed.

Then she reminded me, "Can you think of a better way to die than to be talking with your Lord when you are called home to be with God?" She had made her point and had taught me a very valuable lesson. Over the time that she was in Parkland. She taught me much about ministry and relating to people of color.

Code Blue

On another occasion I visited patients in a 6 bed ward. I noticed that each of the patients seemed to be passing me along to the next patient as quickly as they could. I began to wonder what I was failing to do in my attempt to be in ministry with them. Finally, I arrived at the bed of the last patient in the room. I discovered that this patient was a self-appointed lay evangelist. In a very brief time I began to understand why the other patients had appeared to be hesitant to be around a clergy person. Bobby Joe began to pound his bible; shout platitudes of impending doom; and play discordant notes of hymns on his harmonica. The discourse was one way, causing me to wonder if he might take a breath before his next diatribe about sin and destruction. I did not want to appear rude or insensitive, but after a short time I felt moved to leave.

About that time I happened to look back at the other patients. They were all laughing so hard that one of them was not able to catch his breath. This was the first time that I had ever seen anyone literally turn bright blue. Quickly I found a nurse to attend to him. Another nurse called in a code blue. Immediately, three doctors and at least 5 nurses arrived. Things were tense, to say the least. Later, one of the doctors explained to me that whenever a person's necessary oxygen supply ceases, his or her body often begins to turn blue.

Later, as I visited the next day with the remaining patients in that ward, they apologized for their insensitivity. The lay evangelist had been transferred to a private room.

Bobby Joe taught me why Jesus had had so much difficulty with many of the self-proclaimed religious leaders of his time.

A Hero

Ernie was one of the very special patients I visited often while I served as a chaplain in training at Parkland Hospital. Ernie had most every kind of rheumatism and arthritis that medical science had recorded. Literally, his joints were falling apart and his pain was very severe and constant in spite of the ever present morphine drip that his doctors were giving him. The doctors were using him as a living, human guinea pig as they took slices of skin from various parts of his body to attempt to hold his bones together.

When I asked Ernie how he was able to cope with such acute pain and so many operations to attach his bones, he told me that his was a near impossible task, but he was willing to endure whatever was necessary only because he hoped that the doctors' experiments might help someone else in the future who might not have to suffer as he was. He had dedicated his last days to the welfare and advancement of science and future generations. His sole purpose for living during his last days was to be hopefully of assistance to others.

I still marvel at his courage, dedication and tolerance to endure what he did on behalf of future arthritis and rheumatism sufferers.

An Unexpected Emergency

Little did I know that while serving at Parkland Hospital a President and the Governor of Texas would be brought to our emergency ward for treatment.

I had learned that President John Kennedy was going to visit Dallas. I had hoped to be among the multitudes who watched as his motorcade traveled among the streets of Dallas. I was a bit dismayed that I was to be on duty at Parkland Hospital the day of President Kennedy's Dallas visit. I was seated at the desk in front of a large window in the chaplain's office speaking with a contagious patient on fifth floor of the hospital when I saw a large motorcade of black limousines speeding toward Parkland Hospital. Several police cars, with sirens blaring, were leading this procession. A few minutes later this long line of vehicles pulled into the lane that led to Parkland's emergency ward.

Parkland Hospital was not only the primary hospital for all of Dallas, but it was the nearest hospital to where this motorcade had been. All at once a very busy hospital became a beehive swarming with security guards, news reporters and hospital

personnel. Hallways of the first floor were inundated with people rushing to the emergency ward. At first I knew little about why the stream of limousines had rushed to Parkland Hospital, then a reporter took the phone I was using out of my hand, hung it up and made a call to his home office. It was then that I discovered that President Kennedy had been shot and Governor Connley also.

Since I was no longer able to use the chaplain's phone, I decided to take the elevator to fifth floor to let the head nurse know what was happening. I found the elevator shut down. I then started up the staircase only to be stopped by security guards who demanded that I prove that I had business and a right to be in the hospital. Fortunately I had my chaplain's badge and credentials. Even so, I was escorted back to first floor and the chaplain's office.

Soon no one was allowed to come or go in Parkland. We became virtual prisoners. Later I learned that some of the nurses and doctors had to remain in the hospital overnight. Food service was shut down and medicine for patients was limited. Emergency procedures were severely stretched and tested. Many of the other hospitals in Dallas had to extend their limited emergency wards to meet the needs of those who normally used Parkland Hospital.

When I finally was able to use the chaplain's phone once more, I handled many calls from within and beyond the hospital. Many of these calls were inquiries about what was happening at Parkland. With limited information, I was only able to tell them that a major emergency was taking place and that President Kennedy and Governor Connley had been shot. I was unable to tell them of the President or Governor's conditions. Most wanted to talk more, but I told them that the phone was in much demand. In a few instances I needed to hang up because of the caller's persistence.

In time I learned that the president had died and that Governor Connley was beginning to recover from his wound. Soon a procession of police cars, limousines and an ambulance headed away from Parkland Hospital for the Lovefield Airport. Shortly, over the radio, I learned that Vice President, Johnson had been sworn in as President of the USA.

Just before I left Parkland, Dr. Ken Pepper, our primary chaplain, invited me and other chaplains to join him in the chapel with attending doctors, nurses, family members, some security personnel and a few reporters to share in a worship service he had prepared. I still have a copy of the sermon he delivered at that time.

Following this service, I returned through the near empty streets of Dallas to my apartment. The dust blown streets reminded me of a little country town after the businesses had shut down and all of the people had gone home. In my apartment I joined my roommates as we watched the news on TV much like millions of others across the world.

It was hard to imagine that President Kennedy was dead. Only a few hours previously he had been so vibrantly alive and essential to the prosperity of our nation. It always amazes me how brief a life can be; how momentary is the passage of our opportunity to make a difference with others. For such a brief time President Kennedy had extended to many across the world, promise, vitality and an affirmation of the intricate worth of all persons no matter what their race, color, material wealth or creed.

Ordination as Elder

In the fall of 1965 I was ordained an elder in the Methodist Church at First Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas. I was very excited about this ordination service because not only would I become a fully ordained minister, but the ordination preacher would be one of the persons whose many books I had read and admired. I considered Bishop Gerald Kennedy one of the great influences in my theological education. Since I had not met him personally, I assumed that he was well over 6 feet tall, one of the giants among men.

When I arrived at First Methodist Church I found it necessary for me to go to the bathroom. When I entered the restroom most frequently used by members of the congregation, I found a long line waiting to use its facilities. Because I only had a brief time before I was expected to line up with the other ordinands and since I was familiar with First Methodist Church, I decided to slip around to another restroom less likely to be crowded. This restroom was located closest to the entrance to the chancel area and pulpit. I discovered only one little, old man in this restroom. He stood before the restroom sink visibly shaking all over. I asked him if I might help him in some way or other. He replied, "No, thank you! I often find myself in this condition whenever I am about to preach." Then he left the restroom. I wondered to myself, "There must be another worship service somewhere in the rest of this vast church facility where this very nervous person was going to preach." I thought it strange that another worship service would be held at the same time as our ordination service when Bishop Kennedy would be preaching.

Throughout the early portion of the ordination service I thought about the old man I had met so briefly in the restroom. I was concerned about his well-being. To my utter surprise, when Bishop Kennedy was introduced; as he stepped forward to preach, I discovered that he and the little, old, nervous man were one and the same person. I had been in the presence of one of the giants among my mentors and did not know it at the time.

Then he began to preach. No longer did he show any sign of nervousness. He preached with the authority of the gospel and the wisdom of great experience. His message was directed to each of us who were to be ordained and to the vast congregation that had assembled. His message reminded us that there was no one among us who was not carrying a burden at one time or another that would not overwhelm others among us. He encouraged each of us to become more considerate, attuned, loving and grace filled with those who walked the pathways of life with us. He reminded us that without doubt we were often in the presence of angels yet unknown or recognized among us. To my amazement, I had vividly experienced Bishop Kennedy's message in the brief moments when we first encountered one another.

Throughout my many years of preaching, whenever I became a bit nervous as I faced the tremendous responsibility lent to me through my ordination of leading those entrusted to my care, I found courage and strength recalling the humble confession of Bishop Kennedy, "I often find myself in this condition whenever I am about to preach."

Going Home to Winlock

Each of the three years when I was in seminary, I went home to Winlock during Christmas.

The first year, because I was short on money, I purchased a round-trip Greyhound Bus ticket to Winlock, Washington from Dallas, Texas. Although this was a long way to ride a bus, the trip was made even longer as I was bumped in Denver because military had first preference for space aboard buses during the Christmas season. Each time I was bumped I was told to be ready to board the next bus for Washington, yet time and again, night and day, I was bumped along with others for over five days. I dared not sleep fearing that I might miss my ride to Winlock. Finally a special bus was scheduled to transport a fair number of passengers who had been waiting over the course of five nights and days. The initial miles went by quietly, for most of us were very tired. Some passengers were able to sleep. In most instances the food at the bus stops along the way was very limited and of very poor quality. I found the restrooms were poorly maintained. Even so, all went well until I discovered that this bus was not going to let passengers off until we reached the bus terminal in Tacoma, Washington. As we neared Winlock, I asked the bus driver if he could stop long enough to let me off along side the road. He said he could not. When we finally stopped at a reststop some distance up the road, I took my small suitcase down from the rack and left the bus. I am sure that the bus driver was not pleased when he found that I was not once more aboard that bus.

I walked back down the highway hoping that someone would give me a ride to Winlock for I did not have enough money with me to purchase a ticket back down the highway over which I had just come. A short time later a highway patrolman stopped to ask me where I was going. I told him what had happened. He told me that I could not hitchhike in the state of Washington. Out of sympathy for my situation and because it was only two days before Christmas, he gave me a ride as far south as he was going.

When I was able to find a phone, I called home and asked if there was someone who could give me a ride. Then after three short days at home, I had to board another bus for my return trip to Dallas. By the time I reached Dallas, I felt like my bottom was attached to the shocks of the bus. Since that adventure I have boarded a bus for a long trip across country only once when I was leading a youth mystery ramble from Dallas to California while I was minister with youth at Highland Park Methodist Church.

The next year I purchased well in advance of Christmas a round-trip ticket on the railroad. I have always enjoyed being a passenger on a train. Following Thanksgiving I called the train station to verify my departure schedule. It was at that time that I was informed that I was not listed as a passenger on the train noted on my ticket. After a brief conversation, the ticket agent said that he would get back to me in the next day or two.

Three days later, after not hearing from the ticket agent, I called the train station. Once more the ticket agent informed me that he could not find me listed as a passenger. When I reminded him that I did have my purchased ticket in hand, he told me that he would once more check on the mix-up. After I had not heard from the ticket agent for over four days, I called once more. A different agent confirmed what the first ticket agent had said. I reminded this agent that I had my train ticket in my hand. I read

the ticket information to him. He assured me that he would get back with me within the hour. Later that evening I called once more and received the same run-around. The next morning I took a bus to the railroad station and showed the ticket agent my confirmed ticket. He was apologetic, but had no solution to my difficulty. I asked if I might speak with his supervisor. About thirty minutes later I met with the person in charge of all matters concerning tickets. He examined my ticket and told me that I definitely had a valid ticket. I felt relieved until he indicated that he would get back with me. He took my phone number and said that he would call me before the day was over. About five o'clock he did get back with me to inform me that he had some good news and some bad news. He told me that he had booked me on a return train from Longview, Washington, a short distance from Winlock, but that he was unable yet to get a confirmed booking for me to get there. He attempted to assure me that he was still working on this matter. The time for me to depart for Winlock was drawing near.

Finally the supervisor called to inform me that he had worked it out for me to get to Winlock. I was to come to the rail station ticket window sometime in the next day and exchange the ticket I had for a new ticket. When the ticket agent presented me with my new ticket he reminded me how difficult it was for them to make the necessary arrangements for my passage on their railroad. It was then that I discovered that I would have to travel from Dallas to Kansas City and then to Minneapolis, Minnesota where I would change trains and board a Great Northern train to travel across the northwestern part of the United States to Seattle. In Seattle I was to change trains once more and board a Southern Pacific train to Winlock. A bit discouraged, I cynically asked the ticket agent why my new ticket did not include Florida and Maine? As I was leaving his booth he told me that when I reached Minneapolis I was to board the 9 p.m. train, not the earlier train.

When we reached Kansas City we were delayed for almost ten hours due to the bursting of a major grain elevator that spilled wheat all over the tracks. We reached Minneapolis about 15 minutes before my scheduled 9 p.m. departure. I rushed to the Great Northern train that had been awaiting the passengers from our train for some time. I boarded without incident. By the time that the conductor came to stamp my ticket, we were already in the Dakotas where the temperature outside was near 50 degrees below zero. It was then that the conductor informed me that I was supposed to be on the next train and not the one I was on. I sure did not want to be dropped off that train in the middle of nowhere, especially when the temperature was so very cold. He told me that I would have to move from one seat to another whenever new passengers boarded the train and claimed the seat in which I was sitting. I spent much of that trip in the vista car or walking from car to car with other passengers.

A series of mishaps had led me to a Christmas experience I shall always cherish. Never have I enjoyed a trip more, for I not only met many new persons as a result of my ticket difficulties, but throughout the western trip I joined many passengers who sang Christmas carols all night long. We also shared Christmas memories and told many Christmas stories.

The deep snow glistening in the tall evergreens and the warmth and joy of many voices of travelers from across the nation, raised in harmony, singing familiar Christmas carols, was such a wonderful surprise, presenting me with many gifts which I had not even expected. My initial difficulties and feelings about securing a valid train ticket had

been transformed from despair into joy. My impression about that train trip had been noticeably altered. Sometimes that which appears to be an apparent disaster about to happen opens the door for an adventure loaded with extraordinary memories.

The third year was anticlimactic, for a plane delivered me in Portland, Oregon, in record time. I kept waiting for a second shoe to drop, but it didn't. I think that I was almost disappointed. I had almost grown accustomed to the chaos of unexpected events and changing schedules. On the plane trip I was amazed how quickly I arrived at each destination.

Picking Out a Christmas Tree

One of the Christmas traditions of our family was the annual trek to the woods to select and chop down a Christmas tree.

One year Donald and I were assigned the honor of picking out a Christmas tree from among the hundreds of amazing trees on our step father, Bert Harris' tree farm in Winlock, Washington. Most of our family members had gone into town to finish buying a few last minute Christmas items. When they returned, much to their surprise, they could hardly get into the front room of the family home.

Donald and I had selected a wonderful tree. The tree was well rounded and very bushy. We found that it would not fit through the doorway, so we removed the two large front bay windows and pushed the tree through the opening. Then we returned both windows to their former location. We built a tree stand and placed the tree in a corner of the room. We agreed that it did take up a fair amount of space. There was barely room for the many presents found beneath its limbs on Christmas morning. After Christmas and after Donald and I had left, we heard that when it was time to remove the tree from the front room, it was necessary to cut it up in pieces to get it out the door.

Dating Jeane

I met Jeane for the first time in March of 1962, as I was standing in a lunch line at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. She was talking with a friend about her frustration with receiving "C's" on papers she was submitting for her English class. In most classes she was used to getting "A's" and occasional "B's". A teacher's assistant was grading most of her English papers. In the midst of her conversation with her classmate, I overheard that her next assignment was about Robert Browning. I broke into her conversation and suggested that maybe I could be of some assistance since two years previously I had written my undergraduate senior English paper on Robert Browning's concepts of love.

For years Jeane denied that she followed me to a dining room table, but that is what happened. We talked about her upcoming paper over lunch. She received a "B" on her Robert Browning paper. For the next two months we dated. During this time I grew increasingly fond of her. Then, for reasons unknown to me, we stopped dating.

In the fall of 1963, I met Jeane once more briefly at a play that I was attending. I had not seen or spoken to her since our breakup. Prior to Christmas I sent Jeane one of the Christmas letters that it was my custom to send to friends and family members. Following the Christmas break I received a note from Jeane inviting me to "drop by for a chat sometime." Not wanting to stir up false hope and my lingering hurt feelings, I waited until after final exams late in January before I responded. On Friday we went out to dinner at the Red Barn on Hillcrest Avenue.

From that time forward we dated often. Most of our dates were strolls across the campus and along Turtle Creek, music events, meals, lectures, and a movie or two. By mid-April our mutual affection was evident.

On May 1st, May Day, Jeane and I attended a lecture on Planned Parenthood. Attendance at this lecture was required for one of Jeane's sociology classes. When I met Jeane that day, I told her how I had almost fallen down a flight of stairs outside of my apartment because someone had left a basket of roses just outside my door. I never had an inkling that she had placed them there. I should have known, for I had ordered a basket of flowers to be delivered at her apartment in celebration of May Day.

We graduated in June of 1964. Jeane received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Science and I received my Bachelors of Divinity/Masters Divinity degree in Theology.

I was appointed by Bishop Martin to remain full time on the staff at Highland Park Methodist Church as Minister with Youth.

During the summer of 1964, we continued to date, but Jeane told me that she wanted to be free to date others. She did. Then in August I asked Jeane to marry me. She said, "Yes!"

We selected November 14th as our wedding date. So it was. Rev. James Palmer officiated and 6 additional ministers served as my attendants and in a variety of assisting roles. Jeane's brother, Jim, was the only person who served as one of my attendants and was not an ordained minister.

Counselors in the youth department at Highland Park Methodist Church where I served, prepared a wonderful reception at the beautiful, spacious Pat and Carolyn Humphrey home. Following the reception Jeane and I left for Waco, Texas, where we spent our first night. From there we traveled to The Sea Gun Sports Inn in Rockport, Texas. We stayed there for two weeks, courtesy of Paul and Ann Corley, two persons who worked in Highland Park Methodist's youth department.

While at the Sea Gun Inn we fished on Captain Brown's boat, caught a wide variety of fish off the docks and along the inter coastal waterways, viewed rare whooping cranes at Aransas Wildlife Refuge, collected bay leaves, attended several interesting churches, strolled some of the surrounding beaches and got up late whenever we took a notion. Near the Sea Gun Inn I went goose hunting. When we returned to Dallas, I told everyone of the day that Jeane cooked my goose. I also joined Mr. Patroski, the owner of a marina in Rockport, Texas, to experience netting shrimp.

A "chat" that had begun because of a Christmas letter has continued for over forty five years thus far.

Jeane and the Pregnant Sting Ray

In the early years of our marriage while we lived in Dallas, Jeane and I found pleasure fishing along the Texas gulf coast, especially near Rockport and Aransas Pass. The Intercoastal Canal was one of those places where we were never sure what kind of fish we were going to catch. Grunts and flounders, ribbon fish and speckled trout, catfish and drum, dogfish and redfish were among the many fish we caught.

Most often we fished from the shore with shrimp or squid, but from time to time we joined Captain Brown on his party boat to fish the bays around Rockport. He often invited us to fish free because we caught many fish and it helped advertise his business. On other occasions I boarded a party boat to go deep sea fishing in the deeper waters of the Gulf Coast for groupers and red snappers, bonito and king mackerel.

One time we rented a small boat to fish the Intercoastal Canal. Before the day was over we had caught a large stringer of fish of many varieties. From time to time one of us would hook a sting ray and I would row close to the shore and throw it up on the bank so that it could not return to the water. Jeane did not want anything to do with stingrays. One of her stingrays was particularly large. It fought deep and long. Because it was so big, I pulled into shore and drug it up onto the bank and then removed Jeane's hook from it's mouth. As I was doing so, it began to deliver little stingrays in abundance. Up to this time Jeane remained in the boat. Suddenly, the arrival of babies touched the maternal instinct of Jeane and I found her there by my side marveling at the wonder of birth, even of stingrays. I had a hard time getting her to return to our boat so that we could continue fishing. It was only after I placed the mother and baby stingrays back in the water that Jeane joined me once more in our rented boat.

What a difference the deliverance of babies can make!

Jeane and the Doves

Before Jeane and I were married I went dove hunting with one of the members of the church I was serving. This was one of the few times I ever went dove hunting out of respect for my great uncle Jim who was very fond of doves. He did not allow doves to be hunted on his property. Doves are very difficult targets because they flit up and down and from side to side as they fly. Even so, I was successful and filled my limit of 14 birds.

When I returned to my apartment, I removed the breast meat from the birds, washed them and invited Jeane to share cooking a meal of dove breasts with me. For some time Jeane just stared at the dove meat. She had never seen dressed dove breasts before. I asked her what she was thinking. She responded, "Were these 14 or 7 birds?"

A Lesson Learned

Early in our ministry in Dallas, Texas, when Jeane and I were only beginning to be able to afford the essentials of a household, a couple for whom I was performing a wedding, asked if we might be interested in purchasing a washer and dryer which they were selling.

They were merging their two households.

The price appeared to be right, so I gave them a check for the washer and dryer.

When I went by their home to pick up our purchases, I learned that immediately following their wedding, they had moved to Ohio.

Not only had they placed our washer and dryer in storage with the rest of their unwanted household goods, but they had cashed our check, not paid their storage fee, and closed their bank account so that not even their checks for the wedding expenses could be cashed.

Thus, we learned an unexpected, important lesson that even persons you serve may not be as trustworthy as you might think they are. A sense of forgiveness made itself known when we began to realize that perhaps they needed what we had to offer more than we needed what they had to offer.

The Birth of Our Son

In March of 1966, Jeane and I learned that Jeane was pregnant. We were excited to discover that our first child was to arrive in October. Jeane had just begun working as a secretary of the chaplain of Southern Methodist University's Wesley Foundation and she was taking two courses toward her teacher's certificate.

In June Jeane quit work; served as a camp counselor at Highland Park Methodist's Lake Sharon summer camp; and went on a vacation at Rockport, Texas on the Gulf coast.

As the time for our child's birth drew near, Jeane busily sewed curtains and decorated a bassinet. She continued to sing in the church choir. She also had a craving for watermelon.

I began buying things in anticipation of our child's arrival: stuffed animals, clothes, a rocking chair and some blocks. I even bought a fishing rod and could hardly wait for the time that we could go fishing together. I kept asking Jeane to pack her suitcase and to tape the doctor's phone number up by the telephone. In the meantime, as the time for our first child's estimated time for arrival drew near, I held a youth retreat, assisted in worship in the main sanctuary service and continued a heavy schedule of ministerial duties.

Then early in the morning on that October day, our son arrived after an extended labor at Baylor Hospital in Dallas, Texas. We decided to name him Michael Allen, traditional family names. On Sunday, December 4, 1966, Michael was baptized.

From the very beginning, Michael was an active, curious child. He enjoyed playing with his toys; his times being rocked and fed, his times splashing and blowing

bubbles as he was being bathed; and his many visits with church members and periodic gatherings with his grandparents.

Much of our family life centered around Michael's needs to be fed, changed, entertained and enjoyed. What a difference a child makes. What a joy he has been.

Our Daughter's Birth

Prior to Bonnie's impending birth, Jeane and I had arranged for another couple to come to our home, when our daughter was due, to baby-sit our son, Michael. The Ushery's lived only a short distance away.

Jeane had also intended to cook a large turkey, which she had begun to thaw, so that I might have something to eat while she was in the hospital.

Early in the morning when Jeane announced that we had best head for Baylor Hospital for Bonnie's delivery, I called the Ussery's home and reached Mark. I had awakened Mark from his sleep. After waiting for 15 minutes for the Ussery's to arrive, I called their home once more and reached his wife, Betty. She was glad that I had called, for Mark had fallen back asleep after I had called the first time. She said that they would be with us very shortly. I decided to carry Jeane out to our car.

Once I had to set her down on the floor while she was having a contraction. It was during this time that the front door bell rang. There to my relief were the Ussery's. Mark volunteered to open the car door and the metal gate. In his haste to be of assistance, Mark lifted the metal gate right off of its hinges. I think that he was more nervous than I was. Consequently, I told him that I would open the car's door.

For weeks we had attended Lamaze childbirth classes in preparation for Bonnie's arrival. In the rush and urgency of the moment, it was most difficult to remember many of the great and practical hints which our instructor had offered us. Two things seemed paramount in my mind: get Jeane to the hospital as quickly as was possible and encourage her not to have our little one until she was safely in the hospital delivery room.

A touch of panic and a degree of hyperventilation tested my nerves and memory in how to assist Jeane to breathe between labor pains.

Only an early hour, when traffic was minimal, and the grace of God assisted us to arrive at Baylor Hospital moments before our precious daughter was born in September. As the hospital attendant and I were wheeling Jeane into the hospital, she kept saying that she was worried that she might be sitting on our child's head. Then in one moment I was parking our car in the hospital parking lot, and in the next moment I was hearing a nurse announce to me that unto us a child was born. How could this be? Something within me wanted to ask, "Who? Me?"

Truly, the Spirit of the Lord God was upon us, ready or not. Even in the midst of our trying moments and Jeane's labor pains, God was coming to us; calling us; challenging us; and changing us. We were anointed: called forth to protect, nurture and love a child lent to our care by God. With mixed feelings we could only reflect joy and wonder; fear and trembling at the awesome responsibility and exciting privilege which was now ours.

After Bonnie was born I remained with Jeane until I knew that both of them were all right. Then I went to work. It was later that day, after Jeane called the church, that I found many of the church staff members upset at me because I had neglected to tell them of our daughter's birth. Early that evening I returned to the hospital to be with Jeane and to walk with Jeane to the nursery to be with our daughter. Jeane told me of the wonderful, large meal that she had been served for dinner. I told her that I had cooked the 24 lb. turkey that she had set out to thaw. At 10 p.m. I headed home to get a night of rest.

About 2 a.m. I received a phone call. Someone on the other end of the line was whispering. I soon realized that it was Jeane. She told me that she had a craving for turkey. She asked if I might come early to the hospital and bring some of the turkey with me for her to eat. I assured her that I would.

I brought an ice chest with over 1/4 of the turkey in it. Before I left to go to work, she had eaten all of the turkey I had brought. As I drove to work I wondered, was Jeane attempting to fill the space that our daughter had vacated?

Initially our son, Michael, was not too excited to have a baby sister join our family, because he had grown used to being the center of attention at our house. During Jeane's stay at the hospital, Michael really missed her. When it was time to pick up Jeane and Bonnie from the hospital, Michael and I walked to the hospital's entrance just as Jeane was being wheeled out in a wheelchair. Michael rushed to her side. Then he was introduced to his new sister. He expressed his displeasure by turning away, refusing to hug his mother and heading for the car. In those moments, Michael wasn't too sure he wanted a sister, but since it meant Mom would come home too, he decided to put up with his sister. Over the years they have become very important to one another.

[New Year's Eve](#)

It wasn't until Jeane and I were celebrating our first New Year's Eve together that I became aware that there were differences in the traditions around New Year's Eve that we held and were to share together. When I was growing up, it was our family's custom to await the new year by staying home, playing table games and sharing oyster stew just before midnight with family members. At midnight it was our custom to toast everyone with a glass of Hawaiian Punch and gingerale, to wish everyone a Happy New Year and to go outside, bang pans together and shoot off fireworks.

On our first New Year's Eve together, I am sure that Jeane wondered why we were not going out much as was the pattern of her father and mother, or why we were not sitting quietly recalling the events of the past year and what the new year might hold for us.

It was on that first New Year's Eve that I was introduced to black-eyed peas. Jeane had prepared and given to me a small bowl of black-eyed peas. I wondered why? Later, she asked me how I liked the peas she had given me? I told her that I did not have any peas, but only the beans she had prepared. It was then that I learned that the beans were really black-eyed peas. If I had ever had black-eyed peas before, I was

not aware of it. Then I asked her why were we eating black-eyed peas? She told me that this was a part of her family's tradition. To this day, I am not sure what black-eyed peas have to do with New Year's Eve. In the South, the adopted home of Jeane's" paternal grandparents, black-eyed peas on this holiday meant good luck."

It was also on our first New Year's Eve together that I introduced Jeane to some of the customs that had been a part of my early years. Jeane enjoyed the oyster stew, a toast of Hawaiian Punch and gingerale and the New Year's greeting of "Happy New Year!" I could see that she was a bit unsure of my sanity when I suggested that we go outside and bang some pans together right as the New Year arrived. She was also hesitant about playing table games prior to the arrival of the New Year. Jeane's family did not find enjoyment in playing table games.

After our children arrived we shared with them a combination of New Year's Eve traditions that included sharing a bowl of oyster stew, a few black-eyed peas, a brief prayer, a toast of Hawaiian Punch and Sprite, and a wish for a Happy New Year together. When our children were very young we often celebrated the arrival of the new year with them several hours before midnight and then put them to bed.

One year, prior to their teenage years, on New Year's Eve we joined another family, the Stegners, at a cabin near Buffalo Park, Colorado. Their children were about the same ages as were ours. At nine o'clock we celebrated the new year and pretended that it was midnight. We set the clock ahead three hours. They were thrilled that they were finally able to stay up for the arrival of the new year. After our celebration we sent our children to bed. It was only years later that our children learned that they had been sent to bed several hours before the new year had begun. They are still a bit upset with us.

As I have grown older, new years appear to come and go with increasing rapidity.

The Grand Canyon

While serving Highland Park Methodist Church as a Minister with Youth, I led a mystery ramble in 1967 across much of the southwestern part of the United States.

While on this tour we visited for a day one of the awesome wonders of nature: The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River.

While most of our tour group wandered among the many attractions on the plateau of the Canyon, five of our party chose to make the long hike down into the valley below. That hike was like a stroll through time as geological formations, sediment overlays, and fossil outcroppings changed as we descended increasingly into the depths below. Vegetation and rock coloration changed as we wandered deeper and deeper into the Canyon. Periodically, springs and waterfalls offered moist relief to the heat of a July morning.

After reaching the valley floor, we examined the muddy waters of the Colorado River, visited briefly the Phantom Ranch, and ate our lunch in the shade of some trees. All too soon it was time to make the long hike back up to where we had begun early that morning. We had been warned to take plenty of water with us for there would be no

places at that time for us to get water along the trail. Each of us had carried three containers of water with us.

As we climbed upward, we began to become more aware of how steep, narrow and winding the trail that we had come down had been. Numerous switch backs allowed us to see the progress we had made and to see the steep incline of the trail we were yet to travel. Increasingly the heat of the day, combined with the lack of a cooling breeze, reminded us to drink the necessary water we had been warned to carry with us. Others along the trail asked if we had any water to spare. We shared our precious water with them. About a third of the way from the top we all ran out of water.

About the same time, we were forced by a long line of pack mules carrying riders, to lean against the inside protective Canyon wall. To this day I do not know why the mule skinner chose that time to stop his mule train along the trail next to us. The mule next to me decided to lean on me while it rested. Had it not been for the rider on its back, I might have prodded it to move, even over the cliff if necessary. I was already hot and out of breath and the weight of the hot mule took the remaining breath right out of me. Fortunately, the mule train moved on.

The last portion of our climb was made even more difficult as we stepped over and breathed fresh, pungent mule manure. The heat of the trail magnified our distress. Our dry, cotton mouths gasped for water and our empty stomachs growled for food. An endless source of cold water and a cool breeze never felt better than when we reached a drinking fountain at the top of the Canyon trail. A seeming endless supply of snicker doodle cookies that Jeane had prepared for our mystery ramble spoke to our hunger pains.

Before we boarded the bus to continue our mystery ramble, the five of us, who had walked the Canyon trail, took one last look over the edge of the Canyon to see if we could see the trail we had traveled. Most of it was hidden from our view.

I wonder if we would have hiked that trail if we had known in advance how taxing it would become for us? I wonder if we would have done some of the things we experienced along the passageways of our lives, if we had advanced awareness of the hidden challenges we were to face?

[A Mansion in Tucson Arizona](#)

A daily shower was essential for those who were a part of our Highland Park United Methodist Church Youth Mystery Ramble. Each day along our bus ride we had arranged for a stop to get some physical exercise and to take a shower. One of our stops was to be at the YMCA in Tucson, Arizona. Before we reached Tucson our bus had a flat tire. This mishap set back our arrival time in Tucson by almost 2 hours thus causing us to miss our scheduled swim and shower at the Tucson YMCA.

One of our counselors, Dr. Jack Harkey, had a prominent friend near Tucson. He had gone to graduate school with this person. He knew that his friend and his wife had a large home with an indoor swimming pool and might be willing to allow our group of mystery ramblers to shower at his place.

Dr. Harkey gave him a call and was greeted with the good news that not only could we shower and swim at their home, but they would be pleased if we could assist him and his wife to eat the leftovers from a big party they had held the previous evening.

When we arrived at their mansion, we were amazed at the size of this facility. Not only did they have an indoor, Olympic sized swimming pool with male and female changing facilities and multiple showers, but their home consisted of 4 indoor tennis courts, a pool room, an antique ice cream bar, 2 dens, an informal dining room, 2 formal dining rooms, 5 kitchens, an immense pantry, a room filled with silverware, pots and pans and dishes for most any occasion, a civil war memorabilia room, a room for a vast American Indian collection, a room filled with medical items of the past, a room for making pottery, 4 servant quarters and more bedrooms (67) than many hotels might have. I had never been and have never since been in a house that even began to mirror the enormity of that Tucson mansion. We travelers felt privileged to share in such luxury even as something within us felt ill at ease.

Dr. Harkey's friend and his wife were both doctors who treated cancer patients with atomic energy at the noted medical complex in Houston, Texas. Their practices were financially very lucrative. Each week they would fly from their private airport to Houston where they would spend 3-4 days treating patients, then they would return to Tucson. They referred to their mansion as a retreat from the stresses and struggles of those whom they hoped to heal.

It was amazing to me to know that 2 people of such prominence would choose to live in a home of such proportions. Later, in downtown San Francisco, California, our mystery ramblers would experience street people who had little or nothing more than the clothes upon their bodies and food that they could beg or gather from the dumpsters around them. The contrasts were very apparent and discussed among those who shared this mystery ramble.

Scuba Diving

At one time I wondered what it would be like to dive under the waves of the ocean, to explore the beauty and wonders of a new portion of God's creation. Then, while visiting Catalena Island near the California coast on a Highland Park United Methodist Church mystery ramble, I was given an opportunity to take scuba diving lessons in the deep, clear, blue waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Once I became comfortable with the necessary gear essential to explore and breathe under water, I found myself losing track of time and space due to my fascination with this new world filled with endless wonders.

Even though the surface waves were pounding the beaches, the water a mere ten feet below the surface was calm, filled with jungles of kelp and an endless display of fish of many varieties.

In a brief time I found myself over 50 feet below the surface looking up at waves breaking high above my head and watching the butterfly appearance of a huge manta ray appearing to fly high above me.

This was a whole new world to explore by a person from Montana who had grown up far from the oceans.

I was lost in the splendor and wonder of all that surrounded me. Schools of fish of many colors, sizes and descriptions came and went all around me. Clusters of shells and coral dotted the ocean floor. Crabs and lobsters, starfish and sea urchins, seals and eels fascinated me whenever they appeared. Once I came almost face to face with a giant Jew fish of well over 400 lbs and another time I found myself shuttering as a school of large sharks swam by only 20 feet away. Kelp beds offered a degree of protection.

As with everything in nature, there are blessings and dangers.

Time went by quickly, and before I knew it, my diving partner was reminding me that it was already time to return to the surface lest our tanks run out of oxygen.

I was not yet ready to return to the surface, but a breath of fresh air did sound inviting.

Father Dyer's Chapel

During the summer of 1970, Rev. Walter Boigegrain, Rev. Bill Iiams and I led a group of youth from Lakewood United Methodist Church to Fairplay, Colorado to work on the historic Father Dyer Chapel. We decided to do what we could to reclaim this important, tangible reminder of the early Methodist ministries in Colorado. Over the years of neglect, the chinking between the logs had deteriorated and allowed almost a foot of dust to cover the pews, the pump organ and floor boards. Numerous nails, hinges and boards needed attention. Almost forgotten and abandoned to time and the weather, this little chapel had become a storage place for rusting relics and rotting timbers. Like so many things of our past, it had been tossed aside, viewed as almost worthless, as if it was used up and worn out.

Our work team was challenged to help restore Father Dyer's Chapel to some of its former life-enhancing worth. It was in very much need of attention: we chinked logs; reglazed the windows; removed two inches of dust from the floor and furnishings; removed much unsightly brush and weeds from the grounds surrounding the chapel; built a new fence; and designed and posted a sign identifying this historic landmark. Soon an amazing transformation took place.

Father Dyer was an early, itinerant Methodist minister who helped establish several churches in the frontier communities of Colorado. To maintain a source of income, he carried the mail in all seasons to communities throughout the Fairplay, Leadville and Breckenridge frontier. Modern skiers with today's equipment have attempted to duplicate some of his early routes and have met with failure time and again. He was strong, determined and resourceful.

Even though Father Dyer Chapel is a fairly small building of two stories, it is amazing that this chapel served not only as a place to gather for worship, weddings, baptisms and funerals, but the second story served as a hotel, a resting place for weary travelers.

Each traveler was allotted two boards to mark a limited space on the bare floor for sleeping. For the first time, I gained some understanding of what was meant by the term "board and room".

Those of us who worked on this chapel were amazed that the small pump organ still worked after so many years. Mice had not eaten the leather of the billows. When we first played it, not only did the organ play music, but initially, the organ billows blew dust all over the chapel.

As we sat in the pews where Father Dyer's congregation gathered, we imagined the huge 6 foot + frame of Father Dyer leaning over the diminutive pulpit preaching words of sin, forgiveness, hope and salvation as he almost touched those seated in the first pew. We doubted that anyone could or dared fall asleep.

Since we worked on the Father Dyer Chapel we have learned that it has been moved across the highway to a tourist attraction called "Frontier Town." There it is maintained and serves as a reminder of how very important the church and itinerant ministers were to the stability of the frontier communities.

Establishing JEFFCO Action Center

In 1970, in response to some of the basic human needs of individuals and families throughout Jefferson County, Helen Philips, Lillian and Dick Marvin, and I served as representatives from Lakewood UMC to join Church Women United in initiating and establishing the JEFFCO Action Center.

Prior to its founding, most basic human needs were provided by neighborhood churches to whatever degree they were available. By combining church and community offerings to begin to meet food, clothing, housing, job referrals and sound counseling, thousands of individuals and families found real assistance and hope to face the circumstances of their lives.

JEFFCO's first building was donated for \$1 from the Lowrey Air Force Base. It was a discontinued barracks that was scheduled for being demolished. Permission was necessary to transport this barracks through the many municipalities from Lowrey to the Lakewood United Methodist Church parking lot where 2/3rds of the building would be used for the main distribution center. In many instances municipalities required the costs of police escorts to pass through their area of responsibility. Most of the moving had to be done at night for the load was very wide. Several stopping places along the way had to be scheduled in advance because it took several days to complete the move. Measurements for the building had to be made in advance, foundational supports had to be drilled and cement had to be poured. The building had to be chainsawed into three sections and open ends had to be enclosed. Two smaller sections of the building were moved to the back parking lots of Jefferson Ave. United Methodist Church and a local Baptist Church where they would be used for storage, a Santa shop and sorting of donations. Then shelves were constructed and a part-time, almost volunteer employee was hired to coordinate the donations received and distributed. Endless volunteers were required to complete this phase of moving and reconstruction.

For many years these facilities and endless volunteers have served Jefferson County families and individuals who needed basic support and assistance that was unavailable anywhere else within the county.

JEFFCO Action Center is tangible evidence of what can happen to truly help others meet their essential needs when churches and community agencies pool their resources, ingenuity and efforts together.

The Lakewood Coffee House

During the spring of 1972, it came to my attention that many of the high school teenagers of Lakewood were getting into trouble with the law as they cruised west Colefax. Abuse of alcohol and drugs, traffic violations, pregnancies, runaways, threats of suicide and boredom were the most prevalent problems of a sizable number of those in trouble. An average of 6 1/2 teenagers were going to jail each Friday evening.

Several teenagers came to me to see if they could establish a coffee house in the Lakewood United Methodist facilities. As we discussed the purposes of this coffee house, it became apparent to me that these teenagers were just as concerned as I was about the struggles of Lakewood's youth.

Together, we approached the official board of Lakewood UMC with the proposal that a coffee house experience for Lakewood's senior high youth be offered for a trial period to see if our church and some of the community groups might find some way to reach out to the youth of Lakewood.

After a tentative approval was received for the use of Lakewood UMC facilities, I drew together Mayor Richey, a member of Lakewood UMC, the chief of Public Safety of Lakewood, several representatives of Jefferson County's Mental Health Association, several school counselors of the Jefferson County high schools, a few representatives of surrounding churches, representatives of the Parent Teachers Association, two representatives of Lakewood UMC's official board, a few representatives of the Rotary Club, Elks, Eagles, Masons and local granges and several of the high school teenagers who had initially come to me to talk about establishing a coffee house.

This coalition of community representatives were concerned about doing something about the issues, concerns and needs of the local youth. After much discussion they recommended that music and discussion groups (rap groups on current issues of local youth led by knowledgeable adults) should be a significant part of drawing high school youth to this weekly Friday night gathering. Music would be provided by local volunteer groups, emerging talent from among those gathered and recruited touring professional musicians who would be asked to volunteer their talents in community service.

John Denver was one nationally known musician who donated his or her talents at the Icthus Coffee House.

Light shows and the reading of individual's poetry and writings were also encouraged and scheduled.

Cookies, popcorn and sodas were made available for a quarter at these gatherings.

A limit of 10 adult sponsors and 10 youth assistants were recruited from community agencies for each Friday night gathering.

The chief of Public Safety volunteered two officers from his force to serve as volunteer undercover agents to maintain order at these weekly gatherings. We had an agreement that no one would be arrested on the Lakewood UMC grounds unless I and the officers felt that someone was out of control. During the 3 years that the coffee house was held, only one person was arrested on Lakewood UMC's grounds because we found other creative ways of dealing with issues that needed to be confronted.

From the coalition of community representatives, a coffee house board was elected composed of equal numbers of adults and high school youth.

A few of the rules that the coffee house board established were: coffee house participation was limited to high school youth, recruited adult sponsors, scheduled musicians and rap group leaders; no person using or with drugs or alcohol could enter the coffee house; smoking was not allowed on the premises; no person could leave and reenter the facilities more than once and that person had to pay once more the entry fee of a quarter; loitering in the parking lot was prohibited; disruption of scheduled activities was not permitted; and rap discussions had be respectful.

One illustration of how we turned difficulties into teaching moments was when a person decided to sale liquor to the gathering youth in the church parking lot. When this was discovered, instead of having this person arrested, we had him pour out onto the parking lot all of the bottles of beer and hard liquor that he had in his car. His stash of liquor had cost him quite a bit. Knowing that he might be sent to jail for distributing alcohol to underage minors motivated him to empty the liquor from his front and back seats and also from his sizable trunk before many onlooking youth. This lesson prevented any other episodes such as this.

Four rooms were set aside for rap groups: 1 rap group was scheduled each week for open discussion and the remaining 3 rap groups were focused on specific, high profile issues that had arisen in previous open sessions. In most instances the high profile issue rap groups were led by a professional who usually began these sessions with a preplanned input.

One measure of the success of the coffee house was found in the decrease in the number of Friday arrests of youth. In 1974, an average of only 2 youth were arrested on the Fridays of each month.

This was down from an average of 28 Friday arrests of youth each month in 1972.

Mental health noted that teenage pregnancies, runaways, threats of suicide and the use of alcohol among youth were noticeably diminished.

Sadly the use of drugs among youth was rising.

In large measure the coffee house was helpful, eye opening and a strong beginning in reaching out to the youth of Lakewood and surrounding communities.

Followup sessions around significant youth issues were held in area high schools once a year. The school principals, teachers and counselors sensed how important these sessions could be in the lives of the youth who came to their schools. Parents and high school youth were encouraged to attend these enlightening rap sessions. Each person could attend 4 different rap groups during the course of a day.

Expert and knowledgeable facilitators, some from among the schools' faculties and other from a variety of community agencies, led these rap groups. The schools' relationships with youth and their parents were greatly enhanced.

The Colorado Council of Churches

From 1972-1974, I was asked by the Rocky Mountain Conference to serve as the RMC representative on the education commission of the Colorado Council of Churches. During the first year we explored a variety of ways that the representative denominations might assist one another in their efforts to support and develop Christian education ministries in local churches.

In 1973, the Colorado Council of Churches staff member, Spenser Wren, assigned to serve the Commission on Education took a new ministerial assignment in his denomination. Since I was the newly assigned volunteer chairperson of the Colorado Council of Churches' Education Commission, it became my responsibility to assist the Colorado Council of Churches to recruit and assist a new Education Commission staff person. One of the most qualified applicants happened to be a nun of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Roman Catholics were not a part of the Colorado Council of Churches, I was assigned the task of bringing the recommendation of the Education Commission, Sister Helen, to the governing board of the Council of Churches. Some of the board members were hesitant and a bit reluctant to have a Roman Catholic hired by the Colorado Council of Churches, but after much discussion, the decision was left up to the Education Commission. We hired Sister Helen.

Shortly after Sister Helen was hired, I received a telephone call from Monsignor Jones, a representative of the Roman Catholic Arch Bishop Casey. He indicated that Arch Bishop Casey would like an audience with me. When I met with Arch Bishop Casey and Monsignor Jones, I discovered that they were pleased that the Council of Churches had considered a Roman Catholic for the Education staff position. Arch Bishop Casey had one reservation: it concerned the salary that Sister Helen was to receive. I began to make apologies for the salary being so minimal, but was surprised that Arch Bishop Casey's concern was that the salary was too high in proportion to that of other nuns. I indicated that Protestants would not have accepted such a low salary. To resolve Arch Bishop Casey's dilemma, I suggested that he and Sister Helen might discuss a solution to this disparity in nun's salaries by determining the excess of dollars and making a donation back to the Colorado Council of Churches. I am not sure how he finally resolved this issue.

During Sister Helen's tenure with us many exciting innovations came into being. Among the offerings were: an inspirational, unifying, yearly Ecumenical Christian Educators' Retreat was held at Ghost Ranch, a national Presbyterian Retreat center, near Chama, New Mexico; a much needed, value clarification training for youth was initiated in several of the Denver public schools and area churches, led by Colorado Council of Church leaders; regional, ecumenical Christian education training

opportunities, with noted creative, education leadership from across the western part of the USA, were offered lay and professional Christian educators; many local church Christian education offerings, open to the public, were widely advertised through the public media; and a representative of the Roman Catholic Church, Monsignor Jones, became an active part of the Colorado Council of Churches.

I believe that the Colorado Council of Churches was first or among the first American Councils of Churches to invite a Roman Catholic to be on their staff. It was good to be a significant part of this long over due, groundbreaking, ecumenical reconciliation.

Overflowing Love

One of the patients I visited at St. Anthony's Hospital, while serving as a minister of Lakewood United Methodist Church, was an artist and teacher named June Birch. June was in the last stages of terminal breast cancer. June became a person confined to a body riddled with cancer. A vital, involved, creative, caring spirit found itself housed in a body rapidly deteriorating, even unto death. She had already experienced a series of chemical treatments shortly after her doctor had discovered the presence of her cancer, but the cancer had advanced too far by the time. Then the doctors removed both of her breasts and the lymph nodes under her arms in hope of arresting the spread of cancer throughout her body.

Despite these setbacks, June was an inspiration to all around her. She was like a human magnate. Many doctors and nurses, who were not even a part of her medical team, looked in on June because of her upbeat and realistic attitude. They were touched by June's spirit and faith. She had a way of celebrating the precious moments of her life even when her days were fading oh so quickly.

In awe and wonder, I found myself visiting June, especially in her last days. Inevitably I found June dictating into her tape recorder notes of care and comfort to those who might have wished that they could have supported her more in her time of trial and discomfort.

She had only one regret that she expressed to me. She told me that she had painted a picture for each of her relatives, except for one niece who lived in Houston, Texas. The next time I visited her, she asked me if I might do her a favor by taking her keys, going to her apartment and bringing to her a canvas, her pallet, her easel and her satchel of paints and brushes. That morning I returned with her requested items.

Knowing that she could no longer lift her arms to paint, I wondered how she hoped to do what she felt called to accomplish. Her hands and arms would no longer do what her amazing spirit hoped. Her spirit was willing, but her flesh was weak. Even so, a creative will had found a way.

She asked me to set up her easel near the end of her bed and to place the canvas upon it. She had me squeeze a series of paints onto her pallet. Then the nurse propped her up so that she could see the canvas. Her next request was for me to place one of her paint brushes between her large toe and the toe next to it. She had never painted this way before, but she was determined to paint a picture for her niece.

Soon a beautiful meadow scene began to appear. The meadow was covered with bluebells that poured down the banks of a stream that seemed to dance in a light breeze. Willows, a shade tree and her initials completed the painting as she laid back in her bed obviously exhausted, but exhilarated.

Word must have spread across the hospital, for a growing crowd of onlookers had gathered in her hospital room to marvel at her skill, her painting and her will power. Most of those gathered kept commenting that they wished that they could paint half as well as she had done.

Before I left that day, a nurse had dialed her niece's phone number. June asked her if she might fly to Denver to be with her in the next day or two. June told her that she would pay for the ticket.

The next afternoon it was my privilege to join a few nurses, doctors and close friends in June's hospital room as she presented her niece with her gift of love. I doubt that there was a dry eye in that room.

After a brief prayer of thanksgiving, I left her hospital room and returned to my other ministerial duties. Within an hour I received a phone call letting me know that June had passed away.

She had spent her last moments using her God entrusted talent, painting, celebrating, and gifting those around her. She refused to die until she had completed and presented one last gift to a family member. Little did she know how many others she had so richly blessed as she spent herself in this last act of love.

The love of Christ had found a way of overflowing even through June's seeming imprisonment.

[A Christmas Gift Revisited](#)

Some years ago, before Christmas, the youth of a church that I was serving were sent in groups of four with an adult counselor to visit some of our elderly shut-ins.

They were assigned the task of discovering what Christmas was like in the early 1900s.

I joined four teenage boys who were going to visit a 94 year old woman who had grown up in a sod house on the prairies of Kansas.

When she was asked to describe her first Christmas tree, she reminded us that evergreens were not prevalent in her part of the country. She said that the focus of her family's first Christmas center was a large, decorated tumble weed.

When she was asked about gifts that she had received as a child, she spoke of a new gingham dress that her mother had sewn for her from a flour sack, an orange that was uncommon in Kansas and a real pencil with which she learned to print her ABCs.

She received her first doll when she was 6. Her father had carved its head from a block of wood and her mother had made its arms, body and legs from corn husks.

When she was asked if she still had this special gift, she went into her bedroom and returned with it.

As she showed it to us, it became apparent that she was still very upset about the deep scars which were most evident in her doll's head. She then explained that

shortly after she had received this unexpected gift from her parents, her brother had used it as a hammer to nail some boards together.

Over the years, some things remain precious to us, and sometimes the gift of forgiveness comes slowly.

Bonnie's "Sauerkraut Juice"

One of the traditions that my grandfather and grandmother practiced was mixing gingerale with Hawaiian punch to celebrate special occasions such as new years, Thanksgiving and birthdays. When our children were young, Jeane and I introduced Bonnie and Michael to this tradition. They grew fond of it and took for granted that we would have this drink whenever we celebrated anything important.

When Bonnie was in preschool her teacher invited the members of her class to bring something special for their Thanksgiving celebration. When the teacher asked each class member to share what he or she was bringing, Bonnie told her that she planned to bring "sauerkraut juice".

That afternoon when we picked Bonnie up from preschool, her teacher made a point of asking Jeane why Bonnie thought sauerkraut juice was so special. At first Jeane was a bit surprised also. Then she remembered that once Bonnie had asked me what we called the special gingerale and Hawaiian Punch juice we served on special occasions. Since my grandfather had never given it a name, for some reason or another I called it "sauerkraut juice". Bonnie seemed satisfied with this name. Because Bonnie felt that this juice was very special, it was only natural for her to want to bring "sauerkraut juice" as her contribution to her preschool's Thanksgiving celebration.

Little did I consider the possibility that our children would ever mention "sauerkraut juice" beyond our family circle. Yet now I ask myself, "Why not?" Names and traditions are truly more important than we sometimes realize.

Bonnie's Doll Crib

Our daughter, Bonnie, really enjoyed dolls. Among her many dolls was a Madam Alexander doll that she carried around with her by holding on to it's hair. In time much of it's hair fell out and it was almost bald, but Bonnie still loved that doll very much.

Prior to one Christmas she requested a baby crib for her dolls. I decided to build one for her. I designed it to be a miniature of the crib that she still used. I finished applying the last coat of white paint to her doll crib the night before Christmas. The next morning she found a large red ribbon tied to it under the Christmas tree. She was so excited and could not wait to fill it with her many dolls. That evening Jeane and I found Bonnie sound asleep in her new doll crib. I was pleased that I was able to build it for her. She still has this doll crib in her present home.

Mike's First Lionel Train

When I was young I always had wanted an electric train. Often I would share my request with the department store Santa prior to Christmas, but alas, it never was found under the Christmas tree. Later, when Jeane and I had our first child, Michael, I purchased a Lionel train for his third Christmas.

On Christmas day he and I played with his train most of the day. The next day was Sunday and we had a full day at church. When we returned home, Michael immediately wanted to play with his train. He could not get it to go and he began to cry. I went to help him. I also could not get it go. It turned out that the train's transformer had burned out because I had forgotten to turn it off the previous evening. Once more Michael began to cry. Neither Jeane nor I could get him to stop crying. He wanted his train to go and nothing else would get him to stop crying. His crying never ceased until he grew so exhausted that finally he fell asleep. The next morning I rushed to the store and purchased a replacement transformer for his train. He still has this train set.

I am not sure for whom I really bought that train set, Michael or me. It was special to both of us.

A Special Visit

When our son Michael and daughter Bonnie were very young we planned a visit to my maternal grandfather's home in Ryderwood, Washington. On the way from Lakewood, Colorado, we camped one night in Yellowstone Park at Indian Creek Campground. We had a large three room canvas tent that we had purchased at a garage sale and a porta crib for our little ones. Just before night fall, a park ranger came through our campground warning campers about a grizzly bear that had been breaking into tents and trailers during the previous week. Jeane decided that we had best set up the porta crib in the back of our station wagon in which the children would sleep. The porta crib and suitcases took up all of the room behind the front seat. Our children slept in the porta crib. That left the cramped front seat for Jeane and me. Jeane decided to spend the night in the lighted park restroom.

During the night a bear did wander through our camp ground, disrupting the sleep of some of the other campers. The next morning we found that our pitched tent had not been disturbed. We drove on to grandfather's house.

When we arrived in Ryderwood, my maternal grandfather greeted our children with the announcement that he sure wished that they had come a day earlier, for the wind had blown all of the ice cream cones from the bushes around his house. Our children were very disappointed.

This was the first and only time that Jeane as well as the children spent time with their great grandfather. What a special time in our lives this turned out to be.

During our visit I assisted grandfather to complete some work on a project that was a statement of how important family ties were to him and to each of us. Grandfather had turned his large garage into a series of self-contained rooms sufficient to house several of his children's families at the same time. He had refinished his

garage so that visiting families could have their own private bedrooms, showers, and restrooms. He called it "The Rolfe Motel."

When we completed this project, I asked grandfather what he had next on his list of plans yet to do. He responded that he had nothing more to do. His response was a bit unsettling to me. This was not like my grandfather for he always had a series of projects on the drawing board. I believe that he knew something that I was not wanting to even consider.

The following day we encouraged grandfather to join Jeane, Michael, Bonnie, and me on a trip along the coast of southern Washington. While there, we dug for fresh razorback clams. We were moderately successful. One of the special pictures Jeane and I have of this outing is of grandfather holding the hand of his 3 1/2 year old great-grandson Michael walking along the mud flat with the sun beginning to set behind them.

When we returned to grandfather's home, grandfather gave Jeane one of my grandmother's recipes for making fresh clam chowder. I believe that the clam chowder that Jeane prepared was the best chowder I have ever had. It was extra good because of the fellowship we shared around the table with my grandfather and family. I believe that a meal is only special in part because of the food we eat, but even more because of the people who break bread with us as they share their lives with us around our tables. There is nothing better than fresh seafood and good fellowship with loving persons.

When it was time to return to Colorado, we reluctantly said, "Good-bye," sensing this would be the last time we would see grandfather alive. A month later grandfather died of a massive heart attack.

I am so pleased that Jeane and our children were blessed to come to know, even though briefly, a very special person and significant mentor in my life.

Coyotes

Each year, while our children were young, Jeane and I found someone to care for our children for two days so that just the two of us could go somewhere together. Because we were most always short of cash, and because we enjoyed camping, we often went somewhere that we could pitch our tent along a beautiful stream or on a high plateau where the view would greet us as we arose from our backpacking tent in the morning.

On one occasion we chose to set up our tent in a colorful aspen grove near Kenosha Pass. That evening as we were crawling into our sleeping bags, we began to hear a pack of coyotes howling near our campsite. Their voices, sounding high and low, reminded us that we were truly in their territory. They were surely inquisitive, for shortly Jeane and I could hear them sniffing and padding just outside our tent. While near our tent, they did not howl. Soon they moved on and we could hear them once more howling to one another in the valley below us and on distant hills beyond us. The next morning in the crumpled grass, we could see where they had checked out our campsite.

That afternoon we followed a trail into the colorful aspen groves and rolling hills around us. There we discovered that coyotes were not the only wild predators that claimed this area as their territory. On a good many of the larger aspen trees we could see the claw marks of bears that had climbed their trunks or left their calling cards for other bears to note.

There is something very special to discover that we are lent the privilege of sharing the awesome wonders and beauty of God's creation while camping in the territories of so many wild creatures.

Riding the Train

Jeane and I were always looking for ways for our children to experience some of the things that had been meaningful in our lives. Riding trains had been a special part of both of our early experiences. Passenger train lines were quickly disappearing. We decided that our children should be allowed to ride a train before they ceased running or became too expensive to ride. Thus we planned a train trip to the hot springs in Glenwood Springs and another to Granby to go fishing.

The trip to Glenwood Springs was in the early spring when the snow and wildlife were very much in evidence. The observation car allowed spectacular viewing of deer and elk, and of bald eagles feeding on a carcass of a winter-killed animal. We stayed overnight in the famous Glenwood Springs Hotel. Just outside our hotel door we swam and soaked often in the hot water of the expansive hot springs pool. Our return trip through the Glenwood Canyon of the Colorado River was truly spectacular with sun light shining on its many sheer walls and interesting rock formations.

When we went by train to Granby, Colorado, we took our fishing rods, a lunch, and the Gerry Pack to carry our almost two year old daughter, Bonnie. After we reached the depot in Granby we deboarded and toured part of Granby. Then we headed for the river to do some fishing. When it was time for lunch, we sat along the bank of the flowing stream and watched the birds fly by. Before we knew it, it was time for us to reboard the train for our return home to Lakewood.

I had scheduled a wedding rehearsal for that evening. The train arrived a bit late at the Denver Depot. But there was plenty of time for me to go home, change, and get to the rehearsal. Yet for some reason or other the conductor delayed passengers from getting off the train for over a half an hour. In spite of our delay, I did make it on time to the wedding rehearsal, but I vowed never to overschedule my day in that way again.

Lake Sharon

While serving as a minister on the staff of Highland Park Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas, I had the privilege of helping develop retreats and camps at Lake

Sharon, a campsite near Lake Dallas, that had been donated to Highland Park Methodist Church.

From 1961-1968, I created and led numerous planning, recreational and study retreats for the youth of Highland Park Methodist Church. Throughout the summers of 1961-1968, I planned and led a full schedule of week-long resident camps at Lake Sharon. Much bonding of groups and friendships, deepened spiritual growth and healthy fellowship was established in gatherings at Lake Sharon. Youth and adults alike looked forward to outings at Lake Sharon. I always contended that one week at Lake Sharon was comparable to one quarter of Sunday morning Christian education.

Lake Sharon had a combination dining hall, fellowship hall and a series of meeting rooms. It also had two buildings with five wings attached to each building for sleeping with eight beds in each wing. Each building also had a common meeting room with a small kitchenette. Thus each building could be a separate unit in and of itself. These sleeping facilities allowed large overnight gatherings of up to 80 persons. They also allowed large groups to be subdivided into two groups of 40 persons or 10 groups of 8 persons. Sometimes the sleeping facilities were used for family retreats that allowed for 10 family groupings.

The grounds covered over 80 acres, two lakes, an Olympic sized swimming pool. A miniature pitch and put golf course, horseshoe pits and outdoor amphitheater were also developed on the camp grounds by the youth of Highland Park Church.

Many of the short and long range plans for ministries of Highland Park Methodist Church were created, developed and scheduled at Lake Sharon. Staff ministry planning retreats and lay leadership training and planning retreats were held twice a year at Lake Sharon.

Even though Lake Sharon was only a short distance from Dallas, the grounds and facilities of Lake Sharon gave those who gathered a feeling of being far away from the diversions of Dallas.

Highland Park Methodist Church was blessed richly with the privilege of owning these facilities and many church groups made uplifting and extensive use of this camp.

Conference Resident Camp Director

In 1960, I served for one week as a counselor at one of the Montana Conference youth camps at Luccock Park. This camp drew youth and volunteer counselors from churches across Montana. These yearly camps were vital to uniting and energizing the Methodist youth and churches of the Montana Conference.

In 1965, I was asked to serve as one of the North Texas Conference camp directors. I directed a junior high camp of 150 youth in a camp west of Dallas. We explored the sights and sounds of God's creation; slept in wooden cabins; learned new camp songs; formed new friendships and prepared much of our own food over open fires. Whenever we went hiking in the woods near camp we had to be ever mindful of encountering poisonous snakes that included cottonmouths, copperheads and rattlesnakes. Insects and thorns were also in much abundance. I found camping in Texas very unlike my experiences of camping in Montana and later in Colorado.

Each summer beginning in 1969-1974, I served as one of the Rocky Mountain Conference camp directors at Buckhorn Camp near Fort Collins, Colorado. All of these camps were for youth, many of whom had not been camping before. It was fun to see persons grow in their appreciation of God's world and to discover their individual and collective abilities to blossom as the unique persons God was inviting them to be and become.

Buckhorn Camp was blessed with numerous wildlife, trails, wooded areas and places to explore, even an old gold mine. Wholesome meals were prepared for the campers in a well supplied kitchen and served around dining tables in a large assembly room. Campers were gathered in groups of eight with one counselor assigned to each cluster. Eight was the magic number because each cabin contained four bunk beds for the campers and one single cot for the counselor. Cabin groups chose a name for their cluster; wrote an original song to identify their group; gathered as cabin groups at their assigned tables; produced a camp skit to present during evening campfires; prepared and led a worship service with one other cabin group for the entire assembly of campers at Buckhorn; chose secret pals from among the other camp groups for whom they would do special things; and prepared daily cabin journals that were gathered, printed and presented to all of the campers as they prepared to return to their homes. On several occasions Jeane served as one of the camp counselors, bringing our children to join in our many camp activities.

Most mornings were spent in worship services, bible studies and in cabin activities.

All of the campers gathered together for worship services, meals, craft groups and evening campfires. Many of the campfire stories became very familiar as they were recalled from year to year. Each afternoon individuals could chose among a series of activities such as hiking, fishing, photographing, cave exploring, observing wildlife, carving, or playing volleyball, baseball, table games or sharing in rap groups around issues and concerns relevant to youth.

Each year, those registering for camp did so as early as they could so that they would not find themselves on the waiting list of those who might not be able to be a part of Buckhorn's 100 camper capacity. A good number of campers who attended the previous camp experiences chose to return for as many years as they could. Lasting friendships were formed during camp and much of what they learned and experienced was shared with those from their local churches when they returned home. For many, their church camp experiences have been life changing.

When I was no longer a church camp director, I served as a guest speaker at one of the Rocky Mountain Conference camps known as Temple Hills. I was usually asked to lead the campers in discovering and identifying numerous wild flowers that grew throughout that campground.

[Buckhorn Tipi Camp](#)

In 1972, Mary Ann Watkins and I led a tipi camp for 24 junior highers at Buckhorn United Methodist Camp. Throughout the week-long camp, it rained, snowed and blew.

For the first day and night our campers remained largely in the tipis except to use the outhouses. By the second day hikes, campfires and our need to gather wood drew campers out of the tipis.

Among the many activities of that week of camping in tipis, Mary Ann and I taught bible lessons, introduced campers to new songs, helped campers to write stories and keep journals, held classes for making crafts, planned skits, assisted the campers to prepare and cook all of their meals and snacks and to cleanup after themselves. We were surprised to learn that many of these campers had never cooked anything before this outing. Some of them became fairly decent cooks over open fires by the time the camp ended.

Each morning the supplies for our meals for the day were delivered to us from the pantry of the Buckhorn Camp by Rev. Bill liams. One morning Bill failed to arrive with our supplies. After breakfast time came and went, I decided to hike the mile and a half over to the main camp to learn what had happened to our necessary supplies. On the way I discovered Bill's van idling in the roadway. As I drew near I heard Bill shouting to me to get back for there was a bear attempting to get to the food he was seeking to deliver. Apparently he had got out of his van to take a picture of the bear when it appeared near the road. As he was taking pictures, the bear moved between him and the door to his van. Fortunately Bill had closed the door as he got out of the van to take the bear's picture or the bear would have made short work of the contents of our food supplies.

When I arrived, Bill was attempting to get into his van from the opposite side from the bear. Apparently the bear had thwarted his previous attempts. Because my appearance on the scene had distracted the bear for a few moments, Bill was able to get into the truck and drive to where I had momentarily taken shelter behind a piece of farm equipment. The bear disappeared into the brush. Surprisingly we were never troubled by bears nor any other wildlife in the area around our tipis.

Instead of having breakfast that morning, our campers had a brunch. Other meals might have been forgotten, but I am sure that our late brunch was well remembered.

Change often inscribes its impression upon the script of our life journey.

[John Wesley Youth Ranch](#)

John Wesley Youth Ranch was owned by First United Methodist Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was located directly west of Pikes Peak next to the Mueller Ranch and a large section of BLM land.

The former owners had used it as a dude ranch and had sold it very reasonably to 6 laymen from First UMC in the hope that it would continue to be used as a retreat center.

At first the senior minister did not want the land, for he felt a large burden maintaining the facilities that were already a part of First UMC.

When I arrived on the staff of FUMC, the 6 laymen approached me to explore how John Wesley Youth Ranch might be used in the educational ministries of FUMC.

Not knowing that the senior minister was not in favor of the church owning this land, I expressed my interest and enthusiasm for the possibilities that this camp might offer the ministries of FUMC.

The trustees of FUMC quickly took ownership of the camp and the educational ministries almost immediately put it to use. Endless number of day and overnight retreats, snow day excursions and hikes, work and planning retreats, day camps and staff retreats were greatly enhanced and made affordable because FUMC owned this camp. Many children, youth and adults recreated, worshipped, studied, enjoyed nature and deepened their understanding and joy of being a part of FUMC at the John Wesley Youth Ranch.

Because there were three small lakes on the grounds, fish were planted in two of them, thus allowing many children and youth to catch their very first fish.

Elk and deer, big horn sheep and sometimes bears were seen wandering across the grounds of this wildlife haven. A huge variety of birds were much in evidence throughout the evergreens and aspen groves of the camp.

A beautiful lodge with sleeping quarters, an excellent kitchen and a large dining/meeting hall with a fireplace enabled the warmth of breaking bread and sharing wonderful meal with one another. It was not surprising that a good number of persons lingered after meals and study sessions around the tables relaxing, becoming more acquainted others and savoring the fellowship found in this retreat center.

The ministries of FUMC were truly enhanced and blessed by these facilities, land, setting and ministry offerings.

[A Time at Iliff Seminary](#)

For 2 weeks during the summers of 1972 and 1973, I arranged housing, secured counselors, planned a schedule of activities, recruited participants, and purchased, prepared and served breakfasts, lunches and dinners for 34 young adults and 6 counselors who were sharing in a 2 week long retreat at Iliff School of Theology.

Dr. Harvey Potthof and I had created this opportunity so that young adults of the Rocky Mountain Conference could be exposed to some of Iliff's professors to experience what it would be like to be a part of the life of a seminary student.

The cost of this exposure was very affordable, yet the experience was invaluable to those attending, to the Rocky Mountain Conference and to the local churches from which these participants came.

Several young adults who attended these sessions eventually became clergy and most became more informed lay persons.

Throughout my days of ministry, I have found that reality programs are not new nor limited to TV productions.

[Rocky Mountain Conference Backpack Hikes](#)

In 1974, and once more in 1980, I led Rocky Mountain Conference youth and young adult backpack trail hikes.

In 1974, our hike of eight days led us into the Holy Cross Wilderness area above Leadville, Colorado.

Our eight day hike in 1980, led us to Mount Rosalie, near Mount Evans, above Bailey, Colorado.

Both of these hikes had hikers who had never been on an extended backpack outing. Two of the campers who joined us for our 1974 backpack trip were residents of an orphans home in Lakewood, Colorado. Truly this outing was significantly new to their life experiences. By the time they returned to the orphans home, their physical condition, world outlook and spiritual understandings had been stretched, grounded and enhanced.

One of the campers on the 1980 hike had never been out of the state of North Carolina, nor even his home town, before he joined us on this venture into nature. Of all of the campers, I am sure that he grew more over those eight days than any others. His was a quantum leap from a very sheltered life to experiences he had never even imagined. A massive dose of growing self sufficiency, courage and shaken complacency had moved him light years beyond his limited past experiences. He had been sent to Colorado to expand his horizons by visiting with his great aunt who lived in a senior residence. His aunt did not know what to do with her young adult nephew, so she asked if he might join us on our backpack trip. Neither his mother, his great aunt nor that young adult had any idea how much his life or horizons would change in that short time of one backpack hike.

What a difference a few days backpacking can make!

[RMC Coordinating Team for Alaska Youth Mission Team](#)

In 1974, I was invited to co-sponsor a two week long, conference-wide, youth mission trip to work on an orphans home in Alaska with Bonnie Jones, the wife of the president of Iliff School of Theology. Throughout the spring, Bonnie and I interviewed youth from Conference churches, large and small, who had applied to be a part of this first mission team of 30 participants. Over 70 applicants had applied.

Some of the criteria necessary to participate as a member of this youth volunteer in mission team were: a willingness to share fully as a team member; a commitment to be an active part of the work of the mission team, not simply a person on a tour; a representative of a wide diversity of churches from across the Rocky Mountain Conference; an active member of a local United Methodist Church; a person presently in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade; a flexible person open to change and willing to work with people of different ethnic backgrounds; an optimistic person, not pessimistic, who is willing to grow; and most importantly, a person who seeks to represent the Spirit of Christ in all experiences.

Bonnie and I hoped to draw together the strongest team of youth from among the applicants who would best represent the diversity, energies, spirit and commitments of the youth of the Rocky Mountain Conference. After many hours of interviews, Bonnie

and I found it was not always easy to tell a young man or woman that he or she would not be a part of this very first conference wide youth mission effort. Many of the youth we turned away were qualified and would have been worthy representatives, but those who were selected met more fully the established criteria.

Shortly before we were to begin our mission trip, Bishop Wheatley asked me to consider the possibility of being interviewed for a ministerial position at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs. When the staff parish committee of First UMC decided to recommend me for the opening on their church staff, they said that it was essential that I find a replacement for the immanent Alaskan youth mission trip leadership position. Fortunately, Bonnie and I found an able replacement to share as a co-leader of this mission effort.

This last minute change of plans reminded me that I too needed to be flexible, committed to ministry, willing to grow, optimistic, a team player and open to Christ's leadings.

The youth mission was well received and the Rocky Mountain Conference was well represented by the wonderful efforts of the youth and their leaders.

Peaks and Pines

In 1969, the youth of Lakewood United Methodist Church planned to climb Long's Peak, one of the 14,000 foot mountains of Colorado. When I learned of their intent, I insisted that they prepare for this climb by going on four conditioning hikes prior to their ascent. I also suggested that these five outings should be open to persons of all ages, beginning with 12 year olds. John Watkins, a knowledgeable hiker and member of Lakewood UMC, was assigned the responsibility of planning and leading these outings. These were the beginnings of a series of outings called "Peaks and Pines."

Over the course of the next six years, "Peaks and Pines" expanded to cover local and distant hikes throughout Colorado. Groups were formed that focused on climbing as many of the 14,000 foot mountains of Colorado as was possible; many day hikes were held in the surrounding mountains and parks of the Denver area; numerous backpack trips, short, long, easy, moderate and difficult were experienced; spelunking excursions into several impressive caves of Colorado drew those inclined to this interest; canoeing trips were pursued across some of the lakes and rivers of Colorado; fishing, photography, rockhounding and botany outings drew many who pursued these adventures; bicycling and picnicking were on the agendas of others; viewing the fall colors, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and downhill skiing added to the year's schedule of activities.

Eventually, outings that included fourwheeling; visiting national parks and monuments; and visiting Rocky Mountain Park to listen to the elk bugle expanded the many opportunities available to the members and non-members of Lakewood UMC.

One year there were over 52 outings scheduled with qualified leaders. Many persons formed lasting friendships because they became involved in the activities of "Peaks and Pines," and a number of participants became members of Lakewood UMC because of their initial involvement in "Peaks and Pines."

Peaks and Pines enable the youth of Lakewood UMC to lead that church in ways that only the fullness of time, growing relationships, expanding interests and God's leading Spirit could enable them to imagine and experience.

I was privileged to be a significant part of planning, leading and sharing in many of these exciting adventures.

Bonnie's First Backpacking Hike

Hiking and backpacking were very much a part of our family's recreational activities. When our daughter, Bonnie was only 2 1/2, Jeane and I decided that it was time to take her backpacking in the Indian Peaks Wilderness near Eagle's Peak and Crater Lake. The trailhead began at Monarch Lake near the town of Granby.

Jeane and I decided to allow Bonnie to walk as far as she could at her pace. I carried most of our camping gear in my pack: a tent, a stove, our sleeping bags, food, pots and pans, fishing gear, and changes of clothes. Wildflowers and M & Ms enticed Bonnie up the trail. It was only as we encountered snow on the trail that it became necessary for me to carry Bonnie the last two miles to our campsite. Our 4 1/2 year old son, Michael hiked the entire distance. We caught and ate fish; roasted marshmallows and made somores; collected rocks and skipped some of them across the water of the lake; sang songs and told stories around our campfire; watched marmots and listened to their high pitched whistle; and pointed out constellations and shooting stars in the vast expanse and darkened freedom from the lights of the cities far below our campsite.

For Bonnie this was the beginning of many wonderful backpacking hikes she enjoyed with our family and friends. To this day Bonnie and Michael enjoy hiking, exploring and wandering among the wildflowers and wildlife of God's awesome creation.

Lake Nanita

One of the largest trout that I have hooked in Colorado was on a backpack trip at Lake Nanita in Rocky Mountain Park. Lake Nanita is the largest and perhaps that deepest lake in Rocky Mountain Park. It is found at the end of a 10 1/2 mile hike from Grand Lake. A Park permit was necessary to camp anywhere in Rocky Mountain Park.

After we had set up our tents and prepared a simple meal, those who liked to fish headed for the nearby shore of Lake Nanita. From a rock high above the calm lake we saw a good number of native trout cruising the shore line. Quickly we rigged our fly and spinning rods with our favorite flies or lures.

In a short time one of our party had become fast to a strong fish. Soon everyone had caught at least one of the strikingly beautiful fish. We returned most of the fish back into the lake and kept only enough fish to provide evening meals for our group of campers.

Each evening a few of us cast flies to rising fish. It appeared that every fish in the lake was attempting to see who was camping along the lake shore.

One evening two of us walked around the lake to a deep drop off.

I wanted to see how deep the lake was. I attached a heavy lure and let out line from my reel until almost all of my line backing was gone. I never reached the bottom of the lake. As I was reeling in my line, with my polarizing lens I saw two fish rising from the depths far below. One fish was noticeably larger than the other. It was obvious that the fish were pursuing my lure as I reeled it toward the surface.

About twenty feet below the surface, the smaller fish lunged at the lure. When I finally landed this fish, I discovered that it was over 26" long. I returned it to the water and began fishing for the much larger fish that had accompanied the trophy fish I had caught.

After three tries I watched the very large fish rise after my lure. It's mouth looked as large as an alligator's. When I saw my lure enter the white mouth of that immense fish, I had lifted my rod in anticipation of hooking a fish of my lifetime. I must have been too quick in reacting, for my hook came up empty.

Once more I cast my lure and allowed it to sink to the depths of the lake. This time the fish struck before I could even see it in the deep water of it's shelter. I fought this fish for well over 12 minutes before the lure came loose. At one point I thought that I had a chance of landing this massive fish, but as it neared the shore and saw me, it once more rushed to the safety of the lake's depths.

The next morning I made many casts near the place where I had hooked this memorable fish, but I only managed to catch a few fish that responded to my efforts.

A year later I returned to Lake Nanita to fish the same deep drop off where the fish of my dreams had dwelled. My lure did not attract a response. Finally, I tied on a large woolly bugger. On my very first cast I once hooked "Mr. Big." Even though I had attempted to be gentle and not rush this fish, it broke my light leader and slowly returned to the depths of the lake. I never saw nor hooked that fish again.

I believe that this cutthroat trout was well over 40" long. Like the huge brown trout I had lost on the Madison River in Montana, the Lake Nanita cutthroat trout is remembered by me as a very special fish. I can still see it in the recordings of my mind.

I trust that someone else might have been fortunate enough to see and hook this same trout in the course of it's lifetime.

[Mount Holy Cross](#)

For a period of 12 years when our children were young, it was a tradition for our family to backpack into the Holy Cross Wilderness near Leadville, Colorado, during the week of the Fourth of July. We were often joined by youth, young adults and grown adults from former churches I had served and led on various backpack trips throughout the years.

Each cluster of hikers arranged for his or her own camping gear from a list we provided, sufficient food and a carpool to Half Moon Campground, above Minturn,

Colorado, where we would all gather to begin our hike to a base camp around Lake Constantine which was about 5 1/2 miles up a moderately steep trail.

Lake Constantine is a picturesque, timberline lake located between Mount Whitney a 13,000+ foot mountain, Notch Mountain another 13,000 foot mountain, and Mount Holy Cross Mountain that rises to over 14,000 feet. Each of these mountains and the view of the cross on Mount Holy Cross drew us high above timberline. Timberline in Colorado is most often found near 11,800 feet in elevation. At such elevations we discovered that weather representing all seasons can change at any time. Sun, rain, sleet and even snow greeted us at one time or another, sometimes even during the same day.

Lake Constantine blessed us richly with breathtaking scenery, crystal clear sparkling water, meadows overflowing with carpets of colorful wild flowers, many delicious meals of eastern brook, rainbow and cutthroat trout, and challenging trails that led us to endless discoveries high above and below our base camp. Waterfalls, snow fields, gigantic slopes of rosy quartz, wildlife, spectacular vistas and narrow pathways along ridges and cliffs that fell thousands of feet to valleys far below drew us each day to explore pathways familiar and unfamiliar. Hiking, fishing, sliding on snow fields, picture taking, gathering wood, periodically washing our hair and resting filled most of our days. Preparing shared meals, singing familiar songs, story telling, recalling daily adventures and looking at the brilliant stars filled our time around the warmth of roaring campfires and within the fellowship of most evening.

Our children found much pleasure riding a log in our campsite that looked like a horse with two saddles on it. They also enjoyed drifting sticks, which they called boats, down a nearby creek.

Traditionally, on our Holy Cross backpack hikes, our first evening meal consisted of precooked, frozen cubed beef round steak, mashed potatoes, gravy, a vegetable and fresh fruit. Our last evening meal was created when everyone contributed anything they still had in their backpacks that might add to a common meal of soup. Needless to say our last evening meals were one of a kind creations. Jeane was often one of the most popular persons in camp each time she prepared and served pies made from graham crackers and instant pudding on these outings.

For many years we drank water right out of the clear streams until the year that I came down with a bad case of giardia, often known as beaver fever. A high fever, diarrhea and growing weakness are evidence of giardia's symptoms. Consequently, we boiled our water thoroughly or used iodine tablets from that time onward.

Backpacking tends to focus that which is really basic and essential in our living: lighter contents in our backpacks, sound shelter, wholesome food, protective outerwear, warm clothing, supportive shoes, clean water, good health, a sense of self-sufficiency and vulnerability, and uplifting experiences and conversations with caring family members and friends.

Hopes and dreams, disappointments and successes were often shared as we grew ever closer to one another. Lifetime friends were inevitably created and enhanced as we shared the struggles and joys of living and surviving so very close to the wonders and challenges of nature.

A Fellow Traveler

On one of our 4th of July outings at Lake Constantine in the Holy Cross Wilderness, because the snow was particularly deep, we set up our camp near the outlet of the lake.

We were joined by Howie Powell, several of his brothers and friends. Howie and his brothers were like mountain goats and always carried in enough food to feed an army.

On this occasion, it was well that this was the case, for the day after we arrived in camp, a stranger stumbled into an area near our camp and told us how he had become separated from his backpacking party, backpack, food and shelter. He told us that he had been pushing through the deep snow for the past day and a half. He was obviously very tired, cold, wet, and extremely hungry.

We led him into camp where Howie was roasting 7 large chickens over our campfire. Howie asked him if he would like some chicken. He devoured a whole chicken.

Then Howie asked him if he would like a baked potato. Quickly a very large potato with butter and sour cream was placed upon his plate. It soon disappeared.

Then Howie asked him if he would like some salad. After he said, "Yes," Howie asked him what kind of dressing he would like on his salad, as he produced 3 different possibilities.

Dry clothes, a warm tent, a spare sleeping bag, and a night of rest seemed to transform this stranger into a deeply appreciative friend.

After a full breakfast, beyond his imagination, he set out down the trail to return to his car which was parked at the beginning of the trail.

I wish that I could have been with him when he once more was united with his original group, for I am sure that they would have found it most difficult to believe the story that he had to tell.

In his wilderness, the bread of life had come to him along the trail because he had been blessed with manna from heaven, through a fellow traveler along the way.

Sharing

I recall one time when I was leading a group of young adults on a day hike up Mount Holy Cross from our base camp near Lake Constantine.

After a long, difficult climb; as we were nearing the summit of the 14,000 + peak, it became apparent that a dangerous storm was fast approaching our ridge and it would be necessary for us to give up our quest to summit Mount Holy Cross. Reluctantly we quickly descended to a safer elevation.

Just before a blinding snow storm transformed a 90 degree day into 2 hours of bitter cold, our group found a large rock which provided us considerable shelter. Fortunately, I had insisted that every camper should bring a warm coat on this climb in elevation. Each person found a place to wait out the storm, secure but disappointed.

The cold and long break reminded all of us how much energy we had expended on the long climb and decent and how hungry we were.

As we waited, it became apparent that various members of our group were attempting to secretively snack upon a variety of goodies which they had carried with them on the hike. There were some of us who had plenty. Others had a little. Still others had nothing at all.

Finally, one member of our group felt moved to share what she had in her day pack with those around her. Later she indicated that something within her felt great relief and pleasure as she shared her good fortune with others. Soon, other members of our group were inspired to pool their resources for the benefit of all.

It was not long before a bitter cold experience was warmed by the vast variety and abundance of love offerings and fellowship generated by the miracle of sharing.

Most of those who gathered and shared together that day are still moved whenever we recall the experience when our words of care and unity became flesh and dwelt among us.

Resurrection

For a number of years other interests, responsibilities and experiences diverted us from that which had become an essential part of our summers past.

Several years ago, after our children had left home, Jeane and I decided that we would like to explore once more some of our former stomping grounds. So we loaded up our backpacks and struck off for Lake Constantine, one of the lakes near Mount Holy Cross.

By the time we arrived at one of our favorite camping places, just below treeline, our aching bones and gasping lungs reminded us that we were out of shape and no longer spring chickens.

We sat around the campfire, cooking our evening meal, wondering if we would somehow or other get our legs to carry us to our tent and warm sleeping bags.

Then we wondered if we would be able the next morning to force our sore bodies to move into the beauty that we had come to enjoy. Could our bones live again?

A night of rest and the dimples of rising fish on Lake Constantine reminded me of the regenerative, motivating powers which God had built into his creation.

The warmth of the sun hitting the tent and a breakfast of freshly caught eastern brook trout, hash browns, and hot chocolate soon had Jeane testing her weary bones to see if she could join me around the campfire.

The endless carpets of wildflowers, soaring slopes and inviting trails soon drew us to explore once more places we had been and memories that continued to lift our souls.

Pictures of this beautiful setting with so many fond memories still tempt our unlikely return.

We are pleased that we were able to physically make that last sojourn to a place that holds such a special portion of our life journey.

Star Light

One of the pleasures that members of our family members experience whenever we are out camping is found as we step away from the comfort and protection of the campfire and look out into the abyss of the vast spaces of the darkened sky.

As our eyes begin to adjust to the darkness, we are often struck by the infinite number of stars whose rays of light reach out to us from the endless depths of space.

Some of the stars appear larger and closer while others are mere dots twinkling across the endless light years of space. But each of them contribute to the beauty, wonder and awe which we feel.

Scientists remind us that some of the light which we are viewing comes from stars which have long since burned out. Still the light travels across time and space lending to the aurora of stars new and old.

The stars remind me that each of us are like stars which God has painted across the backdrop of the past, present, and future. In each moment of our lives everyone of us has been lent by God a contribution of light to share with others for the sake of the whole world.

Fishing at Jefferson Lake

When our children were young, one of our family's favorite places to go fishing and camping was Jefferson Lake near the town of Jefferson, Colorado. It is a crystal clear lake tucked in a cirque shaped valley, well supplied with comfortable camping sites and picnic tables high in the Colorado Rockies. From this lake it is not uncommon to catch rainbows, eastern brook, lake trout and even cutthroat trout.

Jefferson Lake was one of the places where Michael caught some of his first fish. At that time we had a 12 foot aluminum boat that I rowed to the far end of Jefferson Lake. Michael was a very active child and was anxious to fish as soon as I launched our boat. I tied his rod to the seat in the boat, but allowed enough slack that he could hold it in his hands, yet not lose the rod overboard. He trolled his bare hooks all of the way to the end of the lake. There I baited his hooks.

Before I could prepare my rod to fish, Michael announced that he had a bite and a fish. He began to reel in his line. Initially I thought that reeling in his line would give him something to do while I was getting ready to fish. Then I saw his rod bend indicating that he really did have a fish on it. I dropped what I had been doing and assisted him with his fish. We placed his fish on a stringer and tied it to the boat. Once more I baited his hooks and let his sinker drop to the bottom of the lake. Before I could pick up my fishing rod, Michael once more announced that he had another fish. I asked him if he was sure? He said that he was and began reeling once more. He was right and another fish joined his first fish on our stringer. At that time children were allowed to catch 3 fish, 1/2 of an adult's limit of fish. Once more I baited his hook and taught him how to allow his line to fall to the lake's bed. Before it even hit the bottom of the lake,

his rod jerked with another fish letting us know that Michael's limit of fish had been met unless we released it so that he could continue fishing. As he was reeling in his third fish, I explained why I was going to let that fish go.

I failed to remember that children of such a young age do not comprehend adult logic. When I released his fish instead of putting it on our fish stringer, he began to cry and then wail. His mother and sister were on the shore collecting pretty rocks and smelling beautiful wild flowers, not too distant from our boat. Jeane wanted to know what was wrong? Above his wail, I attempted to tell Jeane why he was crying. I finally got him to stop crying by baiting his hooks and allowing him to try to catch another fish.

The fish were really biting that day, for momentarily Michael had another fish on his hook. I had him help me put it on our stringer and told him that he would now have to stop fishing. Once more a piercing wail arose from our young son. I decided that he could catch a fish or two from my limit. In no time at all he had caught all 6 of my fish and placed them on our stringer. I had not had a chance to bait my own hook to begin to fish. I told him that it was now time for us to go back to shore and stop fishing. Once more he began to cry so loudly that even strangers on the shore wandered over to see what might have caused him such grief. Even when we landed on the shore near his mother, I am sure that his cry could be heard from one end of the lake to the other.

After a while he calmed down enough to tell his mother why he was crying. I then suggested that we row back to our launching place. Michael thought that we were going fishing once more. Finally, Jeane and I decided that it would be better and quieter if he walked back with her and his sister along the shore rather than ride with me in the boat. That was one day when I wished that the fish had not been biting so well.

Our family went fishing often at Jefferson Lake. It was there that Bonnie caught her first lake trout. It was there that Jeane became very excited and let all of those around the lake know that she had a very large rainbow trout on her line. Sadly, it got off. It was there that we took Jeane's father, Jim for a memorable day of fishing. It was there that we met an elderly couple who celebrated their many wedding anniversaries by going fishing at Jefferson Lake. They seldom failed to catch a very large lake trout. It was there that Michael caught toads and butterflies that always fascinated his imagination. It was there that Jeane painted watercolor pictures as the rest of us fished. It was there that we watched beavers swimming in their beaver ponds and slapping their tails as a warning whenever they became aware of our presence. It was near there that we watched a forest fire creep up a hillside engulfing aspens, willows, and evergreens along its path. It was there that we watched an osprey power dive into the lake and catch a fish, perhaps to feed its young fledglings. It was there that waterfalls lay hidden in the underbrush making their babbling presence known to us as streams of water from snow fields high on the mountain splashed over rocks and logs sharing in replenishment of the water in Jefferson Lake.

It was at Jefferson Lake that we camped in our 3 room canvas tent on a Memorial weekend. The next morning over 8 inches of snow greeted us as we prepared breakfast at our campfire. Not far from our tent we discovered fresh elk tracks wandering up the hill above our campsite. I suggested that we might see the elk if we followed their tracks quietly. Tracking elk became a highlight of that outing at Jefferson Lake.

On two different occasions Jeane and I directed church youth campouts in the campgrounds near Jefferson Lake. During those outings we explored most of the trails and ridges in the vicinity. We discovered old mining camps, a portion of the Rocky Mountain trail system, huge old growth trees, beds of elk and deer, and hidden meadows surrounded by thick stands of towering trees.

The expressed purpose of one of the church youth campouts was "Exploring the Sights and Sounds of God's Wonderous Creation."

We encouraged members of this campout to maintain a personal journal of his or her discoveries. Each evening, around the campfire, we would share some of the sights and sounds of our day's discoveries. It always amazes me how sensitized some persons can become to the endless blessings of God available to us wherever we are.

Because of our many wonderful memories and experiences at Jefferson Lake, our grown son and daughter have brought their families there to allow them to share in Jefferson Lake's special offerings.

Snagging Kokanee Salmon

During the fall three to four year old landlocked Sockeye salmon, called kokanee, spawn in many of the lakes and streams of Colorado. It is during this time that fishermen are allowed to snag these salmon because few of the eggs laid will hatch in the waters of Colorado.

One year on Jeane's birthday, our young family drove to a stream where salmon were running between Granby Reservoir and Monarch Lake. Snow was lightly falling and the stream was full of salmon. Our four and two year old children enjoyed the snow while Jeane and I filled our limit of snagged salmon.

Our son was intrigued with the salmon we were snagging. We told him that we needed to keep them in the snow to help them to remain fresh and good for us to eat. Michael decided to be sure that they were sufficiently cold, even though the temperature was near zero and getting colder. He stuffed snow inside their mouths. Soon it was time for us to head home.

While we had been fishing the roads had become very icy. Blowing snow polished the roadways so that glare ice was most prevalent. As we neared the town of Frazier I decided, despite the cold, to have our tire chains put on at the nearest service station. I pulled in to a Texaco station and asked how soon and how much it would cost to have my chains put on. The attendant said that it would cost \$50. I felt that this was unreasonable and decided to put them on myself. I laid the chains in front of the tires and drove forward over the chains. I then crawled under the car and fastened the first chain. I returned to the car and attempted to warm my fingers before I attempted to secure the second chain. The temperature had dropped to 27 below zero and the wind had begun to blow with much ferocity. It took me two attempts and several minutes in the car with my hands in the warmth of the car's heater to thaw out my fingers before the second chain was fastened.

I was very glad that the car's heater produced a steady stream of warm air not only to unfreeze my fingers, but to keep our family warm and safe from the extreme

cold. Wherever the heat did not hit the windows of the car, a thick layer of ice formed. Slowly and carefully we drove home over Berthed Pass in the midst of a whiteout blizzard of huge snowflakes.

On another occasion Michael and I were snagging salmon from our 12 foot boat on Eleven Mile Reservoir. After we had caught our limit, I secured our fishing equipment and reached for the anchor rope in the front of the boat. I found that it was stuck on something and was difficult to retrieve. As I struggled with the rope I unbalanced the boat and flipped it over. Even though we were only a short distance from shore, I had placed us in a dangerous position since the water was cold. Even though Michael was secure in his life preserver, he was very young. I managed to place Michael on the boat, cut the rope to the anchor with my pocket knife and swim hard pushing the boat to shore. Some people on shore assisted us to get warm in their camper. I retrieved extra clothes from our car for Michael and me to change into.

When I unloaded our boat's contents into the back of our station wagon, I found that I had only lost one fishing rod and reel in our mishap. Then I placed our boat on the top of our car and drove home.

Snagging salmon in cold weather does have it's blessings and dangers.

Forgetfulness

Some years ago, during a rain storm, as Jeane and I were driving up the north side of Berthhood Pass, we experienced the rare sight of a vivid, triple rainbow. It was striking and memorable.

Another driver was so moved by this wonder, that he stopped his car on the side of the road so that he could take a picture, but in his haste, he had forgotten to apply the brake.

The car, with his wife still in it, began to roll back down the steep hill. Momentarily, fear overcame her. Fortunately, she reclaimed control of the car and averted a sure disaster.

I am not sure if I will remember the special rainbows more or the absent minded driver.

Ruby Mountain

One of the special outings that our family enjoyed was looking for garnets and Apache tears on Ruby Mountain. Ruby Mountain is located near Buena Vista, Colorado, along the Arkansas River. Hundreds of thousands of years ago this area exploded in a series of volcanic eruptions. Molten glass spewed forth and solidified as the surface air cooled the sputtering bubbles of extremely hot materials. Small, black pieces of glass-like obsidian landed in piles of ash that had gathered from previous eruptions. Over time the ash solidified in various degrees due to the weight and pressures of overburden materials that continued to accumulate.

On this outing we had brought two small sledge hammers, several chisels, a shovel, some containers for that which we collected and a picnic lunch. I spent much of my time splitting sedimentary rocks. Garnets were most often found in air pockets within the rocks I split. Over the course of 4-5 hours we had accumulated 3 film containers of garnets and 6 small plastic jars of Apache tears. Our children found much pleasure scouring the ground for garnets and Apache tears that were sometimes lying on the surface of the mountain due to water and wind erosion. Each new specimen that our children discovered required Jeane and I to stop our searches and to celebrate their findings, joy and wonderment. Discovery is a wonderful experience. To this day, our now grown children, enjoy discovering the wonders of nature.

Snakes and More Snakes

I have always enjoyed fishing.

When I moved to Texas I discovered that there were many ways of fishing that I had never experienced. One day from a distance I watched a man fishing from shore with a trot line that seemed to be attached to something that would pull it back into the lake whenever he finished removing the fish he had caught and renewing the lost bait on his many hooks. I wondered if he had some kind of animal trained to pull his trot line back into the lake. Finally I asked the man how he managed to return his line and hooks into the lake from shore? He showed me a long piece of heavy rubber band line that he had attached to a large cement block with a loop of nylon rope. While securely holding the end of the trot line in his hand, he had a friend row a boat out into the lake until the rubber band line and trot line were extended as far as they would go without stretching the rubber band line. The boater had then dropped the cement block into the water with the line attached. When the trot line was pulled into shore, the rubber band line stretched. When the fisherman wanted the trot line to return into the water, he needed only to let the stretch of the rubber band line pull it back into the water. Twenty five hooks were baited and attached to the trot line. The shore end of the trot line was then attached to a tree or another large rock until it was time to check the trot line to see if something had taken the bait.

Sometimes simple trot lines with a rock or large weight attached on one end were thrown out as far as the person could throw. The shore end of the trot line was then attached to a tree or another rock. Fewer hooks were used with this technique because they tended to tangle.

Those who had boats often attached two cement blocks to the opposite ends of a trot line. In the center of the trot line they attached a plastic milk jug that caused the middle of the trot line to float near the surface of the water. The fishermen then dropped one end of the trot line with hooks and bait attached overboard. Then they dropped the other end of the trot line overboard as far away as his trot line would allow. The floating milk jug assisted the boaters to retrieve the trot line when it was time to check for fish. Often the fishermen had a long stiff wire that assisted them to retrieve the floating milk jug.

Sometimes boating fishermen attached a drop line with a weight and three or more baited hooks tied to floating plastic milk jugs. When the jugs began to bob unnaturally, the fisherman retrieved the jugs and hooked fish.

One man used a kite with a long line attached to get his hooks far out from shore. Often he found it difficult to keep his baited hooks and weight in the water or his kite out of the water.

Some shore fishermen attached spring loaded lines to heavy limbs that hung over deep pools along rivers. When the fish bit, the spring's trigger set the hook and the fisherman needed only to remove the fish when he returned.

Fishing the deep pools below dams often required a long rod and a heavy weight.

Many persons fished at night from well lit, floating commercial fishing barges. Most of these barges had assigned fishing locations, chairs and even snack bars.

In one instance I joined a multitude of fishermen who fished from boats at night. Most often the boats had a lit lantern attached that drew insects, minnows, fish and too often cottonmouth snakes to its light. When the snakes began to crawl into the boat in which I was fishing, I decided that it was time for me to go to shore. Needless to say, I chose not to fish at night from a boat in Texas again.

Even during daylight it was not uncommon to encounter many poisonous snakes swimming across the water, attached to one's hooks, or crawling among the rocks and brush near fishing locations.

At least during daylight I could see most of the snakes before they caused me harm.

Cottonmouths are aggressive and were most numerous. Diamondback Rattlesnakes and copperheads were also prevalent.

There is no doubt that Texas did not lack for snakes.

Belly Boating

One of my favorite ways of fishing is float tubing in one of my belly boats. Belly boating allows me to leisurely float in shallow or deep water; in open water or in brush and narrow spaces where larger boats cannot go. It allows me to transport my belly boat in the trunk of my car, not on a trailer or on top of my vehicle. My belly boat allows me to get away from trees, brush and rocks that might hinder some of my casts. It allows me to follow underwater weed lines or to get a better angle on a spot that is blocked by brush. It allows me to cast to a specific fish or to a general area not accessible from shore.

My belly boat is much like a large cork, bobbing up and down with the passing of each wave. It allows me to cast to fish that must think that my float tube is a floating log or something familiar. It allows me to see what flies are emerging or floating on the water's surface. It allows me to get close to fish that are barely dimpling the water's surface or propelling themselves high above the water in pursuit of flying insects. There have been times, without my float tube, that the fish were rising just beyond the distance that I could cast. Many times my belly boat made a major difference in how

well I was able to catch fish. In general my float tube allows me to paddle to a given destination or to just float with the current or breeze effortlessly.

My first belly boat was a large truck inner tube with straps and ropes tied to it. I used it to fish large beaver ponds in Montana. While I was in Texas I purchased a commercial float tube so that I could fish for bass among the cattails of many of the local lakes. It is strange that I never considered or was bothered by the cottonmouth snakes that also dwelled in the Texas waters with me.

When I moved to Lakewood, Colorado, I did not use my belly boat any longer. Then I moved to Colorado Springs where I met Lewis Marsh, a retired Oklahoma United Methodist minister. We often fished together. Louie enjoyed belly boating also, so I once more renewed my acquaintance with float tubing. I even purchased a second belly boat. Over time I have accumulated a total of three belly boats.

I once used fins that were attached to the sides of my fishing boots. Now I wear fins similar to those used by persons who snorkel. They offer me much more control and propel me much faster through the water. I no longer wear heavy fishing boots, but use neoprene stocking foot chest waders that slip easily into my fishing fins.

Sometimes I bring two rods with me on my outings: a fly rod and a spinning rod with a bubble attached. Most of the time I cast to rising fish, but sometimes I allow my fishing line to troll behind my float tube as I paddle to a new place on a lake or pond. Often trolling helps me to discover productive fishing spots I might have overlooked.

Fly Fishing

When I am fishing with a dry fly. I am attempting to catch a fish by focusing upon those fish that are seeking their nourishment from that which can be found on or in the surface film of the stream, pond or lake.

Most of the fish to which I cast, cruise just beneath the surface of the waterways often dimpling the water. Periodically they make resounding splashes and rings across the face of the water's surface as they devour a variety of insects. These fish are frequently striking at emerging insects, or at ants, beetles, grasshoppers or flies which have fallen or been blown into the waterways. Sometimes the fish are seeking an easy meal at the expense of flying insects which are laying their eggs in the upper layer of the water.

Many of the fish which I catch on the surface of the water on a dry fly are young, inexperienced fish because most often the older, seasoned fish have learned from their past mistakes and have become more skilled at sorting out which insects are real and which are not. Larger fish also tend to seek minnows, crayfish, frogs and large insects when possible to conserve their energy.

A pair of polarized glasses assists me to see some of the rising fish.

I suspect that I do not always do as well as I could with a dry fly because I tend to rely almost exclusively on the few flies with which I feel most comfortable and somewhat successful. Therefore, after a brief time of inactivity, I find myself switching to other forms of fly fishing.

In the dim light of the early morning and again in the fading light of the evening, I often fish a wet fly or nymph in the shallow water along the edges of the lake shores

and the banks of rivers and streams. This is a time when many fish dare to come into the shallows. They also do so in the spring of the year because the water is warmer and that which they are feeding on tends to gather there.

I have discovered that the larger fish most often enter the shallow water near places of depth. It is in the depths that they are most protected. It is in the shallow water that fish are most easily preyed upon by birds, land animals and human beings. Thus it is in the shallow water that fish are most easily spooked and diverted from the nourishment that they are needing.

Perhaps this is why I often do well fishing the shallows on overcast, windy days when waves and ripples cause the fish to have a false sense of security and an enriched, momentary supply of food and oxygen. It is then that a properly cast wet fly sometimes allows me to catch fish in water that many fishermen would assume to be too shallow, especially for large fish.

When I wish to catch fish consistently, on most occasions, I do not do well in shallow water.

During the spring of the year I find that dry fly fishing is often most difficult, for many of the streams are either running very low, causing the fish to be very spooky, or the stream's high, rushing waters are discolored and cluttered with floating debris. It is then that I find myself needing to be most diligent in placing a fly carefully near the nose of a fish if that fish is going to be able to see the fly and still have time to strike at it as it rushes swiftly by.

Perhaps this is why I find myself fishing with nymphs, the larva stage of many insects, especially during the spring of the year.

When I fish with nymphs, I try to fish on or near the bottom of the stream bed near a protective boulder, tree or island.

I am told by the experts and by my own experiences that much of the food and protection that fish count on is found near the bottom of a stream or lake. Thus it is only logical that much of a fish's time and dining is done on or near the bottom of a body of water, especially during times of stress and change.

For this reason alone I am successful with nymphs most often.

Clearwater Beach, Florida

Whenever our family went to Florida to visit Jeane's father and step mother, we would inevitably visit Clearwater Beach. There we would swim in the surf, snorkel in the deeper water, lie on the clear white sands of the beach and collect sanddollars, sea shells and starfish of many kinds. Jeane especially enjoyed the many colored, tiny coquina shells. Our son, Michael, liked to run back and forth with each new wave, to catch crabs and to play with the foam caused by the crashing waves. Our daughter, Bonnie, found pleasure listening to the movements of horseshoe crabs, collecting shells and watching the rush of sandcrabs as they attempted to hide in the sand before Michael could catch them.

A stroll down the beach often resulted in a collection of sea shells and creatures too numerous to carry. One day when the tide was very low, we watched hundreds of

live olive auger shells push their way up to the surface of the sand and then topple over. Many of them were washed by the strong waves onto the beach. There, screeching sea gulls removed living morsels from the many shells scattered across the beach. The low tide allowed us to collect beautiful conch shells, many whole sanddollars and even a few live, edible crabs.

Sometimes we saw porpoises swimming in the surf and breakers near the beach. The seemingly effortless flight of pelicans skimming over the water drew our attention to another wonder of God's awesome creation. Curlews, sandpipers and birds of many descriptions chased waves to and fro seeking newly exposed food possibilities.

There is something very peaceful about the constant lap of waves hitting the beach and the cooling touch of a breeze brushing away the pressures and stresses of a not too distant past.

Fishing with Jeane's Father

On two different occasions Jeane's father and I boarded his boat in St. Petersburg, Florida, and went fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. He and I enjoyed deep sea fishing. From past experience, Jim knew several excellent places in the Gulf where ship wrecks, currents and underwater structures drew fish of many kinds. Squid and pin fish were our typical initial baits. Later we used jigs and pieces of the fish we had already caught.

Grouper, red snapper, and sea trout were the most common fish we caught. Angel fish, drum, mackerel, amberjacks, grunts, ribbon fish, octopus and a variety of sharks were also among our catches.

Aboard Jim's boat we had two large ice chests and two very large plastic garbage cans filled with ice. Whenever we caught fish we would place them in one of the two large ice chests and sprinkle ice over them. When that ice chest was full, we would begin filleting fish and place the fillets in bags in the second ice chest. In time both ice chests were full. On one fishing trip both ice chests and garbage cans were overflowing with fillets. The remains of the filleted fish were discarded overboard. Soon a chum line of fish remains drew sharks. Some of the sharks were over eleven feet long.

Jim asked me if I had ever caught a very large shark. I told him that the largest shark I had ever caught was about a foot and a half long. He changed the hook on one of my heavy rods that had 120 LB test line. The new hook was extremely large. He baited it with a whole fish carcass. Soon I was attached to a hammerhead shark that pulled Jim's 26 foot boat all over the Gulf. I had never felt a fish with so much power. That hammerhead shark was about eleven and a half feet long. When I finally had the shark near our boat, I became aware that there were over a dozen other sharks circling the shark I had hooked. All of a sudden they attacked my hooked shark tearing chunks of flesh out of it. They rushed forward with their mouths wide open. Then they clamped down on the hooked shark and twisted until a huge piece of shark was pulled free. Their frenzied attacks churned the water near our boat. On two separate occasions Jim

and I felt sharks brush against our boat. We could hear the sound of the rough hides of the sharks scraping against the aluminum hull. Jim decided that it was time to cut my line and free us from the danger surrounding us. In my mind I can still see the sharks attacking the shark I had hooked, even after we had cut my line.

My arms were sore from such a long, powerful battle with that hammerhead shark. About five miles further in the Gulf we commenced to fish once more. In a very brief time I hooked up to something very large that went wherever it wanted to go. It did not speed across the Gulf like the shark. It just steadily swam away from where it had been hooked. The backing of line on my reel was slowly disappearing. Jim started the boat's motor and followed the departing creature of the deep. For over a half an hour we had no idea what I had hooked. Then, about 150 yards out from the boat, a large sea turtle surfaced. We decided that somehow or other I had hooked this turtle. For the next half hour it surfaced many times, but would dive before we could cut the line close enough to the place it had been hooked where it's head entered it's shell. Finally, Jim was able to cut the line about six inches from the hook. It dove once more to freedom even as we decided that we had had enough fishing for the day.

About three days later I could still feel the ache in my arms from my encounter with the hammerhead shark and giant sea turtle. A large, delicious fish fry and a full freezer of fresh fish reminded us of our outing on the Gulf of Mexico.

Mount Massive Fishing Club

While serving at Colorado Springs UMC, one of the members, Charles Baggs, invited me to join him fishing at a private fishing club of which he was a member. Mount Massive Fishing Club had its own hatchery and at least eight fair sized ponds and lakes into which the hatchery attendant would plant fish that were at least one pound or more. Each lake had its own variety of fish stocked in it: rainbows, browns, cutthroats and eastern brook trout. Charles' family owned a cabin on the grounds of this club and so that is where we stayed on the several occasions that I joined him there.

Prior to our fishing trip, Charles showed me several flies that were very effective at Mount Massive lakes. Thus I tied a dozen or more of each variety so that we would have plenty of flies when we ventured forth.

By the time I joined Charles at his fishing club, I had been using my belly boat for a number of years. Charles also had a belly boat and so we decided to fly fish from our belly boats. The fish were eager to take the flies we offered and they were large enough to require several minutes before we could bring them to net. Most of them we released, but on the day we were to return to our homes, I kept some notable fish to bring home with me to share with my family. These were memorable fishing trips in the high country near Leadville, Colorado, and Mount Massive, one of the highest peaks in Colorado. I do not remember a time that we went fishing there that the sky was not blue and clear even though the temperature was often cool due to the high elevation of the lakes. It was indeed a high privilege to fish in lakes that had been privately owned and maintained since the late eighteen hundreds.

Fishing at Teal Lake

One of the special camping and fishing places that Jeane and I enjoy is Teal Lake. Our friends, Don and Joyce Dirks introduced us to this lake. It is located in the Routt National Forest just south of North Park and north of Grand Lake. When we camped there, the camping sites were a bit rustic and the campgrounds seldom had more than one or two other campsites in use. Deer, elk and moose frequented the area. A large beaver house near the south shore was occupied by beavers that entertained us most evenings just after sunset. Eastern brook trout were easily caught and provided us with many excellent meals. There is little better than fresh trout cooked over an open fire with homemade pie for dessert. We also caught cutthroat trout from time to time.

Exploring game trails among aspen groves, viewing wildlife, photographing wildflowers, sitting around the campfire, sharing stories and recalling daily experiences were among the special ingredients that enhanced our outings.

Sponsoring a Mission Child

From 1977-1979, our family sponsored a young person who resided in a World Vision mission school in Kenya. Tom Mboya Ndede had lost both of his parents when he was a young teenager and World Vision had come to his rescue. We learned of his need of sponsorship and that of so many other children when we heard a presentation by a representative of the World Vision organization at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The following day, after Jeane and I had time to discuss our potential involvement in this sponsorship, we contacted a representative of World Vision and signed on to sponsor a child. Over the next three years, each month we sent a check to World Vision in support of Tom Mboya Ndede.

World Vision sent us a picture of Tom and allowed us to send him a letter from time to time. We received news about him on occasion, but World Vision did not want us to send him presents on his birthday nor at Christmas time. When we asked why we could not send presents, we were informed that the other children might feel slighted if Tom received gifts and they did not.

When a missionary friend of ours was going to visit Kenya in the area where Tom Mboya Ndede was living, we asked if she would be willing to stop at the World Vision mission and bring Tom our greetings. Initially, our friend was told that personal visits were not allowed, then she was told that Tom had run away from the mission some months before she had arrived there. She was also told that the money we were still sending monthly was being used to assist another child. Jeane and I were sad to learn this news, not from a representative of World Vision, but from our friend.

After contacting our representative from World Vision to be sure that the information conveyed to us was correct, after much discussion, Jeane and I decided to cease our monetary sponsorship.

We are pleased that we had been moved to sponsor Tom Mboya Ndede for three years, but we felt that the procedures of World Vision were too restrictive and we found that their communication was less than adequate and forthright. We decided to invest our mission dollars in other worthy causes.

Cowboy Church

During the summer months of 1974-1982, while I was serving on the staff at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in addition to our regular worship services, members of the ministerial staff took turns planning and conducting services at a drive-in theater each Sunday morning. Worshippers remained in their cars and were ushered into their parking spaces by a team of horseback riders from a local riding club. The parking spaces were those that were typically used each evening during the viewing of the outdoor movies. The sound system was hooked up to speakers near each car. The musicians and minister were seated on a high platform that looked out across those who gathered. The musicians usually accompanied themselves and the worshippers with guitars and other stringed instruments. The collection was taken by ushers on horseback. Many new members were first introduced to First United Methodist Church as they shared in our Cowboy Church worship services. Tourists from across the world, who learned of this special outdoor worship service, also were a vital part of these services. Only on one occasion did we experience a brief rain shower or even a strong wind.

Cowboy Church reminded us of the scripture passage that tells us, "Where two or more are gathered in my Name, their I am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20).

Flying W/Roundup

The Wilsons, owners of the Flying W Ranch on the westside of Colorado Springs, were very supportive of the ministries of First United Methodist Church. The Flying W Ranch was a working ranch and also a major tourist attraction each spring-fall. On the grounds of the ranch was a typical small ranching town with authentic pioneer ranch buildings, a store, corrals and a chapel opened to visitors. Two of the main attractions each evening were musical presentations by cowboy singers and a wonderful meal of roasted beef, baked potatoes, salad, biscuits, gravy and cake. Over 1000 persons gathered for these meals and musical offerings each evening during the tourist season.

In the fall of each year, as the Flying W season was drawing to a close, the Wilson family graciously hosted a fund raiser for First United Methodist Church. Tickets were sold in area churches and multitudes filled the tables and grounds for this yearly

gathering. First United Methodist Church staff members helped serve the meal. We were always amazed to discover that we were able to serve near 1000 persons in less than 20 minutes. The Flying W staff had the details of this meal well planned, prepared and served. The Flying W gathering was one of our church's highlights of each fall.

There was something very special and bonding as a good number of church members gathered for fellowship and to break bread together. Thus we discovered a little more of what Jesus was helping his disciples to experience when they gathered many times to break bread together and as he reminded them to "Do this in remembrance of me."

Founding New Churches

One of the special experiences I took pleasure in while serving as a minister at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, was helping to establish new churches in the area.

For some time it was felt that there should be a United Methodist Church in the vicinity of Woodland Park, Colorado, because whenever we held a service of worship at the John Wesley Youth Ranch near Divide, Colorado, persons from the area would join us if we extended an invitation. We researched possible sites for a service closer to Woodland Park, the larger, growing community, and found that one of the resort establishments would join us in this effort for a short time until the church became established.

Initially, whenever I would come to the Paradise Ranch to conduct services that were held outdoors in a corral on the grounds of the Paradise Ranch, I found that I preached to more horses than I did to people. Soon this began to change with the assistance of advertisements and the interest of some of the local residents of the area, especially the local sheriff.

Those of us who would lead these services were driven in a surrey out to a makeshift pulpit where a variety of musicians, including guitarists, would accompany us whenever we sang or needed special music.

Worshippers attending these services were handed a bulletin and led to their seats by persons on horseback. The offering was also taken by riders on horseback.

Soon, this blossoming congregation was able to rent several rooms at the local high school, thus providing shelter from inclement weather. Increasing numbers of potential members, encouraged the Rocky Mountain Conference to appoint a part-time clergy member to assist the formation of a new church in Woodland Park. Within two years construction of a church building was underway on a piece of land that was purchased on the northwest portion of Woodland Park.

This church has grown significantly during these past years and is one of the leading churches serving the surrounding area.

Another church came as a result of the clergy of First United Methodist Church being willing to assist the Flying W Ranch on the west side of Colorado Springs to hold services in a small chapel on their land. We had a cordial relationship with the Wilson family who owned the Flying W Ranch. Volunteer instrumentation and special music

was furnished by some of the talented musicians who played and sang professionally at the large tourist meals held at the ranch throughout the spring-fall. Soon the attendance at the chapel services underlined the need for a larger facility.

The west side of Colorado Springs was growing quickly and a new United Methodist Church was very much needed in that portion of town. In time the Wilson family, who owned the Flying W Ranch, deeded a piece of their land to help establish a United Methodist Church. Thus, the Wilson United Methodist Church came into being. A full-time pastor now serves this congregation.

We, clergy of First United Methodist Church, also helped relocate and supply ministerial leadership for Calvery United Methodist Church. A very small United Methodist congregation had been floundering on a site that was very poorly planned and located. Since Colorado Springs was expanding very quickly on the northeastern edge of town, the Church Expansion Committee of the Rocky Mountain Conference decided to assist First United Methodist Church to help reestablish a new church facility within this unchurched area. Initially, several staff members from First United Methodist Church took turns conducting church services on the newly purchased land. Then, Rev. Jim Cowell, a member of our staff at First United Methodist Church, was loaned and eventually appointed to this growing congregation. Calvery United Methodist Church is now one of the larger United Methodist churches in the Rocky Mountain Conference.

I am pleased that I was privileged to be one of the clergy at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs who saw a need for church growth and dared to do something about meeting these needs.

General Conference Hosting Committee

In 1968, I was invited to serve on the North Texas Annual Conference Hosting Committee of General Conference of the Methodist Church at the historic uniting conference of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church in Dallas, Texas. Most of my responsibilities were greeting and assisting conference delegates and arranging for furniture necessary to host this conference.

In 1988, I was asked to serve on the Rocky Mountain Conference Hosting Committee of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. Among my responsibilities were selecting, arranging the details of and publishing a series of mini tours of Denver area mission interests for General Conference delegates. Among these offerings were: Warren Village: a series of housing and training opportunities to assist single parent families to develop self sufficiency in the safety of a nurturing environment; a tour of agencies of the Cole Community that provide resources for persons in crisis and opportunities for individual and community growth and service; Rinn United Methodist Church: an excellent example of the impact that the Volunteers in Mission efforts can make to congregations and communities across the United Methodist Church and the world; The Woman's Bean Project: a women's self help project to assist women to learn basic cooking skills, to gain self esteem and to develop a capacity to

earn a living; The Colorado Aids Project: an outreach to individuals and families caught up in the aids epidemic; and a walking tour of the Inner City of Denver: to discover how the United Methodist Church seeks to impact the real needs, issues and concerns of those caught up in poverty and homelessness.

The World-wide Methodist Conference

In 1978, when the World-wide Methodist Conference was held in Denver, I served on the hosting committee.

Delegates from all over the world representing most of the denominations, even slightly related to Methodist rootage, were present for this important conference.

Many of the prime decision makers of Methodism from across the world were present at this conference.

One of my responsibilities was to assist conference delegates to secure extensions on their travel visas.

One of our delegates was from a former communist country. It was his hope to tour briefly a little of our country before he returned to his country. After many hours of seeking to extend his visit, it was determined that this was not to be because of the strict regulations concerning his country's former affiliation.

Other delegates were able to extend their visits after they had waited in long lines to get their visas stamped.

I am sure that some of those who had their visas stamped in 1978 would not have been so fortunate following September 11th when the twin towers were destroyed and many persons were killed.

What a difference for good or destruction so few people can make.

Western Jurisdiction Committee on Securing Ethnics and Women for Ministry

From 1974-1975, I served as the Rocky Mountain Conference representative on the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Securing Ethnics and Women for Ministry.

Bishop Golden from the Southern California Conference of the Methodist Church was the chairperson of this committee. Representatives from all of the Western Jurisdiction Conferences met in San Francisco, California to brainstorm possibilities for assisting ethnics and women to come into the ordained ministry and to attain prominent positions within the United Methodist Church.

Many good ideas were offered and then condensed into concrete petitions to be presented to the next meeting of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Since most of the representatives from the Western Jurisdiction Conferences had traveled some distance to attend these meetings, I felt that in light of good stewardship

of our time and dollars, we should have spent more than a morning, each time a meeting was called to work this important agenda.

Even so, with the assistance of telephones, computers and letters, our committee's recommendations, in the form of petitions, were eventually drawn together, brought to the General Conference that met in Portland, Oregon, and after a few revisions were accepted.

Much progress was made on behalf of ethnics and women because of this historic conference.

A Member of Program & Arrangements Committee

In 1973, I was asked to serve as a member of the Program and Arrangements Committee of the Rocky Mountain Conference. This is the committee that plans, recommends and manages the schedule and agenda of the sessions of the annual conference in consultation with the resident conference Bishop. From 1973-1988, I served on this committee as a representative of the Agenda Committee of the Annual Conference.

From 1981-1988, I served as the Agenda Committee's chairperson during the terms of 3 bishops: Melvin Wheatly, Roy Sano, and Mary Ann Swenson.

Each morning at the beginning of the sessions of annual conference it was the Agenda Committee's responsibility to present an agenda for that day's sessions for the conference membership to amend or accept as presented. Over the course of the scheduled time of the annual conference it was the Agenda Committee's responsibility to be sure that all items to be presented before the sessions of the annual conference be allowed adequate time for them to be scheduled, presented and considered by the membership of annual conference. Most of the sessions of annual conference were extremely full and required strict adherence to the allotted time given to each agenda item. In a few instances agenda items had to be referred to a conference committee for further clarification and a later time allotment during the sessions of annual conference if time would allow. Several agenda items were tabled and set to be presented at the next annual conference. As we evaluated the completed schedule of each annual conference, I was always amazed how many items we had considered and acted upon. It would have been near impossible to have completed each annual conference's agenda if the presenters of each item had not been concise, well prepared and open to the many deliberations of the members of the annual conference.

Serving on the RMC Communications Committee

From 1989-1993, I served as the chairperson of the Rocky Mountain Conference Communications Committee.

Among the many responsibilities of this committee was to budget for and oversee the production and distribution of a conference newspaper and event pamphlets that

informed the members of local churches about the numerous ministries of the churches and districts of the Rocky Mountain Conference, the Western Jurisdiction and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church; and the significant work of other denominations of Christianity.

Another significant responsibility of this committee was to oversee and provide budget for a sizable conference media center available to enhance the resources of local churches.

Numerous training sessions in the art of communication were held across the conference in an attempt to assist local, district and conference church bodies in their efforts to grow in their efforts to be in ministry.

One of the goals of this committee was to help the many units of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church to become more adequately skilled and open in their attempts to communicate with one another.

I was privileged to learn much about the ministry of communicating as I shared in local, district, conference, jurisdictional, ecumenical and national training communication experiences.

Serving as Memorial Preacher at Annual Conference

On June 6, 1988, I was privileged to preach the memorial service at annual conference for ministers, ministers spouses and widows of ministers who had died in the faith during the previous year. I had chosen Psalm 8:3-9, John 16:16-22 and Isaiah 6:1-8 as the memorial scripture passages. I titled the memorial sermon: "Precious Moments, Privileged Memories and Perceptive Motivations." A few of my reflections during this memorial sermon were: "There is something about the fleeting, unrelenting flow of life moments that underlines the preciousness of God's gifts of life's lent relationships and experiences. Life enhancing, privileged memories reclaim for each of us the essence of persons, places and relationships that have touched the soul strings of our life instruments. Privileged memories have a way of reclaiming persons in our life journeys, for life is a gift so precious that we would accept it on any terms rather than never to have experienced it."

Preparing for this memorial sermon caused me to reflect deeply upon my own life and that of so many others with whom I have been so blessed to have shared my life journey.

During my deliberations, I was reminded of some words of Marcia Lattanzi, a founder of the Boulder County Hospice when she wrote, "It is a rare and good experience to find some people who fit into our lives and with whom we reflect good things. When they are taken away from us, it takes time for us to re-establish and re-define ourselves."

Then I was reminded of Jesus' words to his disciples, "A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." Thanks be to God!

Area wide RMC Disaster Relief Committee

From 1994-2006, I served on the Area wide Rocky Mountain Conference Disaster Relief Committee. This was a committee that recommended how our annual conference might respond to natural and manmade disasters that occurred in the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Conferences of the United Methodist Church.

During this time period we responded to a major flood in Fort Collins, a flood along the South Platte River in the northeastern portion of Colorado, the Columbine High School shootings, the Hayman forest fire in Colorado, a series of forest fires in Montana, and a tornado in Windsor, Colorado.

In most instances a financial collection was taken and distributed to families and communities that needed assistance. Counseling was offered to families and students from Columbine High School shootings. Volunteers in Mission groups and individuals reached out to be of assistance, where needed, to families that were impacted by the Hayman forest fire, the Montana forest fires and the Windsor tornado.

Training was offered to churches and church members in what to do prior to, during and after a disaster touches the lives of their families, communities and churches. In several instances national leaders of the United Methodist Committee On Relief and the Red Cross led these training sessions on how to deal with disasters and potential disasters.

The training was offered not just to those who had experienced a disaster, but to those who over time might experience a disaster. The issue was not if, but when a disaster strikes. Most, who attended these training sessions, found them helpful and very informative.

Troubled Waters

A few years ago my wife, Jeane and I joined two of our church members, Perry and Jean Langer, on a fishing trip near Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The scenery was beautiful and relaxing. The day was calm, yet chilly. Hardly a ripple moved across the glass smooth surface of the lake.

For me, the fish appeared to be taking a nap. Jean Langer alone, seemed to have located the hide out of the fish. In a short time her stringer held seven fish.

Then a cold wind began to blow, troubling the fleeing calm we had begun to take for granted. The same thing happened the next day when my wife and I were part way around the lake.

When the lake was calm, we periodically caught fish, but when large snowflakes began to pepper the surface of the lake and lightning and thunder made their presence known, fish began to strike my lure like their very lives depended upon it. In the midst of a nearly blinding snow storm I caught and released many fish from places where a short time previously the fish had been reluctant and lockjawed. Had I quit fishing due to the storm, I might have missed some of the best fishing of the whole trip. Some of the fish I caught weighed over 4 pounds.

Have you noticed that when things are too calm and routine, we tend to settle into patterns that require little or no effort, creativity, or risk on our part. Sometimes peace at any cost is not peace after all.

Driving to Alaska

In May of 1982, Martha Ralston asked me if I would be willing to drive the Alaska Highway with her husband, Paul. She knew that I wanted some day to travel to Alaska and she was worried about Paul driving that far alone. He was determined to go. I knew that my church schedule was very full for the summer and told her that I would have to talk with Jeane and my co-pastor, Charles Schuster. I also was the agenda chairperson for the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference that was to be held the first week in June.

Jeane and Charles told me to go, but my obligation to the Rocky Mountain Conference was definite. I talked with Paul and Martha and told them that I would not be able to go any earlier than the end of annual conference in Fort Collins, Colorado. Paul said that would be fine. I then planned to travel with him.

We talked about what I should bring with me so that I could be packed and ready to go as early as possible. I would be gone for a month. Just before I left for annual conference Paul suggested that I might bring my Alaska baggage to be packed in his truck and have Jeane drive back from annual conference by herself. He would pick me up in Fort Collins on the way to Alaska.

As we were leaving Fort Collins early Saturday afternoon, Paul's truck began to have transmission problems. Prior to this trip, Paul had his truck's transmission overhauled in Longmont, Colorado. We drove on to Cheyenne, Wyoming, and pulled in to a Midas transmission repair shop. The owner had one of his mechanics look into the problem. He told Paul that the transmission would need extensive repairs. Paul called the transmission repair shop in Longmont and was told that it would take 2 weeks before a replacement transmission could be sent to Cheyenne. Paul told the Longmont transmission shop owner that he could not wait that long because we were needed in Alaska to fish commercially for salmon. After much heated discussion, Paul handed the phone to the Midas owner who agreed to make necessary repairs as soon as possible and to send the bill to the Longmont shop.

The Midas shop owner asked his chief mechanic if he would be willing to work on Sunday to get us on the road as soon as possible. He agreed. Early Monday morning we were on the road again. We thanked the mechanic and the Midas owner for their thoughtfulness. We had even been lent a key to the shop so that we could use the restroom while we were there.

Truly the mechanic and owner had personified grace, having gone well beyond the call of duty.

On the Road Again

This Alaska road trip was an adventure of discovery, wonder and beauty. We alternated driving; stopped only for gas and to go to the rest room and reached Great Falls, Montana, just before it was time to stop for an evening meal. We chose a place where the restaurant offered two different menus and prices for all- you-could-eat meals. I chose the one that did not include the desert options so that I might conserve the limited dollars I was able to bring with me. Paul chose the all inclusive menu. When it was time for desert, he decided to heap a small bowl as high as he could. The mound of soft ice cream was over 10" high. Then he placed it in front of me, for he was diabetic and could not eat ice cream that contained sugar. He said that he wanted to enjoy it vicariously. I was hesitant, but enjoyed it anyway.

Two young boys at the table next to us asked their parents if they might get ice cream. Their parents agreed. Soon their small bowls were overflowing onto the floor. Their parents got after them.

They then pointed to Paul and said that they were only trying to do what he had done.

Children learn by example, but they did not have the knack of stacking ice cream that Paul did.

Danger Along the Way

Before night fall we were crossing the border into Canada and heading for Calgary. On the way we stopped to secure maps at an information station. While there we spoke with a truck driver from Wyoming who had been driving straight through over the same route we had come. He said that he planned to reach a truckstop just outside Calgary before he stopped again. He left before us.

About 60 miles up the road we saw two semis rolled over into the ditches on both sides of the road. The accident had happened just before we had arrived on the scene. Both drivers, including the person we had spoken with at the information station, were OK even though their rigs were totaled. The roadway was covered with metal. About that time a Canadian Mouny arrived. They told him that the accident happened when a person in a small sports car attempted to pass them as one semi was passing the other, each going different ways on a two lane highway. The sports car had been ground into small pieces between the two semis. Without this information it would have been near impossible to know that a sportscar and its driver had even been involved in this accident. Careless speeding and passing had caused one of the worst accidents I have ever come upon.

Red Deer & Edmonton

Early the next morning we reached the community of Red Deer where I exchanged some of my money for Canadian dollars. At that time I received \$1.38 for each U.S. dollar I exchanged.

We went on to Edmonton and strolled through the then largest shopping mall in the world. Besides endless stores and eating facilities, the mall housed the Edmonton Oiler ice rink, a triple sized Olympic swimming pool, numerous Ferris wheels, full sized sailing ships, roller coasters, hot air balloon rides, massive aquariums, art displays, and untold numbers of additional booths and shops.

The parking lots were massive, full and readily available to the entrances to the mall. After a very long stroll through the Edmonton Mall, we discovered that locating our truck was not as automatic as we had assumed it might have been.

Some distance from Edmonton we could see a massive thunder storm and an awesome display of lightening in the distance. In time we discovered that that storm was over 100 miles away. Distances were deceiving in such wide-open spaces. I never realized that Canada was so immense.

Much of the land that we traveled through the province of Alberta, Canada, was relatively flat and covered with grain fields. Huge grain silos with art work or saying were prominent throughout this land. I remember telling Paul that I was amazed and disappointed that I had not seen any wildlife throughout most of Alberta.

Dawson Creek

Later we reached Dawson Creek, the official starting point of the Alcan Highway. In Dawson Creek we viewed some of the 16 mm films of the building of the Alcan. These films showed the almost impossible task that the Corp. of Army engineers had undertaken as they pushed through this highway in less than a year despite endless mountains, numerous swamps, massive rivers, melting perma frost, difficult weather and swarms of mosquitoes. Modern highway crews could learn many important lessons in disciplined work ethics, diligent road construction and cost saving expenditures.

In Dawson Creek we also toured a novel art gallery where local artists displayed their wares to sale on the inside of a huge, towering, ramped grain silo.

Wildlife & Sites

In time we began to travel through mountain terrain. It was there that we saw stone sheep scattered along the highway. Apparently they were eating new vegetation in the barrow ditches and licking salt that had been spread on the roadways to clear snow during the winter.

High winds greeted us at Destruction Bay where the Corps of Army engineers were forced to build concrete barracks to keep their facilities from being blown away like many of their wooden structures had been.

I enjoyed the enlightening exhibits at a museum near Kluane National Park. Beautiful pictures were displayed of places, flowers, wildlife, geological formations, rivers and lakes found within the park.

Wildlife became more evident, especially as we entered the Yukon. By this time I had used over 20 rolls of 36 exposure film.

I had just put a new roll of film in my camera when I spotted 3 young cub bears along the highway. Paul was driving as we pulled along side these cubs. I took shots of them clustered together and more shots as they scampered up trees along side the roadway. Then we heard their mother barking and growling at them, probably telling them to get away from the highway. Then she came storming out of the brush, swatting at one of the cubs and then another, chasing them back into the dense forest. I took pictures of all of this. When my camera indicated that I had taken 42 shots, I began to worry. It was then that I discovered that my film had not advanced as I thought it would, for I had not connected the film properly into the sprockets built into the camera to advance the film. Only my mind had recorded these special memories. Even now, in my mind's eye, I can see and hear these bear cubs and their mother's actions as if they had just occurred.

Along the way we stopped at Liard Hot Springs to soak in one of the hot pools to wash off some of the dust we had accumulated, especially along those portions of the highway that were only dirt or gravel. Even in the coolest of three pools, I never felt comfortable soaking in water almost too hot for my flesh. The water in the upper pool was almost boiling. The lower pool was less foreboding only because a sizable cold water stream entered it where I entered the pool. I was amazed to discover fish swimming in water that was so very hot.

Canadian Campgrounds

Paul and I were impressed with the cleanness and conveniences of so many of the campgrounds along the Canadian section of the Alcan. Each campsite was well marked and each cluster of campsites had a central meeting place where a large cook stove, much like the wood stoves found in many kitchens of the 30s and 40s of the U.S.A., was provided. An ample pile of cut wood and kindling was placed conveniently near each cook stove. The outhouses looked freshly painted and no graffiti was in evidence. All of this was provided for a very minimal fee. Even so, most of the times that we stopped to rest, we pulled off the road into gravel ditches along the highway.

Clutter Along the Highway

On this first trip traveling the Alaska highway, both Canada and Alaska highways were cluttered with tires, camper tops and various kinds of garbage. I dare say that if a person was looking for a tire rim, no matter the dimension, a rim could be found among the many discarded rims where travelers removed a flat tire. On several occasions we

saw whole vehicles mired up to their floorboards in the tundra where persons had pulled off the roadway to change flat tires.

Whenever we came to a major curve in the typically straight highway, we most often discovered two or more campershells lying along side the roadway. Sometimes we saw whole campers that had come loose from the trucks that had been transporting them. Many disappointed travelers had failed to periodically check the nuts and bolts that kept the campers and camper shells tightly bolted to their trucks.

Binding straps, coffee cups and aluminum cans were most evident among the litter along the highway shoulders and roadways.

Periodically, Paul would stop and ask me to pick up a binding strap or two least we have need of a few. I believe that this was his way of being sure that we had a break from driving from time to time.

It seemed a shame that the pristine beauty of miles of wilderness should be desecrated by those who had come to behold its beauty and wonders.

Yukon Buffalo

The Yukon is filled with few people and miles and miles of trees and wildlife. In one stretch of highway we traveled over 30 miles through the smoldering embers of a forest fire that was raging out of control. Later when we reported the fire to a Canadian outpost, we were told that forest fires provided good moose forage. Forest fires seemed to be of little importance in such a vast expanse of space.

At one point Paul and I spied a herd of wild buffalo crossing the road a distance ahead of us. I was hoping to get a picture of them, but they were already moving too far into the brush for me to get much of a picture. A short distance up the highway we discovered one of the few side roads that we hoped could lead us to a place where we might once more see the buffalo. This road led us to a ranch house. We could see the buffalo not too far away in a meadow.

About that time, the rancher came to the door and asked what brought us to his place? We asked him if we might drive across his property along one of his roadways to take some pictures of the buffalo. He said, "No, but if we would get into his truck, he would drive us there." Paul climbed into the front seat of the rancher's truck and I rode in the bed of the truck. Soon we were driving through a portion of the buffalo herd. The rancher asked me if we were close enough. Some of the buffalo appeared to be at least as big as the truck. I told the rancher that even with a close up lens, I would not be able to get a decent shot because we were too close. He pulled a ways beyond the buffalo thus allowing me to have a dozen or more excellent pictures of this wild buffalo herd.

When we returned to the ranch house, his wife told him to invite us in for a bite to eat. We told him that we did not want to be a bother to them. He insisted. He assured us that his wife looked forward to company, expected or unexpected. She served a wonderful meal.

Around the table, the rancher learned that we were driving straight through to the Kenai peninsula, alternating drivers. He then insisted that we stop for a few hours to

rest in a cabin that he had built for his departed father. After some deliberation, we told him that we would stop briefly and then be up and about 3 hours from then. We had already been with this family for over 4 hours after the rancher took us on a tour of his land and huge barn.

After a short rest, we attempted to quietly slip away. The rancher came to the cabin door to tell us that his wife had made us breakfast so that we would not be hungry along our way.

I believe that this isolated family was very much in need of company. Apparently we filled the bill.

As we were leaving, the rancher and his wife reminded us to stop by and visit with them the next time we traveled through the Yukon on our way to Alaska. We told them that we very much appreciated their wonderful hospitality.

A Broken Powersteering Hose

On our second trip to Alaska, Paul and I took the cutoff from the Alaska Highway to the community of Dawson. Dawson was the community that came into being as the Klondike gold rush stampede swarmed into that area along the Yukon River.

Just before we arrived in Dawson, Paul decided that we should take a few hours to rest along side the road. As we pulled over, we smelled something that did not bode well for our truck. Upon lifting the hood of the truck, we discovered that the powersteering hose had sprung a leak. We decided to hike the short distance into Dawson and see if we could find a replacement for our dilemma. No one in town could help us that day. Even the business that usually made replacement hose parts was out of the basic materials necessary to help us. The owner said that it would be at least two weeks before he could order and get the materials necessary to give us a hand. We returned to our vehicle a bit unsure what we might do.

Just as we were entering our truck, a fellow with a long, scraggly beard appeared, asking us what we were doing near his land. We told him of our difficulty. He told us that he had once owned a truck very much like the one we were driving. He mentioned that the body of his truck was all that remained, but we were welcome to see if there might be a powersteering hose still attached to the body. As luck would have it, the only hose left was the still intact powersteering hose. In a short time we replaced our leaking hose with the newly discovered powersteering hose. We thanked the man who donated it to us. Thus we were allowed to continue our journey without any further delay.

Just before we entered Dawson, Paul took me to a cabin that was covered with old ax heads of many descriptions that had been collected after the gold rush. These ax heads had been nailed to the outside and inside of the cabin. Most of these ax heads had been hand crafted after the miners had reached the Dawson gold fields. Another cabin was covered with saw blades in a like manner. It was amazing to see what human beings had created out of necessity.

While in Dawson we visited the cabins of authors: Jack London and Robert Service. At the cabin of Robert Service, an actor recited one of Robert Service's poems entitled "The Cremation of Sam McGee".

We learned that most of the gold claims had been taken even before the masses of gold stampedeers had headed inland to seek their fortunes. We also learned that much of the wealth from the miners had ended up in the hands of a few merchants, especially those who owned beer joints, gambling establishments and dance halls. We heard that those who struck it rich could be millionaires one night and the next day be flat broke because of a few hands of cards.

We all know that life is surely a gamble, but some things that we risk are needless, senseless gambles.

Entering Alaska

On our first trip to Alaska, we were riding in a truck fueled by propane. After checking through customs, we looked for the nearest propane distributor in Alaska. There we discovered that propane was almost \$1 higher a gallon than it had been just across the border in Canada. Thus we returned to Canada, saving many dollars.

A U.S.A. border attendant, who had checked us through the first time we had entered Alaska, asked us why we had returned to Canada. When we explained our need to save on fuel costs, he asked, "Don't you believe in buying U.S.A. goods?" We told him, "Not at those prices!" I was surprised that the border attendant had not asked us about the many rocks we had collected along the way.

After crossing the border a second time, we were greeted with endless displays of California poppies in full bloom all along the highway. One thing that brought me displeasure was to discover bullet holes, riddled road signs in contrast to the lack of same along the Canadian roadways.

The Top of the World Highway

After we left Dawson, we crossed the Yukon River on a ferry and began driving a dirt highway called the Top of the World Highway. As we traveled along this roadway, Paul recalled a park that highlighted the only place in that part of the Yukon Province that was not covered with snow and ice during the ice age.

Pillars of Jade

Later we turned north onto a roadway that was not even marked on the map. It led us to an area where asbestos had been mined and processed. The encampment

had been torn down, but the primary mill was still standing. Many pieces of major equipment was still scattered throughout the mill and grounds.

Paul and I decided to exercise our legs and follow a dim trail that led some distance into the woods north of the mill. Just before we decided to return to our vehicle, we discovered a pillar of Jade that must have weighed over six ton. As Paul was trying to discover some way to remove a chunk of Jade from that pillar, I walked a bit further up the trail and discovered another pillar of Jade that could have been the twin of the first one. Since we did not have equipment to remove any part of the pillars, I began to return to our truck. On the way back I kept my eye open for additional pieces of jade. About a quarter of a mile from our truck, I discovered a slab of jade lying near the trail. It must have weighed 60-70 pounds. Instead of waiting for Paul, I decided to carry this piece of Jade to our vehicle. By the time I got near enough to see the truck, I felt like my arms were going to rebel and drop my special treasure. Somehow or other I managed to get it to the truck just before Paul arrived to help me load it into the camper.

[A Gold Nugget](#)

As we were returning to the Top of the World Highway we came upon a man who was panning gold in the creek along side the roadway. We stopped and visited with him for a brief time. I asked him where he had come upon the sizable gold nugget that hung from a chain from his neck. He told us that he had panned it near the junction of Highway 6 and I 40 just west of Golden Colorado.

Once more Paul and I recalled how small a world is ours.

[A Border Crossing](#)

When we reached the border between Canada and Alaska, we discovered that two of the American guards were teachers who taught in Littleton, Colorado. They had spent thirteen summers serving as guards in that location.

As a song from Disneyland reminds us, "It's a small, small world after all."

[Boundary, Alaska](#)

About twelve miles into Alaska we reached a little community called Boundary, Alaska. It had been called Boundary before it was discovered that the real boundary between Alaska and Canada was a bit further east of that community.

The most notable features of Boundary were the immense moose racks that greeted us at the entrance of the bar/cafe/post office. The walls and ceiling of the bar were covered with paper money signed by tourists from across the world. A much

deteriorated, weather beaten building that had once been a hotel, reminded us how tough people of the past had to be in order to live in the non-insulated board structures of the far north.

Chicken, Alaska

Later we arrived in Chicken, Alaska. My most memorable recollection of Chicken was the sign on the very small post office that read, "We receive and deliver mail from 11:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. each Thursday."

I wonder what our high tech world has done to the citizens of that community.

A Gold Dredge

As we headed for Tok, Alaska, we came upon a huge, wooden gold dredge that spanned much of the creek in which it had claimed it's precious bullion. This dredge was over three stories high and must have weighed many tons. A pond under the dredge helped it to float much of it's weight as it was pulled forward into the gravel bed by it huge jaws.

Many mounds of river rock still remained along the route that the dredge had traveled.

Placer Mining

Between Chicken and Tok, Alaska, we came upon another process for securing gold when we viewed a large stream of water blasting the overburden off of the adjoining hillside so that miners could work their sluiceboxes with continuous shovels of gravel and dirt. We stopped for a short time to watch these miners in action. They used a powerful water pump near the stream and connected it to a firehose with an adjustable nozzle mounted on a large galvanized tub. The tub was about a third full of water and tipped at a slight angle. When the hose was turned on, the water in the tub caused the hose to rotate back and forth across the opposite hillside. The force of the water blasted the overburden many feet from the point of impact.

When the overburden was removed to about three feet from the top of the permafrost layer, the pump was turned off and the miners began shoveling the remaining gravel and dirt into a sluicebox.

When the water was turned away from the sluicebox, the miners removed the larger rocks pieces of gravel from the sluicebox. The material in the bottom of each portion of the sluicebox was shoveled into 5 gallon buckets that were later panned when all of the many bucket were full. Much of the panning was done later in the fall.

While we were watching the miners work, Paul and I discovered balls of black agate all around the area where we had parked. We asked the miners if we could collect some of them. They told us to take as many as we wanted. Needless to say Paul and I gathered a goodly number of those agates and brought them home to Boulder.

We had found and claimed our own treasures of the earth.

A Narrow Road

Along a narrow span of road heading from Chicken, Alaska, for Tok, bordered on one side by a sidehill and on the other by a steep drop-off, we were surprised to see a speeding pilot automobile that warned of a very wide load approaching us. Less than a half minute later an 18 wheeler sped by us with barely inches to spare. That truck was hauling a D9 Caterpillar with a wide blade extending well beyond the truck bed. We were fortunate that we were not brushed off into the deep drop-off by the truck, its load and the rush of wind that accompanied them.

I discovered that most people in Alaska know only two speeds: slow and as fast as their means of transportation can go.

Dall Sheep

As we were nearing Portage Glacier along the Turn Again Arm of Cook Inlet we could see Dall Sheep on the slopes above us. I asked Paul to pull over so that I might hike up one of the slopes and attempt to get a picture or two of these snow white sheep.

When I reached a plateau where I had seen some of the sheep, I was able to take some wonderful pictures of Dall Sheep that apparently had grown accustomed to humanbeings. One of the sheep even moved so close to me that I had to move back so that he would not overflow the frame of the picture I hoped to take.

I believe that some of the sheep were as curious about me as I was of them.

Bear Facts

On my second trip to Alaska we traveled to Seward, a coastal town that was significantly affected by the 1964 earthquake. Many eye witnesses during the earthquake said that the deep water in the sound swirled around like water in a wash basin causing waves over 50+' high, tossing boats and buildings high up on the steep hills above Seward. Some boats and household items were being discovered every year since this sizable earthquake.

On this trip to Alaska, Paul and his family had exchanged a week of their condo allowance in Colorado for a week of condo use in Seward. While Paul and his family slept in the exchanged condo, I slept in the camper in the condo's parking lot. This allowed me to come and go as I chose.

While I was in Alaska, I found that my fascination with its wonders and wildlife caused me to want to explore and discover as much as I could during the time I was there. Consequently, I seldom slept more than 3 hours a night.

One night as Paul and his family slept, I strolled down the beach while the tide was out. I was amazed how many different starfish, shells, fishing floats and pieces of nets I found along the way. I was overwhelmed by the number of salmon I saw heading up the bay to spawn in streams above Seward. I was amazed how fast sea lions could swim as they chased schools of salmon. I marveled at the vast numbers of birds of many descriptions that flew up and down the steep banks near the sound. Then I was astounded by the swiftness of the current and the immediacy of the rising tide as I was forced to climb the slopes of the bay to keep from being swept away by the intensity and depth of the rising water. In a very short time I found myself crawling through tunnels of thick brush, devil's club and heavy vegetation.

High above the bay in a mass of foliage I came upon a large boat that had been deposited there during the earthquake. I wondered why it had not been salvaged.

Even higher on the slope I found a rough pathway that led to cement gun fortifications that had been used to protect Seward during world war II in case Seward was invaded. At the fortifications I met an older man who, since his discharge from the military, had made it his life work to maintain these reminders of WWII and to seek to have these ruins become a designated historical landmark of the Seward community. He indicated that he was disappointed in the city leaders' lack of interest in this part of their history. He led me through much of these gun placements and told me what it was like to man them. Some of these gun placements would have made wonderful places for bears to hibernate.

After leaving this talkative individual, I attempted to take a short cut back to our camper on the outskirts of Seward. Soon I found myself once more crawling through the brush. At one point I looked down and discovered a bear print almost as large as a dinner plate. Brown bears were present in the Seward area. Only then was I startled to an awareness of the foolishness of my ways.

Sometimes a shortcut can turn out to be the most dangerous and longest way. I realized that no one knew where I was and what dangers I had already encountered. I was never so relieved when I finally emerged from the brush into the parking lot unscathed from the very real and imagined dangers that could have caused me much grief.

The next day we visited a garage sale where the owner had attempted to display his many items by nailing them up on the side of his barn. This person was definitely unique and eccentric.

We also visited a water wheel that turned a very large grinding stone. The sign in front of this water wheel read, "If you have an ax to grind, grind it here."

Fishing in Alaska

In preparation for fishing in Alaska, I tied fishing flies similar to salmon flies found in fly tying books I had studied so that I would be more than adequately supplied should I lose tackle to fish I imagined and looked forward to catching. Every time we stopped along the highway to eat or rest, I would pull out my fly tying equipment and tie a few more flies. By the time we reached Alaska I had tied over 700 flies.

When I went fishing the first time for Chinook salmon on the Kenai River in Alaska, I went with the assurance of friends who had gone before me and I hoped to catch fish larger than I had ever caught before in a river. I went fishing convinced of the availability of huge salmon which I had not yet seen and my ability to catch them on large colorful flies that I had tied but had never tried before.

Only a few people were present when I hooked my first salmon. But soon a crowd gathered about me, making it near impossible for me to follow the fish up and down the river bank as I attempted to bring my first silver-bright king salmon to net. Fishermen and tourists alike, had appeared like magic. This seemed to happen whenever anyone tied into a large salmon. When a person had a large salmon on his line, it was the custom to holler, "Fish on!" Most people would reel in their lines and let you pass by as your salmon made a dash for freedom, otherwise a mass of tangled lines resulted.

My first king salmon was a little over 25 lbs. My friends encouraged me to throw it back, for they assured me that it was too small to keep. I kept it anyway, for it was just what I thought a big salmon should be. Little did I know.

The next day we fished on the Kasilof River. That day I found out just how big salmon can get. Each day I was determined to catch a fish that was larger than the one I had caught the day before. Each day I caught several king salmon and released them before I caught one larger than the one I had caught previously. The king salmon I kept the second day was over 44 1/2 lbs.

The third day I kept a 56+ lb. king salmon.

The fourth day the king salmon I kept was 67+ lbs.

My last salmon on this particular trip was a salmon that weighed in excess of 82 lbs. I was fishing from a steep bank on the Kenai River near a place called Eagle Rock. It took me over an hour to land this salmon. It was very strong, much like hooking the bumper of a moving truck. Five times I had brought it to the shore before I finally had it in my grasp. When I did get a hold of that salmon, I thought that it would break my arm as I attempted to bring it up the steep bank before I dared to let loose of my grasp on it.

That same morning I had hooked a very large salmon, that must have decided to return to the Cook Inlet, for it led me on a merry chase down the river for over two miles as I attempted to land it. When I came to a large cottonwood tree that blocked my pathway down the river in pursuit of this salmon, I found it necessary to apply as much pressure as I could without breaking my fly rod. Soon I was at the end of the 20 lb. line backing that was in my reel. I pointed my rod at the salmon hoping not to break my rod. The line began to sing much like a tightening banjo string. I was amazed how strong 20 lb. test line can be. Then like a rifle shot the line broke, leaving me with only 8 inches

of line still attached to my reel. At first I thought that I had broken my fishing rod. Fortunately this was not the case.

I had to go back to town to purchase new line to fill my reel before I was able to continue fishing.

On that same fishing trip I caught a king salmon that was just a little larger than the fly I was casting. My friend, Paul, took a picture of this little fish. When we returned to Boulder, the picture of the little salmon was the one he showed to illustrate how large the salmon I caught in Alaska were.

I wonder how large is large and how small is small and how much faith is enough faith until we are opened to a greater faith before it is crowded out?

Arctic Terns

One evening, while I was fly fishing for Chinook salmon on the Kasilof River on the Kenai Peninsula of Alaska, I became so entranced with the flight of two arctic terns hovering over the river against the twilight of a fading sunset, that I almost lost sight of the reason I had come to that stream. I was suddenly reminded when my fly rod was jolted by a vicious strike of a large king salmon that almost yanked my fishing rod out of my hands. Somehow or other I managed to recover my intended purpose for being on the river and in time I netted a fish that weighed almost 46 pounds. Since I had set a goal of catching a king that weighed more than the salmon I had caught the previous day, I returned that salmon to the river and continued fishing. Thus I was granted the opportunity to extend my time in this beautiful setting.

Before I knew it, I was once more enthralled with the beauty of arctic terns seemingly suspended against a backdrop of rippling water, darkening sky, sparkling stars and clouds of rising insects. That night on the Kasilof River the silhouette of their flights over the river touched something deep within my soul, erasing any tension that I might have felt except for the wish that I held to record this experience on film so that I might recall it for years to come.

Little did I realize that my mind had already filed this wonderful experience of observing Arctic terns in a setting that will long live in the recesses of my special memories.

I was amazed to learn that the Arctic tern is one bird that sees more daylight than any other creature on earth as it migrates from Antarctica to the Arctic each year. In the daylight the Arctic tern's striking scissortail, white plumage, capped with a black head and orange beak and feet are captivating, especially when they are contrasted against a brilliant sky.

There are some moments in our lives that we hold as precious, inspirational and uplifting. Those moments on the Kasilof River are high on my list of life enhancing experiences.

Combat Fishing

Fishing at Cooper's Landing near the confluence of the Kenai and Russian Rivers was called combat fishing by more than a few sports writers and fishermen. When the sockeye salmon began to run up the Kenai River, hundreds of fishermen lined both banks of the river for hundreds of yards near Cooper's Landing Campgrounds.

We were allowed three sockeye salmon a day. The fish that I caught averaged a little more than nine pounds apiece. Fishing was limited to flies and lures only. I fished with flies that I had tied for this occasion. I learned that bright flies were very effective on bright days and dark flies caught most of the fish on overcast days. Many persons were using heavy weights to get their flies down to where most of the salmon were swimming, but I found that by using no weight other than the streamer and a weight forward fly line was most effective when I cast my line where the current would take it down to the fish. One day I caught over 187 salmon before I placed one on my stringer to take back to our ice chest. That day I wanted to see how many fish I could catch before it was time to return to Paul's son's home.

I fished at Cooper's Landing at least eight times during my first stay in Alaska. Fishing was never so good.

Fishing for Halibut

While exploring Seward, Paul's family went to the military commissary to have their daughter, Paula, who was in the air force, purchase some needed items. While they were shopping, I strolled the hallways and read some of the material posted on three large bulletin boards near the entrance to the commissary. I discovered that halibut R & R fishing trips were going out each morning with military personnel and their guests. Military persons could sponsor non-military persons to join them fishing if there was room aboard the boats.

I spoke with Paula and convinced her to sign up to sponsor Paul and I on one of the boats scheduled for the next morning. We were numbers 18-20 on the waiting list, but we felt we might have a chance since 16 boats were going fishing each day and each boat could have a total of 20 people aboard.

The next morning we arrived at the docks a good hour prior to the time for launching. The wind was blowing; the sky was overcast and the water was a bit choppy. We rationalized that we just might be able to get aboard a boat because some people might not want to go out on such a questionable day. We saw a sign that indicated that military fishing trips left from the nearest dock to us. People were already getting aboard the boats.

As we entered the small hut where persons were instructed to sign in, a stiff wind blew the sign up sheet out the door into the bay. The person who was in charge said

that he had only one space left on the last boat. Paul and Paula took me aside and insisted that I take that space. I was a bit leery because I would not have a sponsor aboard with me. Finally I signed up and took only for a life vest, since I already had my own fishing equipment and bait.

The captain of my assigned boat was a private first class. He was used to being in charge of the first of the 16 boats that left the harbor. Because of his impulsiveness, he had been assigned the last boat. He was glad that his last passenger was aboard. The boats had been held up from launching for some time due to the rough seas.

As we were waiting, one high ranking person began to go around the boat asking us to tell our names, where we were from, what rank we held and if we were a guest. Since I was last aboard, I was last to introduce myself. I just knew that I would be left at the dock because I did not have a sponsor with me. Just after I had told them who I was, where I had come from and before I had indicated that I was a non-military person with no sponsor, it was announced that our boat could proceed out into the bay. Our captain gunned the motor which backfired just as I was telling those on board that I was non-military. I suspected that no one had heard my last statement, for I was not left at the dock.

Because the waves were very strong where we had initially been scheduled to fish, we anchored in a protected cove. While waiting, we were allowed to start fishing. It was at this time that I discovered that the high ranking person surely had not heard that I was non-military. Since he had not heard me, he assumed that I outranked him. Thus he instructed everyone to wait until I had dropped my line overboard before others could start fishing. Nervously and as quick as I could, I baited my hook and began fishing.

Before most persons had their bait in the water, I had a strong bite and hooked my first halibut. The ranking officer demanded that everyone reel in so that I would not tangle with them. Then he grabbed the net and instructed another military person to get the gaff in case it was needed. I had more help landing that 30 lb. halibut than I could have imagined. Then everyone had to wait until I had my line in the water once more. By this time I was really nervous.

I missed the next fish that stole my bait. Everyone sympathetically moaned because of my loss. About this time our captain received the news that we could proceed to the original place where we had initially been scheduled to fish. This was a place where the huge Harding Ice Field periodically calved icebergs into the sound. We did not anchor, but floated with the current.

Once more I was expected to be first to drop my line into the depths. Once more I hooked a fish that turned out to be some form of a green colored bass about 10 lbs. No one else had yet had a bite. I began to feel guilty. Finally the wife of the ranking officer shouted that she was hooked up to something and was sure that it was a huge halibut. Immediately the ranking officer began shouting instructions and took charge of reeling in his wife's catch. His wife warned him in no uncertain terms that he had best not lose her fish.

After a short time the captain of the boat suggested that he believed that they had not hooked a fish but instead were snagged to the bottom of the sound. In a flash, I witnessed how a ranking officer could put down a person of less rank. Needless to say, I never heard another comment from the captain of our boat. As the ranking officer and

several other conscripted persons literally pulled the boat back against the current, the hook finally pulled free.

Immediately the officer's wife verbally assaulted her husband with language that would have embarrassed even a hardened sailor. She never stopped screaming at him until I hooked another halibut and asked if she would like to reel it in. Soon she had it aboard, all of the time reminding her husband to keep his hands off of her fish. He never said another word until we reached the docks.

I caught another fish and soon learned that no one else on any other boat had even had a bite. The captain asked me if it would be all right to go back to the dock since the catching of fish seemed limited only to me.

I wondered, "Who does this captain think I am that he would ask my permission to return to the dock?" My nervousness was now growing by leaps and bounds. He indicated that if I wished to fish some more it would be necessary for at least 3 more boats to remain with us, for the boats were assigned to remain in pods of 4. I told him, "By all means, let us return to the dock."

I was met by Paul and Paula as I stepped off the boat. Paul wanted me to pose for a picture with my fish. I was anxious to get as far as possible from the ranking officer lest he discover that I did not outrank him as he must have believed. He was also still seething from his wife's tirade.

I would have left immediately, but I needed to return the life vest to the person in the check in station. It was then that I became aware that the ranking officer was following me. As I signed the sheet that indicated that I had returned the borrowed life vest, I heard the ranking officer exclaim, "Why he is nothing more than a -----non-military person!" I quickly left the check in station only to have Paul once more want me to pose for a picture. I told him, "Not at this time!"

As we were driving away from the docks I told Paul and Paula about my mistaken identity and my consequent anxieties. It was then that they began to call me "general."

They then told me that I had gone out on an army boat, not an airforce boat. After I had left the dock they had discovered that the airforce boats were one dock away. They had been able to go out on one of the airforce boats. They had come back early because no one had had a bite on any of the 16 airforce boats.

I have no doubt that someone was truly looking over me.

Alaska Tides

During one of my trips to Alaska, while assisting a commercial gillnet fisherman, I discovered how powerful and dangerous the tides of Cook Inlet can be.

The fisherman I was helping tended to be a bit laid back until the last minutes and then he would drive like crazy to beat the tide to the place where he would launch his boat.

His launching place was over 6 miles up a beach between the rising tide and 40 foot cliffs. In that part of Alaska in less than 30 minutes, the rising tide changes the water level as much as 30 feet.

On several occasions I found myself reminding Craig how cold the water would be if we got stuck or the engine failed or if we hit an unseen rock and we didn't make it to high ground in time. My comments didn't seem to phase him. At least three times we barely made it, even with water lapping the floor boards.

Often when the tide was out, huge boulders that were over 25 feet tall and mud flats that were 20 or more feet under water would appear. One day Craig decided to remain with his nets in the water up to the last moment, even as the tide was going out. We were about 3/4 of a mile from the beach. Because of the swiftness of the retreating tide, before we could do much about it, our 26 foot boat was stuck in the mud. Our nets were full of fish.

With much difficulty we retrieved the fish by wading through the mud back and forth from the boat to the nets. Fortunately, we were able to wash the fish in tidal pools that remained. We could only wait until the tide returned some eight hours later.

When the tide began to rise once more, we wondered if our boat would remain stuck in the mud necessitating us to swim to shore. Just as the tidal waves were about to overflow into the boat, a loud sucking sound announced that our boat was beginning to pull free out of its entrapment. Like a huge cork, our boat burst to the water's surface, relieving us from a long and dangerous swim.

Once more, God must have been watching out for us.

Commercial Fishing

On three different trips to Alaska I served as a captain's helper for a month assisting Craig Ralston gill net salmon on his permit site on the North beach of the Cook Inland. Craig was fishing primarily for sockeye salmon, often called reds. We also caught pink salmon (humpback salmon), king salmon (Chinook salmon), a few silver salmon (coho salmon) and dog salmon (chum salmon). We never caught steelhead trout (sea run rainbow trout).

Each permit allowed Craig to set 3 nets that were 20-25 feet deep and 250-300 feet long. We were not allowed to set the nets until 7 a.m. on appointed days and the nets were to be removed no later than 7 p.m. each day we were allowed to fish. Huge fines were assessed for nets set earlier or later than the allowed time.

Each net had floats attached at the top and lead weights at the bottom. The ropes at the ends of the nets had very large floats and very heavy anchors attached to them. At the beginning of each day the nets were piled carefully in the bottom of the boat ready to be cast overboard at 7 a.m. sharp. Each net was placed in the water in less than 1 minute per net and stretched as tight as possible from anchor to anchor. When the tide came in, the tight net was stretched into a semi-circle by the power of the current. Salmon swam with the tide and eventually attempted to swim through our nets. Most often they became entangled in our nets as they stuck their heads through the gaps in the nets. When they attempted to back away from the nets they found their gills caught in the netting.

Craig and I removed the salmon from the nets by driving our 24-26' boat under the anchor rope on one end of the net. Then we physically pulled the net over the sides

of the boat so that we could remove the fish from the net and drop the fish into the bottom of the boat. When the fish were plentiful, the boat was almost filled with salmon by the time we reached the end of the 300' net. Sometimes it was overflowing. A second empty boat and driver was waiting at the end of the net.

It was always interesting and dangerous when we had to climb out of the mass of flopping fish, no matter how high the waves, into the empty boat as the driver of the second boat attempted to climb into the boat full of fish so that he could head into shore where he and Paul Ralston would quickly stack the fish in large plastic containers called totes. A layer of ice filled the bottom of each tote, then a layer of fish, then another layer of ice, then another layer of fish, etc. until each tote was full.

By the time the boat was emptied of salmon, it was returned to the end of a net where inevitably Craig and I were waiting with another full boat of fish. Our gear was covered with slime up to our armpits and the larger fish beat us up as they attempted to escape from the boat.

Often when the sockeye salmon were much in evidence, we would return the humpback salmon to the water to leave room for a full boat of sockeyes. At that time Craig received \$1.60 a lb. for sockeye salmon and only 1/2 cent per lb. for humpback salmon. Sometimes he received nothing for the humpback salmon we did bring in to the processing plant.

At the end of the day and sometimes during the day we would load the totes onto a 6 x 6 surplus army truck and haul them the short distance to the processing plant. There attendants would sort the salmon according to kinds and in matter of minutes the salmon would be cleaned and frozen. I found this process to be very fascinating and efficient. It is my belief that frozen salmon are really fresher than salmon that is iced down and flown to markets throughout the world.

I learned that the Asian market received most of Alaska's salmon and the Japanese controlled the prices that the fishermen received. I wondered why the Alaskans allowed the Japanese to dictate the value of their fish?

I also learned that commercial fishing in Alaska is considered by insurance companies as one of the most dangerous occupations they cover.

Flounders & More Flounders

One day, salmon were not plentiful in our nets. As we checked our nets, we found large flounders caught up in the netting. Craig tended to throw them back into the water since they were not salmon. I liked flounder and suggested that any flounder that were as large as a dinner plate might be kept for me to bring home to Colorado. One tote on shore was reserved for flounder. That evening I was amazed to discover a full tote of flounder waiting for me to fillet. They were relatively easy to fillet, but there were so many that it was after midnight when I completed filleting, washing, wrapping and freezing this bountiful windfall.

Marching in a Parade

One year I was in Kenai, Alaska, when they held their 4th of July parade. It was cold, about 38 degrees, and drizzly as is often the weather pattern along the Alaska coast.

I greatly appreciated the inclusiveness of this parade in Kenai.

Depending upon the corner and perspective from which I viewed this parade, it was possible to see and hear bright red or yellow fire engines and highly polished police cars with sirens wailing. There were various antique automobiles and trucks loaded with hometown folk, and freshly painted or purchased garbage and sewage trucks. There were flat bed trucks with country western dance bands and dancers with brightly colored outfits, and convertibles driven by proud owners and filled with waving county and city dignitaries. There were baby buggies with the latest arrivals, and doll buggies filled with dolls, stuffed animals and a variety of pets. There were wagons pulled by horses, wagons pulled by reindeer; wagons pulled by children; a boat pulled by a tractor; and an AT&T phone booth on castors pulled by a Volkswagen. There was a float loaded with fishing gear, and a robot decorated as a fire plug followed by a long line of leashed and unleashed dogs and cats. There was a loud boom box band tuned to a variety of radio stations; two clowns; and a long line of horses, followed by a scout troop; and a bible pounding preacher dragging a cross supported by a large wheel. There was an ambulance; a pop corn wagon and a succession of R.V.'s that may have made a wrong turn onto the parade route. And finally there was a proud little league team, some roller skaters, many bicycles, a candy throwing Kiwanis group and an untold number of persons who just stepped off of the curb and became part of the parade.

At various times, a designated dignitary led the parade, only to be preempted by any one or more of those who felt called to step forward.

The parade seemed to go on and on, even as participants came and went most anywhere along the parade route.

As I reflect upon this parade, I am reminded of a poster presented to our church secretary. It read, "I have gone out to look for myself, if I should return before I get back, hold me until I get here.

North Star United Methodist Church

During the summer of 1989, I had the privilege of leading 3 teams of very skilled volunteers to help build the North Star United Methodist Church in Nikiski, Alaska. Some of us flew on commercial airlines while others drove the many miles of the Alaska Highway. Those of us who flew, landed in Anchorage, stayed overnight in First United Methodist Church and then rented cars to travel on to the Kenai Peninsula and Nikiski.

When we reached Nikiski, we stayed in the homes of members of the North Star UMC or in RVs that some had driven to Alaska. Our hosts were more than gracious, for they not only gave us a key to their homes, but in some instances, they even gave us keys to cars for us to drive while we were in Alaska.

Each of the volunteers paid their own expenses to and from Alaska and while they were there. We also made a sizable contribution to help pay for necessary supplies to build North Star United Methodist Church.

Our volunteer teams were composed of talented carpenters, plumbers, electricians, insulators, sheetrockers, cooks and general laborers. In three short weeks we created 10 new rooms; installed necessary electrical wires and fixtures; plumbed sewer, water and heating support systems; insulated and prepared walls for eventual finishing; refined supports undergirding the old and new church building structures; helped purchase many of the building supplies; and shared in daily worship services. Most significantly, we made many new friends, further connecting the United Methodist connection especially with the members of the North Star United Methodist Church.

We began each morning with a worship service, breakfast and assignments for the day. Most of the time we prepared our own breakfasts, lunches and dinners. We also provided most of the food we ate. Some of the church members brought us snacks for the times that we took breaks and for two evening meals we were presented with salmon, salads and casseroles. Most of the men of the church of necessity were unable to assist us with their project since summer was the time when they had to make much of their income for the year.

Even though daylight lasted most of 23 hours, I insisted that our teams stop working no later than 8 p.m. each evening and begin work no sooner than 8 a.m. after worship, breakfast and our time of determining our daily assignments. During our free time, some of us went fishing; some went sightseeing; some slept and some visited and read books. Our work, worship, meals and free time brought us close together. Each day I could feel our sense of unity growing. To this day many of us gather at our annual salmon bake and recall the sense of fulfillment that we had knowing that we had accomplished so much, not only for the members of North Star UMC, but also among ourselves. We had traveled to Nikiski to assist others and discovered that we had received even more than we had given. Over the course of my many years of sharing in the Volunteers in Mission projects, I have been blessed even as I attempted to be a blessing with others.

The North Star United Methodist Church is now one of the leading churches on the Kenai Peninsula. It is not only growing in membership, but the members of the church are very engaged in the needs and concerns of the communities around them. Truly they have been blessed to bless.

[North Star Hospitality](#)

Even before we arrived in Nikiski to begin work on the North Star United Methodist church building construction, those of us who needed housing were invited to plan on staying in the homes of church members. When we arrived at the homes of our host families, many of us, after being shown where we were to sleep, were presented with keys to their homes, keys to a car to use while we were there and full access to the food in their refrigerators. Our hosts and hostesses were more than gracious.

One of their many questions of us was, "Why would you come all of this way at your own expense to work with us on our very much needed church facility?" Most of us replied, "Our Lord saw fit to invite us and move us to reach out in this way." "The Spirit of God said, 'Do this in remembrance,' and we found ourselves called and responding to God's call."

Appreciation, excitement, joy and Christian fellowship were much in evidence in the responses of the members' hospitality at North Star United Methodist Church.

Soldotna United Methodist Church

While we were building the North Star UMC, for three days during the last week, I took 9 volunteers with me to paint Soldotna United Methodist Church.

Through the District Superintendent of the Methodist churches of Alaska, I had learned that Soldotna UMC needed some assistance. While I was still in Colorado, I contacted the pastor of the Soldotna UMC and scheduled a time when we would be available to assist him with his project. We sent \$1000 in advance so that we would have necessary paint, brushes and tools to paint Soldotna UMC. He assured me that he was looking forward to hosting our work team.

When we arrived at the appointed time to begin scraping, caulking and painting, we discovered that the pastor was no where to be found, nor were any of his church members. About 9 a.m. a member of the Quaker Church arrived to give us a key to the Soldotna UMC and to tell us that we would need to go to a warehouse where the chosen paint and painting equipment had been stored. Shortly before noon we began painting the church. The color of paint that had been chosen was not what most of us volunteers would have chosen, but it was the color that had been purchased by our host pastor.

We prepared our meals in the church kitchen; parked our RVs in the parking lot and some of us slept in a classroom in the church building.

At the peak of the roof, Soldotna UMC is three stories high and required much climbing of ladders to complete our assignment.

It was only on the morning of the third day that anyone from the church came by. I saw someone enter a side door to the church. It was the pastor. When I asked him to come look at the nearly completed work, he told me that he did not have time, for he needed to go home and wash numerous batches of clothes and clean his house before his wife returned from a two week trip she had taken. I told him that it would only take a few minutes for him to come out and see what had been accomplished. Reluctantly, he came out the front door as he left. He did not even have the courtesy to comment on the efforts of those who had come so many miles to assist with this project.

Later, as we evaluated the work we had done, some of the volunteers indicated that they were disappointed that no one from the church had even appeared while we were there. Even so, we concluded that we were pleased and blessed with the efforts we had made. I never let the volunteers know the attitude of the pastor. I did not want to discourage their future volunteer efforts.

While we were painting Soldotna UMC, the pastor of a nearby Lutheran church came by to ask us if we were available to paint the church he was serving. He told us that he was impressed with our diligence and professional work. The volunteers were pleased with his comments. I believe if we had a few more days to spare, we just might have taken on the Lutheran church project also.

Sometimes the message of "Well done, good and faithful servants," comes through persons we least expect.

Three months after I had returned to Colorado from Alaska, I received a letter of appreciation from one of the trustees of the Soldotna UMC for the work we had accomplished. He indicated that the pastor had taken all of the credit for the work we had done. It was the Lutheran pastor that had set him straight. To this day, I feel sorry for the lack of integrity of Soldotna UMC's pastor.

Sometimes when we volunteer, we need to remember that we are doing what we are doing because we have been and continue to be blessed by the privilege and grace of serving in the Spirit of our Lord.

UMVIM Coordinator

In 1993, I was asked to serve as a co-coordinator of the United Methodist Volunteers in Missions Committee of the Rocky Mountain United Methodist Conference. I served in this position until 2006. The United Methodist Volunteers in Missions Committee planned, scheduled, budgeted, recruited team leaders, trained team volunteers, advertised, evaluated and informed kept potential team leaders aware of potential mission local, national and international opportunities. United Methodist Volunteers in Mission served in multiple locations throughout the world assisting local churches and communities with their construction and reconstruction projects, their Christian education efforts, agricultural advancements, counseling assistance, their work with person rehabilitation, their medical outreaches and their efforts to recover from natural disasters. Church buildings, homes, community centers, medical centers, livestock facilities, new water resources and delivery systems, vacation Bible schools and agricultural training sessions were among the many volunteer in mission projects pursued by teams of volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church.

When I began serving in this position, an average of 5 volunteer teams from our conference were reaching out to mission projects each year. In 2006, we were sending 87 volunteer in mission teams to mission projects that encompassed all continents across the world except Antarctica.

Volunteer members of each team paid their own way and gave of their time and talents as they reached out to the needs and requests of these mission projects. Team members paid for their own food, transportation, housing and insurance.

Often mission teams held fund raising events to secure finances to purchase needed materials for their mission endeavor. Most team members also contributed additional dollars to help with material expenses.

Time and again the evaluations of volunteers would report that initially they had gone on their mission hoping to assist others, which they did, but so often they found themselves lifted and renewed by those they were seeking to serve. Many of the churches from which the volunteers came reported that they found the returning volunteers increasingly and more meaningfully involved in the life and leadership of their local congregations and communities.

How often we are blessed as we seek to bless others. How often the church comes to life as we not only listen to the words preached and taught in our churches, but as we become a part of the living word lovingly engaged in the real needs, interests and concerns of others around us.

Many of the volunteers formed deep and lasting friendships as they responded to the call of God for them to join with others in the life changing work of becoming the ever widening circle of the body of Christ.

I am thankful for the opportunity that was extended to me to send and be sent in mission through the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission offerings.

Western Jurisdiction UMVIM

From 1993-2006, I served as a member of the Western Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Committee. We represented all of the western portion of the United States including: Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Hawaii and Alaska. It was our task to list the UMVIM events that were already scheduled in each annual conference; to note UMVIM events that had been pursued in the past year; to project future UMVIM events projected in each conference; to bring to possible mission projects to the attention of conference UMVIM coordinators for their future considerations; to project and vote on the next year's Western Jurisdictional UMVIM budget; to plan and carry out a yearly Western Jurisdictional UMVIM training and inspirational retreat and produce and update a website of information for anyone interested in being a part of the many mission experiences available across the Western Jurisdiction and all of the United Methodist Jurisdictions.

Each time we listed the growing number of Western Jurisdictional UMVIM experiences held in the past, scheduled for the present year and projected for the future, we were astounded and pleased that we were privileged to be a part of so many amazing acts of grace, relationship and accomplishment as the body of Christ. UMVIM is truly one of the ways that members of the United Methodist Church are connected across the world as the love of God is put into action in the lives of so many persons, communities and churches.

From 2003-2006, I was privileged to serve as the vice chairperson of the Western Jurisdictional UMVIM.

Jefferson Avenue UM Church Roof

In 1998, it became obvious that the church that I was serving, Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church, was drastically in need of a new roof over the educational rooms and fellowship hall. This section of our facilities had been built with a flat roof that had been reroofed every 8 years since that portion of the church facilities had been built. When the trustees of Jefferson Ave. UMC secured 3 estimates for this reroofing project, the lowest estimate was over \$20,000. I suggested that we might consider reconstructing the roof so that it would be a sloping roof rather than a flat roof. With many reservations, the trustees of Jefferson Ave. UMC checked with our church architect and discovered that not only was this feasible, but they discovered that a sloping roof would save the church many dollars over the next 20 years. The first estimate for a commercial company to build a sloped roof was over \$167,000. This was almost prohibitive for the members of Jefferson Ave. UMC to undertake.

Rather than dismissing the possibility of a sloped roof, I then asked if I and a small contingent of knowledgeable laypersons might explore the possibility of doing this project with volunteers from among our congregation and the UMVIM members of conference churches. Once more the trustees reluctantly agreed to consider this possibility.

After our architect listed the necessary materials needed to replace the present roof with a sloped roof, the exploratory roofing committee projected that a sloped roof constructed by volunteers could be built for under \$20,000.

When this proposal was offered to the church trustees there was a renewed interest in its feasibility, but some trustees did not believe that enough volunteers could be secured even if a capable construction foreman had already volunteered.

It was decided that a presentation should be made at a called session of a church conference of all interested church members with the district superintendent presiding.

A budget of needed materials and necessary volunteers was presented along with a projected construction timeline. The sloped roof concept was approved after it was determined how the necessary dollars would be secured.

In a very short time the dollars were in hand and construction began. Within 10 days the project was amazingly completed with over 67 persons having contributed their time and expertise. Many others, members and nonmembers, made financial contributions and offered prayers for the successful completion of this project. One nonmember, who owned his own roofing construction business, volunteered to offer his services and time to this effort when he learned of Jefferson Ave. UMC's plan. When he showed up with a group of volunteers that he had recruited to assist with our effort, he was amazed to learn that the roofing project had already been completed the day before they arrived. I would have contacted him if he had left me his phone number or business card. He did make a financial contribution to this project. In fact over 1/3 of the volunteers and dollars for this roof were contributed by non church members.

Not only were the members of the church relieved, pleased and amazed with the work that they had shared in completing, but a new spark of faith, excitement and participation spread across the life of Jefferson Ave. UMC from that day forward.

Soon the parking lots were repaved and the church heating plant was upgraded with funds that had not been available until church members began to see what they could do together when each member contributed to that which needed to be done.

Visitors could not help feel the excitement of a church that had caught the spirit of sharing in the work that God was about.

This enthusiasm soon carried over to the outreach of church members to assist with mission efforts and construction projects of the Volunteers in Mission groups of the Rocky Mountain Conference.

The members of Jefferson Ave. UMC had been blessed and they found themselves called to share their blessings with others.

Warren Village

Warren Village is a sizable residential facility opened to offer hope and to enable single parent families to become self-sufficient. These families are not only provided housing, but they are assisted to develop a plan whereby they can become increasingly all that God would have them become. Assistance with education, child care and a variety of family difficulties are offered through this mission with single parent families.

A team of volunteers from Jefferson Ave. United Methodist Church reached out once a month to Warren Village as they painted rooms that had been vacated by families that had graduated from the facilities and assistance of Warren Village.

With a Boulder United Methodist Mission Team of Volunteers I was pleased to share in the reconstruction of a large room and necessary shelving for medical supplies that Warren Village used for providing medical assistance to residents.

Later, when a huge facility was leased to provide additional space for a growing number of single parent families, I joined another Boulder United Methodist Mission Team of Volunteers to paint all of the rooms, meeting spaces and hallways of the three story building.

Over 87% of the residents of Warren Village become self-sufficient members of their communities.

It feels good to assist others as they seek to discover their life gifts and their abilities to share increasingly in the blessings of their life journeys.

Entries in the County Fair

Throughout the early years of our children's lives, Jeane and I attempted to expose them to some of the experiences of our lives that we had found to be helpful to us.

When I was serving as a minister at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, our family discovered the El Paso County fair. Over those eight years, we entered items in the county fair in several different categories including art, garden produce, flowers, canned goods and baked goods.

We encouraged our children to prepare some items also. Jeane and Bonnie entered bran muffins they had baked. Bonnie found her muffins were awarded a blue ribbon and that her mother's muffins warranted a red ribbon. Jeane had even prepared her muffins the morning when the entries were due, using the same recipe as Bonnie's. Bonnie had made her muffins several days prior to the fair and had frozen them.

Michael entered watercolor paintings. One year Michael's painting was completed on the drive out to the fair grounds on the day it was to be entered. That year Michael found a blue ribbon on his painting. That year, Michael found a blue ribbon on his painting. Surprisingly, it had been entered in the adult division of competition since there was no children's division for paintings.

We each entered sand paintings we had designed. A red or white ribbon adorned Michael's sand paintings. Bonnie received a blue ribbon on her sand paintings. Jeane's sand painting received a red ribbon as did mine.

Jeane and I entered fruit we had canned. Our canned fruit were also awarded blue ribbons.

I entered homemade bread I had made from wheat ground in our Magic Mill. I also entered vegetables and flowers I had raised in our garden. . Some of my vegetables and flowers received red ribbons and others were awarded white ribbons. My bread received a blue ribbon.

Each year we eagerly anticipated returning to discover how our entries had fared.

For the several years that we entered the county fair, our family entries were well awarded. Each blue ribbon brought one dollar. Red ribbons granted us \$.50. White ribbons brought us a quarter. The real value of this venture was that our children broadened their interests and gained an increased sense of confidence.

We always enjoyed walking around the fair grounds viewing the livestock, crafts, carnival, and rodeo.

It is fulfilling to be a part of something that is beneficial and greater than we are.

Building and Flying Kites

One of the crafts that I taught in churches I have served was building and flying kites. March was the perfect time for this class to be taught, for March was typically blustery with much wind essential for flying kites.

Children of all ages, even some who were over 60, joined in these periods of creating. Most of our kites were made of old newspapers, white glue, thin wooden sticks and kite string. Cloth for our kite's tails were also cut in a variety of lengths from materials of various kinds. At least 100 feet of kite string was also necessary. Sometimes the adults assisted the children in their constructions, and sometimes the children ended up helping their elders. Most often this experiment in creating not only resulted in a variety of wonderful kites, but it also served as a melting pot where family members became closer, where persons of all ages formed friendships and a deeper appreciation of the complexity of God's creativity became more evident.

Of course, we then had to check to see if the kites we had created could really fly. Some flew instantly. Others needed to be adjusted before they took to the wind. Some had short lives landing in trees. Still others flew out of the grasp of those who had created them when the kite string slipped out of their fingers. Some crashed to the ground in forceful winds and required much repair and sometime total replacement. On a few occasions a different day needed to be scheduled for flying our kites because the wind ceased to blow enough to create the necessary updraft to lift our kites to the heights we had so much anticipated.

Patience along with creativity and fellowship added to our accumulation of blessings.

Downhill Skiing

When we first moved to Colorado Springs, two of my doctor friends decided it was time to take me skiing. I had not skied since I was a college student and lived in Montana. Most of my previous skiing had been cross country skiing, not down hill.

My friends in Colorado took me to Breckenridge and introduced me to Duke's Run. Duke's Run was filled with large moguls. By the time my doctor friends had reached the bottom of the run, I was about 1/2 way there. Next they took me down a black run that looked more like a cliff than a ski run. When I told them that I might break a leg if I tried that run, they responded, "You're in good hands; you forget that we are doctors!" Somehow or other I survived my reintroduction to skiing.

For the next few years Jeane and I enjoyed downhill skiing at Breckenridge, Copper Mountain, Arapahoe Basin, Loveland, Geneva Basin, Pike's Peak and even the Broadmoor ski areas.

At that time downhill skiing was still affordable. Eventually our children joined us in this winter sport.

Winter Sports

Our family always enjoyed participating in winter sports. Skiing, ice skating, snow tubing, ice fishing, sledding, snow shoeing, snowmobiling, building snowmen and snow angels were a few of the winter activities we enjoyed.

In time Jeane and I felt that it was time to teach Michael, at age seven, how to ski. Since the Broadmoor ski area was close at hand, we took him there for his first experience of skiing. We bought him a set of skis and some ski poles and showed him how to get on and off the ski lift.

When it was time to take him on his first run, Michael and I boarded the ski lift successfully while Jeane waited below to watch him come down the hill. Since the Broadmoor ski hills were more like downhill ice runs than snow runs, I decided to zig zag slowly down the hill with Michael following my example closely behind. Michael never fell the entire way down.

Once more we boarded the ski lift for another run down the hill. This time Michael suggested that we not zig zag, but go straight down the hill. He went first and I followed. At first I was a bit apprehensive as he began to gain speed, but he seemed to have no difficulty. He even came to a sliding stop as he reached his mother at the bottom of the hill. From then on there was no stopping him. Skiing fast was in his blood.

The next week we entered him in the Broadmoor ski school hats program. Quickly he went through the program from white to black hat.

Soon the Broadmoor ski racing team was wanting him to be a part of their program. Being a part of the ski team was very expensive and required members to travel at their expense on weekends all across the state and even to other states. One weekend Jeane did accompany Michael to Steamboat Springs for a Billy Kidd workshop and competition where Michael skied very well. Billy Kidd was very complimentary of Michael's skiing ability. Michael proved to be very competitive. That one experience underlined how unlikely it was going to be for Jeane and me to afford the time and dollars to support Michael in the Broadmoor ski racing activities even when we knew that he was a very talented skier. We sat with Michael and explained our dilemma to him and suggested that maybe we could do more recreation skiing and ice skating instead of pursuing competitive skiing. A bit reluctantly, he agreed.

Our family skied as often as we could. Pikes Peak, Geneva Basin, Copper Mountain and Breckenridge were the ski runs we frequented most often. The Pikes Peak Ski area had rope tows that pulled us to the top of the ski runs.

One time when Bonnie was young, she got tangled in the strap attached to the Pikes Peak ski tow. She was drug up the slope for a brief ways until the tow operator discovered her dilemma. He stopped the tow and she managed to get herself free from the strap. For some time she did not want to ski there because of that experience. Soon she was back skiing as usual and enjoying it.

When Michael was older, he joined several of his friends as a member of the ski patrol at Winter Park. There he also gave private ski lessons and taught skiing to handicapped children in their Buffalo program.

Jeane and I were part of several cross country skiing outings with the Peaks and Pines group of Lakewood United Methodist Church. One of our most challenging cross country skiing tours began at Echo Lake near Mt. Evans. We skied downhill on a narrow trail to Green Mountain Reservoir and then on to the highway some ten+ miles below. Some of the turns were very sharp and the trail was very icy and steep. A short distance before we reached the highway, at a sharp curve, we met four snowshoers from Japan who were taking up the entire width of the trail. Since they did not understand English and we could not speak Japanese, we could only hope that they would quickly provide a way for us to pass. Since the trail was very steep and we were going very fast and unable to stop, we were fortunate that we were able to pass through the group of snowshoers without a mishap. Thus, from that time on Jeane and I decided that we needed to cross country ski on terrain that matched our skill level.

Snow tubing was another activity that our family enjoyed together. We each had an inner tube from a large truck tire on which we slid down a variety of slopes. Sometimes we would make trains of our tubes by holding on to the ankles of the person who was tubing before us.

One time we snow tubed the entire ski run at Squaw Pass near Mt. Evans. Most often we tubed on established snow tube hills near Evergreen, Colorado. Later we tubed at the First United Methodist's John Wesley Youth Ranch behind Pikes Peak. Generally, snow tubing was a safe winter sport with few accidents.

A trip with our neighbors near Leadville, Colorado, allowed our family to enjoy the use of snowmobiles to explore some of the winter wonderland and deserted miner's cabins surrounding their cabin in the woods. Hot chocolate sure tasted and felt good after we returned from our chilling adventures aboard their snowmobiles.

Michael enjoyed snowmobiling so much that he and his friend bought and rode an ancient snowmobile that they were able to purchase. It was very powerful, but extremely heavy and cumbersome compared to modern snowmobiles. I am not sure what they finally did with that machine.

Jeane taught our children to make snow angels by falling backwards into the snow and flailing ones arms up and down until the image of angel with wings appeared.

Whenever the snow was right, Jeane and I joined our children to make a snowman or two, usually in our front yard. Sometimes our snowmen turned into snow forts.

One year a lot of snow fell and the wind created drifts so high that they reached the eaves of our house. A few days later, after the snow had packed down, our children took much pleasure making snow tunnels and caves throughout much of our backyard.

Everyone in our family enjoyed ice skating. We were very fortunate for the Broadmoor skating rink and local outdoor ponds were readily available to us. We even created an ice skating rink in our back yard by flooding an area with our garden hose. For a period of time Jeane, Mike, and Bonnie took group figure skating lessons at Memorial Park. For one year, 1976-1977, Jeane took private figure skating lessons before she was due at school to teach preschoolers. She learned enough to know how much practice it took to learn to be an excellent skater.

That same year Jeane, Michael and Bonnie skated in the Broadmoor Ice Review with many of the famous skaters from across the United States. I was not a part of that ice review because I was a speed skater and not a figure skater.

One time while we were at Echo Lake high on the slopes near Mt. Evans just below treeline, Jeane and I discovered that the strong wind had swept the ice clear from its surface. Jeane decided to put on her ice skates and see if the wind would propel her across the ice to the far side of the lake. She was wearing a Peruvian wool poncho. She extended it to catch the wind. With no effort at all she was flying across the ice. The wind was so strong that it was near impossible for her to skate back to where she had begun. Therefore, I made quite a few trips in the car to the other side of the lake to return her to her starting point so that she could take wing once more.

Winter was a time of much activity in the life of our family.

[Lake John](#)

One of the places that our family enjoyed fishing was Lake John in North Park near Walden, Colorado. Lake John is a lake noted for large fish: rainbow, cutthroat and brown trout. Often in the early spring we would camp along side of Lake John and

catch our limits of 2+ pound fish. We most often fished from shore with bait or a fly and a bubble. Every time Jeane would hook a large trout she became so excited that almost everyone near the lake heard her shouts of delight.

Jeane also enjoyed hiking on the hills behind our campsite. Wild flowers and a variety of birds were much in evidence on that hillside. One time she encountered a curious buck antelope. Instead of running away from her as antelope typically do, it slowly approached her. She was both pleased and a bit afraid. She could hardly wait to return to camp and tell us about her adventure.

New Years at Lake John.

One year on New Year's Day our family journeyed to Lake John to fish through the ice and ice skate. Jeane and our children enjoyed ice skating. The lake was blown free of most of the snow that had fallen throughout the winter, so the whole lake became a massive rink of hard blue ice. Jeane, Michael and Bonnie took much pleasure in skating across the expansive, bumpy ice. I chose to drill holes in the ice to attempt to catch some of the large trout known to dwell in Lake John.

The day had begun with a clear blue sky and a temperature warm enough for light wind jackets. Fish were biting and the skating brought much joy to the rest of our family. In time we shared a peaceful picnic on the ice.

Soon a light wind began to blow requiring heavier coats. The excess energy displayed by our children in the morning began to wear down. Then a light snow began to fall. We decided it was time to pack up and head for home.

By the time we reached the car, large flakes of snow began to fall. Then a strong wind began to blow.

When we turned down the isolated highway that led to Granby and Berthoud Pass, we found that the accumulated deep snow had not been plowed. We decided to turn around and return home by traveling a brief distance to a major highway in Wyoming that would surely be plowed and less dangerous than the highway to Granby. A strong wind, typical of Wyoming, was blowing from the west. We traveled east with the wind and snow until we had to turn south at Laramie to get back to Colorado.

From Laramie to Fort Collins we encountered a ground blizzard about hood high that hid much of the road from our view. The blizzard engulfed our car and forced us to travel at a snail's pace causing us to hope that a truck or another car would not slam into us because of limited visibility. We saw very few vehicles. This was good, because we were less likely to have a collision. It was bad, because we had no one to break trail for us and few were likely to rescue us if we ran off the road into a ditch. We made progress slowly by catching brief glimpses of the road and by paying attention to the tops of fence posts along the way. Once in a while we could see the highway for brief stretches when trees or snow fences caused the fierce winds and blowing snow to abate to some degree, allowing the highway edges to come into focus. Then light began to fade as night forced its darkness upon us.

By the time we reached our home, my hands were cramped and my eyes felt strained. That was a long, difficult drive home. The security of our home never felt so

good. Relief, warmth and thanksgiving overwhelmed us. Fortunately our children had fallen asleep during much of our winter ordeal. They only awoke long enough for them to be carried into their bedrooms to their warm beds and a night of rest.

Jeane and I found that for us, sleep was initially difficult to experience, for it took us time to unwind from our harrowing return trip. Only after we thanked God for his protection and guidance throughout that winter storm, were we able to fade into a much needed rest and rejuvenation. By the next morning, our new year's adventure already had begun to become a lasting memory.

I am reminded of a saying of one of our former neighbors, Barney Ruben, "When we go on a trip, we are glad twice: once when we leave and once when we return home."

Ice Fishing

For a period of time I joined a retired minister, Lewis Marsh, ice fishing at Antero or Eleven Mile Reservoir. Louie was a good fisherman and usually caught fish when no one else did. He was good company and a prankster. Often he would come over to my fishing spot and when I was not looking, he would tap the end of my rod so that it appeared that a fish was taking my bait. At first I responded by attempting to set my hook in the phantom fish. He would then chuckle. I soon learned to ignore his antics until one time I really did have a bite and a fish. I think that he was as surprised as I was.

Once he pulled this same trick and shortly thereafter I saw a skunk coming across the ice toward his fishing spot. Louie had his back to the skunk, so when I warned him, he did not take me seriously for he thought that I was attempting to fool him. When the skunk really appeared before him seeking a handout, Louie took wing across the ice lest he be sprayed by the skunk. It turned out that that skunk's long tail was so heavily covered with ice that it could not raise it even to walk across the ice. That skunk had obviously become accustomed to getting a handout from previous ice fishermen.

I have found that I enjoy ice fishing, but it does have its challenges and dangers.

A Near Record

Each winter we made several trips, usually to Granby, Antero or Eleven Mile reservoirs to fish through the ice. In most instances we caught fish and enjoyed the brisk winter scenes around us. One particularly cold morning, when the holes I had drilled through the ice, tended to quickly refreeze, I hooked a large fish that would not fit through the remaining hole in the ice. This was one of the big fish that I lost. I redrilled that hole and soon hooked another large fish. It turned out to be a near-record kokanee salmon. A member of the Colorado Fish and Game Department said that it might have been a state record if I had not waited over three days before I had it weighed. I caught

it on a Friday morning and had it weighed the following Monday morning. I did not know that I could have had it weighed at a meat market on a certified scale before witnesses to verify its weight. I had kept it in our refrigerator where it lost weight due to dehydration. A picture and story of this catch was noted in the Colorado Springs newspaper.

Amazing Facts

One time while ice fishing at Eleven Mile Reservoir one of my friends, Bill Keck, dropped his jar of salmon eggs down the hole that he had drilled in the ice. I was fishing near that same hole. About an hour later, as I was reeling in my line to check my bait, I felt a slight weight on my line. Bill and I were very surprised when I discovered that I had hooked the lip of the lid of Bill's salmon egg jar. Sometimes facts are stranger than fiction.

Another time, while ice fishing at Anterio Reservoir, another person, fishing a short distance from Louis Marsh and I, began calling to us to help him land what he thought was a very large fish.

When his catch finally appeared at the top of the ice, it turned out to be a very angry muskrat. It chased the man, who had hooked him, all over the ice. Finally it broke loose from the hook and rediscovered the hole in the ice from which it had been dragged. This was one catch that that person was surely relieved when it got away.

Risks Great & Small

Often, as we would travel to and from our winter outings, we saw a goodly number of wildlife: coyotes, fox, elk, deer, antelope, buffalo, rabbits and birds.

We also saw a number of wrecks, usually caused by driving too fast on snow and ice. One wreck we witnessed on Wilkerson Pass was tragic because seven out of nine persons riding in a station wagon died because of excessive speed, glare ice and a sharp curve.

Like each season, winter offers those who are adventurous, a great variety of wonderful experiences, but also a good number of risks.

Growing Up

One day my wife Jeane, who worked at the Barbara Davis Children's Diabetes Center, was attempting to assist a second grader to explore how he might begin to deal with his newly diagnosed case of diabetes.

In silence he wondered what life might hold for him.

Then Jeane found her little patient asking her, "Jeane, what are you going to be when you grow up?"

Jeane found herself answering, "I am not sure, but when we do grow up, we'll see, won't we?"

Some how or other, that was just the right answer to set this little boy's mind once more at ease.

Jeane then answered him by telling him that she wanted to become an artist.

Life is a continuing journey of discovery and in the fullness of time, when tomorrow becomes today in time, we may just see, hear, feel and know what each new day holds for the fulfilling of our days.

New Life

When our son was nearing the time when it would be possible for him to apply for his driver's learning permit; in his opinion, time seemed to stop. Each day, each hour, and even each minute passed with leaden hands upon the clock of our son's urgent impatience.

To assure us that he was ready, he spent some of his anxious energies on the family car.

Our family car has never looked so good since that time period. I am sure that the oil was changed once each week; the spark plug gaps were checked every other week; the vacuum cleaner almost wore out and a steady buildup of highly polished wax nearly blinded drivers in our neighborhood.

By the time the long awaited day had arrived, our son had memorized the driving manual from cover to cover. He and his friends challenged most of the adults of our neighborhood with possible driver's exam questions that those eager teenagers had devised. I do not believe that I have ever been quizzed on the driver's manual so thoroughly.

In a short time, the teenagers of our neighborhood were diligently saving their pennies to purchase their first cars: that, in most instances, were cars that had long since ceased to run.

When our son turned 16 he bought a 1969 Pontiac that was very much in need of repair. The former owner had badly abused and neglected this car. Truly this car was what many would have called a "fixer upper," even "a pile of junk".

At this same time a friend of our son, Chris Tennison, who was living with us so that he could complete his senior year at Boulder High School, had purchased a 1972 Buick, also badly in need of attention.

With a vision of that which could be; the idealism of youth and the expectancy of a miracle by God, these two boys set about dismantling, at the same time, both of these cars in our garage. Can you imagine 2 dismantled cars in one shrinking garage at one time?

In a brief time the nuts and bolts; fenders and hoods; engines and transmissions; batteries and alternators from both cars were boxed, bagged, shelved and scattered across the limited expanse of our garage.

Jeane and I seldom had to wonder where these two young men were, for school, jobs and car repairs occupied their many waking hours.

I could only pray, "How long, how long, O Lord?"

It is amazing how many of their friends came by to assess their progress and give them their expert advise on auto mechanics. It is simply astounding how much their friends knew about car repair, even though most of them had yet to own or even drive a car. Even so, their interest and presence seemed to encourage, empower and impress our 2 would-be mechanics to carry on their efforts to restore to running condition that which I would have long ago given up for lost. I confess that I was one, in this instance, who had little faith in the eventual outcome.

I also must confess that there were times when I had thought, "If only they had not begun this project; if only they had not attempted to tackle two cars at the same time."

Spring, summer and fall came and went.

Salvaged parts, new parts, repaired parts and rebuilt parts added to the growing collection of automobile parts assembled in our garage.

Then one Saturday, wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles, as I was tuning on the TV to watch a Denver Bronco game, I heard not one, but two engines struggling to remember a long forgotten sound that I never believed I would ever hear from those cars. The engines of the two cars were actually sputtering as if they might return from their graves.

After some major and then minor adjustments the cars' engines finally roared smoothly to life.

Somehow or other the vast array of nuts and bolts, pistons and rings, carburetors and brake shoes of a 1968 Pontiac and a 1969 Buick had found their way back to their rightful places in various degrees of renewal so that they actually showed promise of offering transportation to their never-doubting owners.

New seats, much Bondo, new paint, much insurance, a new window and inspection stickers soon had the 2 cars on the road again.

I had long ago given up on the prospect that those cars would ever go anywhere, except to a junk dealer. O, I confess that I was one, in this instance, who had little faith in the eventual outcome.

Who would have believed that two amateur mechanics, with no prior experience, could possibly reclaim cars that even the junk man might have turned down?

Soon new life had been breathed into the skeletons of not one, but two cars that had barely avoided being given up for dead.

At that moment I remember thinking that, "It seemed only yesterday that these two young men had been dependent children. Overnight they had discovered a growing degree of self esteem, independent assurance and creative ingenuity."

Then in the fullness of time, we reinherited our family car. Thanks be to God!

In the fullness of time, a transformation, built into the timetable of God's wisdom, had come into being.

The National Bison Range

Whenever we visited mother in St. Ignatius, Montana, we enjoyed visiting the National Bison Range near her home.

After entering the Bison Range, we would register at the visitor's center and museum. Then we would drive the 26 miles of winding, dirt Bison Trail Loop. It seldom took less than 2 hours as we viewed and photographed elk, bighorn sheep, deer, antelope, bear, grouse, herds of buffalo and beautiful scenery throughout our travels.

An early morning or a late afternoon trip to the Bison Range always allowed us to view a good number of wildlife. Many of the animals we photographed were outstanding examples of their species. Once we were on the trail, we had to remain in our car, especially when buffalo were near, until the road led us back to the visitor center and picnic grounds. A sign in the picnic grounds warned about watching for rattlesnakes, but we never encountered any.

I found the National Bison Range to be unique and always very special.

Jeane's Earrings

For many years my wife wore little jewelry.

One day I was going through our Master Card bill and discovered a charge at a place called the Piercing Pagoda. I thought that it was a mistake, or that Jeane had bought something at a Buddhist bookstore. I asked Jeane if she knew something about this charge. She asked me, "Haven't you noticed?" "Noticed what?" I responded. "I had my ears pierced for my fiftieth birthday over a month ago," she replied. Obviously I had not noticed that her ears were pierced, and I admitted that I was a bit surprised.

Shortly thereafter, Jeane and I traveled to Saint Ignatius, Montana to visit my mother. One day, after Jeane had taken a shower, following a dusty drive over the 26 miles of dirt road of the National Bison Range, Jeane asked me, "Does mother's tub have a trap in it?" I was unsure what she was asking. To what kind of trap was she referring? Then she explained, "I lost the pair of ear rings that our daughter, Bonnie had bought for me down the tub's drain. Does the drain have a trap in it?" I assured her that mother's tub had no drain trap and I told her that I was sorry for her loss.

On the way home to Colorado Jeane wrapped up her remaining pair of specially purchased, genuine pearl earrings in Kleenex and placed them in my shirt pocket for safekeeping. When we stopped for the night at The Pinnacle Lodge outside of Dubois, Wyoming, I used the bathroom. Just before I flushed the toilet, I noticed some Kleenex in my pocket. I threw it in the toilet and flushed. Almost immediately, I remembered why I had Kleenex in my pocket. Hesitatingly, I asked Jeane if she thought that the motel's toilet had a trap in it. Her response was, "Oh no! You didn't?"

Her newly pierced ears would have to wait a bit longer for a new pair of earrings.

Flathead Cherries

Whenever Jeane and I visited my mother and Bert in St. Ignatius, if the cherries were being harvested on the east side of Flathead Lake, they joined us for a picnic at Flathead Lake. If my brothers were with us, I encouraged one of them to join me picking ripe cherries. Because the cherries were so abundant and so large, we were often surprised to discover that in a very short time we had picked 40 or more pounds of cherries. They were always delicious, juicy and crisp.

One summer my brother, John and I picked so many cherries that we stayed up until 2 a.m. canning pints and quarts of cherries for Jeane and I to take home to Colorado. We also left several boxes of canned cherries for mother and John to enjoy later that winter. Fresh Flathead cherries are among the very best cherries we have ever eaten.

Repainting Mother's House

In the summer of 1999, when many forest fires were raging across Montana, some near mother's home, mother decided that it was time to repaint her house in St. Ignatius. For five long 12-hour days, with forest fire smoke all about us, my brother, John and I scraped peeling paint, caulked an endless number of cracks, and masked windows and doors. Since the house had never been primed, I applied an initial prime coat of paint. The boards were so very dry and porous that they took almost two times the suggested amount of primer necessary to complete the prime coat. Then by brush I applied the first coat of one-coat-paint. It soon became apparent that a second coat of paint would be necessary. A neighbor, who was a professional painter, agreed to apply the last coat of house paint on a Sunday morning with his paint gun for a reasonable price. What a marvelous invention and time saver a paint gun can be in the hands of someone who knows how to use it well.

A year later, John and I constructed a wooden fence around two sides of the back yard and reroofed the garage all in one week.

During one of these work trips I also sold \$14 worth of a seemingly endless supply of mystery books that mother had planned to sell at a future garage sale. When I asked mother how she managed to accumulate so many mystery books she told me that friends and family members had given them to her and she read one mystery book a night when she couldn't sleep. Mother was a very prolific reader. I was surprised that among the hundreds of books there were no duplicates.

Visiting the California Redwoods & the Oregon Coast

From time to time Jeane and I have traveled to Oregon and Washington to visit with many of our family members. Each visit has been important to us as we caught up with events in the lives of those who mean so much to us.

On one occasion Don and Donna took us to Bandon on the Oregon coast. We enjoyed walking the beaches, photographing scenic sites, visiting a cheese processing plant where we sampled many kinds of common and exotic cheeses, sharing life stories and wonderful seafood fresh from the Pacific Ocean.

Then we traveled on to northern California to visit some of the Redwood Forest that my wife had never seen before except in pictures. We strained our necks as we marveled at the towering heights and tremendous circumference of the trunks of many of the trees that dwarfed us as we stood among them. A few of the redwood trees are among the oldest and tallest trees in the world. We imagined the many stories they could have told of historical events that had occurred during their very long lifetimes. We counted the innumerable growth rings of several of the stumps of trees that had been cut prior to a ban on cutting such regal giants of native timbers.

One stump had a deep cavity that had rotted out over the years in its center. Jeane and Donna found much pleasure pretending to be jack-in-the-box characters as they climbed down into the stump's cavity and bobbed up and down to a tune they sang together. A car of tourists drove by once as Jeane and Donna appeared from the cavity of the stump to the amazement of the car's passengers. Jeane and Donna laughed and laughed and laughed some more as they imagined what the tourists might have thought of their antics. Beautiful flowers, mosses and ferns grew in the shadows and roots of the redwoods.

On our return trip to Don and Donna's home in Myrtle Creek, Oregon, we visited an extensive indoor and outdoor shop where burls of many kinds of trees were on display to be sold. A good number of the burls had been carved into amazing pieces of art of many descriptions: faces, animals, bowls, benches, tables, swings, doors, door handles, window boxes, etc.

I enjoy the intricate smells and colors of wood, especially as they are being cut and carved. Perhaps this is one of the reasons I have tended to collect wood carving of fish, birds and wildlife.

Our trip with Don and Donna to the Oregon coast and the redwoods holds a special place in the vast array of Jeane and my life experiences.

[First Pitch for Zephyr's Game](#)

For many years our surname was last in the Denver area phone book. This became apparent to a good number of persons who let us know this fact. Periodically the Zyzniewski family receives a phone call, usually late in the evening, asking, "How do you pronounce your name or did you know that you were last in the phone book?"

One evening I received a call once more informing us that we were last in the Denver phone book. I was asked, "Did I know that the new semi-pro baseball team in Denver, that was replacing the former Bears Team, was going to be called The Zephyrs?" The person on the other end of line reminded me that, "The Zephyrs and my

last name began with a Z." I agreed with the caller. Then he asked, "Would I like to throw out the first pitch at one of the initial games of The Zephyrs?" I asked him who he was. He told me that he was Greg Korn.

Believing that this was yet another of the many prank calls I had received, I decided this time to go along with his ploy. I responded, "Sure, I would be thrilled to throw out the first pitch at a Zepher's game!" He then rattled off some dates and asked, "Would I be available the very first game that happened to be on a Saturday?" I told him that I had a wedding that evening. He then asked about Sunday. I told him that I would be preaching the morning of that day. He then asked about Monday. I told him that would be fine. He said that he would follow up this call with a letter of confirmation and let me know additional necessary details concerning our conversation. I told him, "Thanks!" and hung up. I was so sure that this was a prank call that I did not even tell my wife or children about it.

About a month later I received an official letter from Mr. Korn. Only then did I begin to recall the phone call I had received and written off. Fortunately the agreed upon Monday evening was free on my calendar. My wife agreed to support my "pro" baseball debut.

The Monday evening of my short lived baseball career arrived with foreboding clouds and growing gusts of Colorado's famous wind. We had never been to the Bronco stadium where the Zephyrs initially played their games, so we arrived early at the executive parking lot near the Pro Shop where our confirmation letter informed us we were to park. As I drove into the lot, a parking lot official informed me that I could not park in that lot.. Then he asked us to leave. Once more, I began to wonder was this a prank after all?

As I was backing out, I asked my wife to read once more the instructions concerning where we were to park. I returned to the parking lot attendant and asked him if this was the executive parking lot. He said, "Yes, and I was now to leave it!" I told him that I was to throw out the first pitch. His responses was, "Sure you are! Who do you think you are?" "This was not a bad theological question," I contemplated. I then showed him the letter I had received from Mr. Korn. After reading every word out loud, the gruff parking lot attendant immediately became apologetic. We were now greeted and treated as if we had suddenly produced another portion of the long-lost Dead Sea Scrolls.

I then asked him where we could find Mr. Korn? He told us Mr. Korn was in the Pro Shop.

Upon entering the Pro Shop, we were asked, "How can we help you?" Once more I found myself deliberating, "This was not a bad question for even church members to ask." Once more the confirmation letter assisted a helpful response.

Since Mr. Korn was in charge of most of the details behind the scenes, he was rushing here and there attempting to be sure that all was in order. I introduced myself and my wife to him and asked him where we were to go? He told us to follow him. He hurried off through endless corridors toward the upper grandstands. He ushered Jeane and me to an executive box seat that towered over home plate. He indicated that Jeane was to remain there alone until I joined her after I had thrown the first pitch.

Quickly he scurried down a ramp expecting me to follow. I rushed after him until I was stopped by an usher at the entrance to the lower grandstands. The usher insisted

that I had to have a ticket. I told him that I was with Mr. Korn and that I was to throw out the first pitch. His response was, "Sure you are! Who do you think you are?" The employers seemed to have this phrase as part of their official speech.

Just then, Mr. Korn realized that I was not with him. He looked back and shouted, "He's with me!" Everyone seemed to know Mr. Korn, so his word was enough for the reluctant usher.

Mr. Korn was already a whole flight of stairs ahead of me, so when he opened the gate and entered the field of play, I was still heading his direction. A policeman, who was guarding the gate to the field, stopped me when I attempted to follow Mr. Korn. He asked me, "Who do you think you are and where do you think you are going?" This was another good question we all might do well to ask. I told him that I was with Mr. Korn and that I was to throw out the first pitch. His response was, "Sure you are! Who do you think you are?" He added, "I have never seen you before in my life!" All of the attendants must have attended the same training session.

Once more Mr. Korn came to my rescue. Soon he was asking me if I could sing? I told him that I could, but wasn't I supposed to throw out the first pitch? He said that he could not find the singer who was supposed to sing the National Anthem. Fortunately, he spied the singer who was frantically waving and attempting to get his attention. She apparently had run into the same blockades that I had encountered.

When she entered the field she asked Mr. Korn about musical accompaniment. She was told that she would have to sing acappella. She became very nervous. This was not what she had initially understood.

Meanwhile, the catcher came to me and reminded me that he was a very good catcher. He told me that the Saturday evening guest pitcher, a prominent radio announcer, had thrown his pitch all of the way up into the stadium. Then he shared that the Sunday guest pitcher, another radio sports announcer, had thrown the ball and hit the umpire who was some distance from the plate with his back turned to the plate. Once more he reminded me that he was a good catcher. I asked him if I would have any warm up pitches. He said, "No! Just get the ball near my glove and I will catch it."

It was time for the game to begin. Mr. Korn introduced the lady who was going to sing the National Anthem. He handed her the mike and she began. Then she stopped, for no sound was coming from the speakers. She told Mr. Korn, "Apparently the sound system is not on." Just then her voice came over the sound system. Once more she began singing, but this time, due to her nervousness, she sang America the Beautiful rather than the National Anthem. Everyone in the stands seemed to believe that all was well, for they cheered after her effort. Maybe their minds were on something else or they also did not know the difference.

Then I was introduced. Have you ever delivered a pitch from a high and lifted up place without even an opportunity to warm up? After noting how the wind was now whipping the flags to shreds high above the scoreboard, I stepped up to the pitcher's mound, wound up and threw the baseball with all of my might. Mr. Ed Zern, the catcher held his glove right over home plate. He never moved it. My pitch hit the pocket of his unflinching glove. Of course the baseball took one bounce before arriving in his glove. Mr. Zern seemed very pleased. He signed the baseball and presented it to me. I still have it.

To my surprise, I was met at the gate leading from the field by several reporters and fans with the question, "What kind of a pitch would you say that you delivered?" "A curve," I quickly replied. "Some throw balls that curve just before crossing home plate. I happened to throw one that went down and then up after a momentary bounce off the ground right into the catcher's mitt," I responded.

Some of my friends were present in the stadium and joined Jeane and me in our box seat suite.

I had always read in the scriptures that "The first will be last and the last shall be first." So it was!

Mistaken Identity

Have you ever been accused of looking like someone else?

A few years ago I entered a Safeway Store in Parkhill, Colorado, and was greeted warmly by most of the people who worked there. They called me Joe and time and again they asked me how I was enjoying my early retirement. Apparently I must have looked like a person who had once worked in the meat department of their store. When I told them that I wasn't Joe and that I was not retired, inevitably they would say, "You sure remind us of Joe."

Communicating

I am reminded of a little boy in one of the Sunday School classes which my wife, Jeane was teaching. Jeane had invited me to join her class of kindergartners.

She introduced me as a preacher, and then asked the class members, "What do preachers do."

It would have been most difficult to have overlooked one of the little boys, for his eyes lit up and became big and most expressive. He had obviously had an insight and was bursting to share his vision with those about him, especially his teacher.

When called upon, he responded, "They eat you up!"

He thought Jeane had asked, "What do creatures do?", and he knew that creatures eat you up.

Miscommunication can cloud our responses and vision.

Support Needed

I recall the time that I was getting ready to perform a wedding in a large church I was serving. In order for everything to be heard in the large sanctuary of that church it was necessary to use a lavalier microphone.

Each time, before I would turn on the mike, I would warn those around me that once it was turned on, everything that they said would be heard over the speaker system. A moment before we entered the sanctuary, I reminded the attendants and groom of my previous warning. I then turned on the mike.

Just then, I heard the groom say to his best man, "God, am I nervous."

As we entered the sanctuary, a muffled chuckle spread like a wave throughout those assembled. Laughter was the last thing the already nervous groom wanted from his friends and family members.

The groom had spoken from the depth of his heart, yet many of those gathered had unintentionally added to his anxiety.

A Slipping Wedding Cake

There are many memories of weddings that I have conducted. Prior to one wedding, a bride asked her mother to bake a cake for her wedding reception. The bride wanted her cake to be similar to all of those that she had when her mother baked her yearly, childhood birthday cakes.

Needless to say her mother was a bit shaken by this request, for over 400 persons were invited to attend her oldest daughter's wedding. The bride's mother felt that she had enough anxieties and responsibilities to cover in preparation for her daughter's wedding without baking a cake that her daughter felt to be so important for her wedding reception.

After much discussion, her daughter's persuasiveness convinced the mother of the bride to commit herself to meet her daughter's earnest request.

On the hot afternoon of the wedding, a very exhausted mother delivered a beautiful wedding cake to the receptionist. The immense 4 layer cake was richly coated with a deep, creamy, white frosting. The bride was very pleased. She knew that her mother loved her very much. She knew that her wedding was going to be just the way she had dreamed it should be.

Prior to her wedding, the bride peeked into the sanctuary and found that most of those she had invited to her wedding were assembled.

Soon the mother of the bride and the father and mother of the groom took their places in the church pews. The wedding service had begun. Before the bride knew it, she and her father were proceeding up the isle to gather with the smiling groom and expectant attendants. The service took place just as she had hoped it would.

Then it was time for the reception. The bride was thrilled with the cake that her mother had baked with loving care. As the bride and groom began to cut into the second layer of their wedding cake, it began to slide oh so slowly off of the heavily frosted lower, foundational layer.

As the cake continued to slide forward, the bride looked up at her mother and asked, "What should I do?"

Her mother nervously responded, "Don't let it fall!"

As the bride hesitatingly reached out her hands to keep the cake from sliding any further, it slipped into her waiting arms and down the front of her beautiful wedding dress.

Once more she looked up at her mother, pleading, "What should I do now?"

Her mother's quick mind responded, "You're a married woman now, so it is time for you to begin making your own decisions!"

The Importance of Physical Touch

During a wedding reception I was reminded of the importance and healing found in physical touch.

Several children, who were attending a wedding that I was conducting, found it difficult to sit still prior to, during and following the wedding service.

One young boy was particularly hyperactive. Initially, at the wedding reception this child ran wild throughout the large dining and dance hall.

A major transformation occurred only when the mother of this young man took his hand and danced with him to the music of the disk jockey.

The touch of his mother's hand and a focusing of his attention, calmed that which had been chaos only a few moments previously.

The Grateful Dead

During my 8 years serving at First United Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado, it was not uncommon for funeral directors to call upon me to conduct funerals for persons who had no connection to a particular church.

Following one funeral at Howe's Mortuary, Norm Howe and I were riding together in the hearse heading for a graveyard. All of a sudden Norm remembered that he had another service that required him to be at the mortuary. He asked me if I would feel comfortable driving the body to the graveyard. I told him that would be OK. Just before he got out of the hearse, he told me to follow the police escorts to the cemetery. I thought that the cemetery was in Boulder, but it turned out to be in Louisville, Colorado.

Following the graveside service the two older children of the deceased asked if they might ride with me back to the mortuary that was close to Colorado University that they had attended. As we were returning, they asked if I might briefly swing through the campus that they had not visited since their graduations some 40 years previously. Since this slight detour would be hardly out of the way, I agreed to take one of the main roads through the campus that led to the mortuary.

Shortly after we began to drive through the campus, I became aware of a growing number of young adults running after the hearse. Soon there was a mass of young persons almost blocking our way out of the campus. They kept peering in the windows even as an increasing number of persons swept toward us from across the campus. Fortunately we reached the exit from the campus before we were totally

blocked by those whom I presumed were students. I could hardly imagine why they were so fascinated with the hearse. As I was waiting for the traffic to allow me space to leave the campus, I spied a sign that quickly unraveled the mystery of why so many young persons were so interested in the hearse I was driving. It turned out that "The Grateful Dead", a hard rock music group, was holding a concert on campus that evening.

When we reached the mortuary, Norm Howe was anxiously awaiting our return, for he needed the hearse for another trip to a cemetery. Little did he know that his hearse had been such an attraction.

Sometimes that which we hope to see is not what we will remember in the long run. I am sure that the two children of the deceased were equally surprised as I was. They probably remembered little of their tour of the Colorado University campus except for the mass of humanity that descended upon us as we traveled through the campus.

Teaching a Variety of Classes

in the many churches I served/teacher education classes; bible classes; theology classes; church history classes; new members classes; classes on social issues; communications classes; value clarification classes; arts and crafts;

Bethel Bible Training

In 1974, I was appointed to serve on the staff of First United Methodist Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado. One of my first responsibilities was to attend Bethel Bible training for two weeks in Madison, Wisconsin, so that I could begin an extensive series of Bethel Bible classes at First United Methodist Church.

The Bethel Bible series covered the old and new testaments in much detail. This course of study required considerable commitment, study, memorization and application of biblical insights.

The first Bethel Bible class that I taught was called the teacher phase. I was required to recruit 26 persons who would agree to commit themselves to gather for 2 1/2 hours each Wednesday evening for 2 full years during the teacher phase to prepare themselves to teach additional classes for another 2 years.

After these students completed the teacher phase, they were commissioned and each pair of newly trained teachers were sent out in teams of two to recruit and teach 20 more students what they had learned.

24 persons completed the initial teachers' phase. They taught 12 classes of students on Wednesday or Sunday evenings during the next 2 years. 223 students completed the initial congregational phase of the Bethel Bible study. A hunger for biblical knowledge and the application of this knowledge were becoming increasingly in evidence.

Meanwhile, I began teaching another class of the teacher phase. 22 students agreed to share in this class. This time I had each student sign up to take a turn in

assisting me to teach the weekly class. I gathered with the assigned student for 1/2 hour a month before that student was to assist me and we would agree what portion of the class the student would teach. Thus, each student received my personal attention one on one and the students gained pragmatic teaching experience. So often the teacher learns more than the students he or she is seeking to teach.

22 students completed this second teacher phase class. In pairs they recruited and taught 10 more congregational classes. I invited 2 of the students from the second teachers' phase to assist me with recruiting and teaching the third teachers' phase class.

187 students completed the 2nd congregational phase of the Bethel Bible study. The impact upon First United Methodist Church was very apparent. A desire to be of service within and beyond the congregation was very apparent.

In the 8 years that I served as a minister at First Church, over 3000 students completed the Bethel Bible classes. In a brief time many of these students were well numbered among the leadership of First Church and the community of Colorado Springs. Regular bible study became a part of most of their lives. Their biblical knowledge was no longer shallow or literal. Biblical principals were increasingly impacting the ways and purposes of their daily living.

Even though I adjusted some of the underlying theology of this Lutheran bible study, I found it to be basically sound and motivating.

In time the Methodist Church came out with a similar course entitled the Discipleship Bible Study. In the next churches I served, I taught the Discipleship course of study.

Mental Health Seminars

Beginning in 1974-1982, I served as the chairperson of a community coalition that planned and coordinated vital and relevant mental health seminars open to the public. They were planned in light of significant community mental health issues such as family life needs, educational concerns, ethical dilemmas, sexuality issues, etc. Expert keynote speakers, such as Dr. Carl Menninger, Dr. William Glasser and Ralph Keyes, were brought in from all over the United States and were supported by many Colorado Springs mental health, religious, medical and educational professionals. The El Paso Parent Teacher Association, First United Methodist Church, the Medical Wives association and the El Paso Mental Health Association sponsored these yearly offerings.

Admission fees were kept to a very minimal cost to make these seminars available to professionals and non-professionals alike. Excellent child care and an inexpensive lunch were also available during the seminars. These seminars were well received and made noticeable impacts upon communities and those in attendance. They were well attended with between 800-1000 participants of all ages attending each seminar. Attendees came from throughout the states of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and western Nebraska. Though the costs of bringing in expert, quality keynote speakers were high, we never failed to break slightly more than even in our expenses.

Following the Colorado Springs seminars, most of these speakers traveled on to Denver and conducted additional seminars in Denver sponsored by Denver's Mental Health Association. Considerably fewer participants attended the Denver seminars because they were limited to mental health workers who had to pay a much higher fee even though they received basically the same input as that which had been delivered at First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs.

Youth in Crisis Seminars

In 1975 and 1976, two day Youth in Crisis Seminars were held in March of each year to encourage early detection of problems among children and youth; to educate citizens about the needs of children and youth in area communities; to unify community efforts in meeting the needs, issues and concerns of children and youth and to initiate action to fill unmet needs of children and youth.

These seminars were co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters, the Mental Health Association, the El Paso County Council of Parents, Teachers and Students and the First United Methodist Church. Grants were received from the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges.

It was my responsibility to pull together this coalition of community groups so that we could secure 65 qualified resource persons to lead workshops, schedule and make arrangements for use of the facilities of First United Methodist Church, advertise and register participants, provide for nursery care and provide lunch for participants who wanted meals provided at a minimal cost.

These seminars not only focused the needs, concerns and potential solutions to current children and youth issues, but they also brought a new awareness to the vast number of community agencies and duplication of agencies that were attempting to reach out to children and youth. New dialogues sprang up among these agencies that had seldom, if ever, been approached before.

The children and youth of surrounding communities were richly enhanced by the workshops and dialogues of these seminars, and parents, teachers, judges, mental health workers, clergy and innumerable community agencies were enabled to become more proficient in their attempts to reach the real, current issues of children and youth.

It always amazes me how much can be achieved when avenues of sincere, open dialogue are enabled and potential real solutions are set in motion.

Questions of the Gospels

When I served Park Hill United Methodist Church and then Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church, I created and taught a course entitled "Questions of the Gospels". I began this course by assigning the students in my classes portions of the gospels to explore for questions found therein. The entirety of the 4 gospels were covered by these assignments. Each portion of the gospels was assigned to 2

students. They were to list the questions they discovered on tablets of paper. Questions such as , “Who do you say that I am?” and “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” were among these questions. All of the lists were then duplicated and passed out to each student.

For the next 46 weeks we explored the theology and meaning of these questions by answering the following questions: 1. Who was speaking when the question was asked? 2. To whom was this question directed? 3. What was the context in which this question was asked? 4. Were there answers found to this question within the gospel where this question was found? 5. Was this question asked in any of the other gospels? 6. What was the context of this question if it was found in other gospels? 7. What answers were discovered in other gospels where this question was found? 8. If you were asked this question, how would you answer it? 9. What implications does this question have for us today?

Over the course of this study we discovered that the questions of the gospels served as coat hooks for the messages of each gospel. These questions within the gospels became focal points around which the gospel writers shared their insights concerning Jesus’ life. By covering all of the questions of the 4 gospels in one course, we discovered how intertwined each gospel and question was with the whole message of the gospels and how relevant the biblical questions are for the living of our days.

[Leading Bible Studies at Nursing Homes](#)

While serving on the staff of First United Methodist Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I served as 1 of 5 clergy who led a weekly communion services for patients at Brady Hospital from 1975 - 1982.

Then while serving on the staff at First United Methodist Church in Boulder, Colorado, in 1984, during the Lenten season, our church staff decided to teach a six week bible course and serve weekly communion at three of Boulder’s nursing homes. The nursing home that I was assigned was the Beverly Manor Nursing Home.

On the first day of my Lenten study over 50 persons were gathered in the meeting room. I enjoyed teaching interactively, but I had no response from those gathered that first day. Many of the patients had been wheeled into this bible study simply to give them somewhere to go.

During the second class session two persons hesitatingly responded to some of the questions that I raised and several persons expressed appreciation for sharing in the brief communion service. They told me that communion was one of the experiences that they truly missed when they were no longer able to attend church services.

During the third class session over a dozen persons joined in the discussion of the bible passages. When I was getting ready to leave that day, three class members asked if I might give them the bible readings that they would discuss at our next gathering.

At our fourth class session seven of the class members were well prepared for our bible study. They had read their bibles and many additional study aids that they had their relatives bring them. Needless to say the discussion was lively and challenging. They sent me back to my church with a series of questions that they wanted me to research.

During class sessions five and six there were few who were not engaged in the class discussions. As I ended class session six I told them of my appreciation for them allowing me to share with them during their Lenten bible study. I confessed that I would miss them in the coming weeks. It was then that one of the class members stood up and shook her finger at me telling me that I was like others who had come among them; briefly offering them purpose and hope; and then dashing their rising expectations by deserting them in the midst of their vulnerability.

I then asked them if they wanted me to continue their weekly bible study and communion service? I need not have asked. For the next 6 years this was one of my favorite classes to teach, for these students were highly motivated and among those who could so easily have been overlooked and easily cast aside.

While I served Jefferson Ave. United Methodist Church in Wheat Ridge, Colorado, I held a weekly bible study and communion service at Arvada's Meridian Retirement Center from 1991- 2002. During this time period, this bible study and communion service was the only Protestant offering at that retirement center. In essence I was lent the privilege of serving as their resident chaplain.

I found that some churches were faithful in reaching out to their members who were in nursing and retirement homes, while many formerly active church members of other churches were numbered among the lost and sadly neglected.

A Transient Named Paul

Paul was a transient who came from time to time for assistance at one of the churches which I had been privileged to serve.

I was deeply moved one day by Paul's intention of kindness when he came by to share a gift with those who had reached out to him during his times of need.

Like many gold miners of old, Paul had believed that one day he would strike it rich in the hills around Boulder.

He had come that day to offer me and the church I was serving 3 full snuff cans which represented the first fruits of his many hours of gold panning. He believed that he had struck it rich and he was moved to share his wealth with others around him.

Who would have believed that such a kindness was within him. Yet Paul's offering reminded me that God intends to extend grace through everyone and everything within God's creation.

Some weeks later, Paul was to discover that his real wealth was not to be found in the iron pyrite, that he had believed to be gold, but rather in the spirit of his generous heart and thoughtful intentions.

It is through such little wonders that God reminds us of God's invitation for us to share in God's ongoing work of creativity and blessing.

Painting the Main Sanctuary

When Paul was sober, he was an excellent painter. One year the trustees of First United Methodist Church of Boulder were considering the possibility of having the main sanctuary painted since it had not been painted since it had been constructed. After receiving several estimates for this work and much discussion, due to expenses, it was decided to put off the painting until a later date.

Because the lower section of the sanctuary was very much in need of new paint, I decided to recruit Paul to help me paint what we could with many gallons of paint that were donated by one of the church members.

In one short week Paul and I had completed painting all of the lower 2/3rds of the sanctuary and the north wall all of the way to the ceiling. The next week we tackled the south wall all of the way to the ceiling. Only the custodian knew that we had been painting the sanctuary even though the smell of paint lingered in the church for several weeks.

The next time the trustees met, they entered the sanctuary and decided that it was not in need of painting after all. Little did they know that it had been freshly painted at a cost much less than they had believed it would have cost.

The main sanctuary was not painted again until another 17 years passed. The commercial painters were paid considerably more than Paul and I had been paid in dollars, for our efforts were donated.

Our pay and that of the donor of the paint was great in knowing that we had quietly made a significant contribution to the glory of God.

Fund Raising

During much of my years of active ministry I was privileged and took pleasure helping raise funds for and awareness of community and church non-profit endeavors.

In 1980, I coordinated the El Paso County Clergy United Way Fund Drive. At the end of this fund raiser, I was told that our efforts and results were among the best that the clergy section of the United Way Drive had experienced up to that time.

In 1989, I co-coordinated the Boulder churches response to a major forest fire on Sugar Loaf Mountain near Boulder. Many of the residents caught up in this fire needed assistance to return to homes that needed much repair following this forest fire. The Boulder churches of many denominations readily donated in response to these local needs.

In 1998 and again in 1999, I was asked to help collect funds for Muscular Dystrophy from among the members of the church I served and the surrounding communities. In 1998, I missed reaching the \$12,000 goal that I was assigned by the

coordinating committee. I fell short by \$300. In 1999, I more than reached my assigned goal of \$15,000.

In 1999, I assisted the children of Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church to collect funds for the Heifer Project. The Heifer Project is a nonprofit organization that raises funds to assist families across the world to become increasingly self sufficient by helping them to secure flocks of chickens, ducks or geese; herds of goats, pigs, cows, lamas or water buffalo; and necessary training to raise, protect and share the first off spring of their animals with others from among their communities. When the children got behind this fund raiser for others, pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and dollars came from the children's allowances, their parents, friends, neighbors and even strangers. The children of Jefferson Avenue UMC were able to provide funds to secure a flock of chickens and a herd of goats for two families.

One of the ways that the children experienced what their offering of chickens would mean to those who received a flock of chickens was when they secured fertile chicken eggs and watched them hatch. Eventually these baby chicks were presented to a family that raised them; helped raise additional funds for the Heifer Project by selling eggs; and shared in telling the ongoing story of how important each gift can be to persons across the world.

Beginning in 1995, I was recruited to assist preparing an annual chicken dinner to help raise funds for local Habitat for Humanity projects. Jim and Linda Richards, Glen Spaur and I purchased, cooked and served a full meal of chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, salad, rolls, beverages and desert each year for well over 200 persons. This annual meal not only provided good food, but it also offered wonderful fellowship and an opportunity to inform those gathered about the past, present and future projects of Habitat for Humanity.

Another major fund raiser that I helped coordinate was an annual salmon bake to assist purchasing materials for the Volunteer in Mission projects of the Boulder United Methodist Mission Partners.

Individuals pay their own way to join BUMMP teams of persons who seek to respond to the construction, educational, medical and disaster needs of churches and communities across the world.

The annual salmon bake began in 1984 when a coalition of Boulder United Methodist Churches traveled to the Keni Peninsula of Alaska to assist adding a major addition to the North Star United Methodist Church in Nakiski, Alaska. In three short weeks we completed most of the necessary construction. Our 3 teams were truly dedicated, determined, talented and called by God. North Star UMC is now a leading church on the Keni Peninsula.

One of North Star's church members offered to provide free salmon to help us raise funds for this effort. I had assisted Craig Ralston for a month the previous summer as he began gill netting salmon on a site that he had newly purchased. When I refused to receive a portion of the profits that we made that summer, Craig made the mistake of suggesting that if I ever had need of salmon, just let him know. I have followed up on this invitation each year since. Craig provides free salmon each year and BUMMP pays for the boxing and shipping of the salmon. Craig has been a very significant part of the mission efforts of Boulder, Colorado. Literally thousands of

pounds of salmon have been donated and served in our efforts to share as volunteers in mission.

Among the many volunteer in mission projects that BUMMP teams have responded to across the world have been projects in: Mexico, Chile, Argentina, India, Russia, Kenya, Uganda, Utah, Alaska, Montana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, California, Wyoming and Colorado.

What a difference each and every one of us can make, especially when we are moved by the call of God to share our blessing with others.

Work with American Indians

Among the Christmas offerings of 1976, extended by the members of First United Methodist Church of Colorado Springs, Colorado, were numerous Christmas gifts gathered and presented to children and families of the Navaho Indians of New Mexico. Rev. Fred Yazzie, the first Navaho to become a United Methodist minister, came with his family to receive the Christmas gifts on behalf of members of his congregation and tribe. Many of the families Rev. Yazzie served would have received very few gifts for Christmas had First UMC not shared their blessings with Navaho families. When the Yazzie family returned to their work on the Navaho Reservation, their truck was overflowing with gifts and their hearts were filled with the assurance that they were not alone in their concern and efforts to reach out to the many Navaho families they served.

During the school year, Rev. Yazzie and his family housed and fed a dozen or more Navaho children who would not have been able to go to school if they had remained in their family's homes, for most of these children lived 50 or more miles away from any school on the Navaho reservation.

During the summers of 1976 and 1978, members of First UMC traveled to Rev. Yazzie's home to help build additions to Rev. Yazzie's parsonage so that those boarding with the Yazzie family would not have to be crowded into limited bedrooms and of necessity, sleep on the floor. New rooms, bunkbeds, mattresses, bedding and a large supply of food enabled Rev. Yazzie to provide more comfort and nourishment for those who depended upon his assistance.

Burton & Mary Kirby, members of First UMC, and I felt called by God to spearhead this effort to assist Rev. Yazzie and the Navaho children.

When we learned that the Air Force Academy was throwing away wonderful, wool uniforms of graduating cadets each year, we discussed the possibility of securing these perfectly good castoffs so that we might recycle them on the Navaho, Sioux and Blackfoot reservations. It took almost 2 1/2 years before we were able to finish going through the endless red tape of the Air Force procedures. Then removing insignias, boxing, labeling, transporting and being sure that responsible persons were ready to receive these excellent articles of clothing had to be arranged. Many Indian children and adults were blessed by these gifts of warm clothing.

Each year over 1 1/2 semi truck loads of Air Force Academy clothing found new homes on the reservations.

Because the clothing needed to be resized, especially for children to wear, we soon learned that sewing machines were needed. Most of the sewing machines had to be treadle sewing machines because electricity was not available in many locations across the reservations. We made a plea for treadle sewing machines and in a brief time we delivered these machines to the homes arranged across the reservations. In many instances we found ourselves spending a half of a day teaching a group of women and a few men how to use their newly acquired sewing machines. The delivery of sewing machines and teaching sessions took much of one summer. Designing other uses for the excess wool clothing took much of the next winter. Many of the Indian dolls sold on the reservation were clothed in scraps of wool from Air Force Academy clothing. Sarapies and wool blankets also contained wool that would have been cast away in the landfills of Colorado Springs.

This was not the only effort that Burton and Mary and I felt called upon to reach out to the children of the world who were in need. When we learned from missionaries of Haiti that the children, who were attending missionary schools in Haiti, had only one book for each cluster of 20 children, we contacted local schools in Colorado Springs and found that endless number of perfectly good books were being sent each year to the local dumps because more current books had been purchased or because there were not sufficient numbers of books available for every student to have a book of his or her own. Soon many of these cast off books found a new home in Haiti at United Methodist mission schools.

First the books had to be sorted, boxed and labeled; then free transportation had to be secured; next a Florida United Methodist Church was contacted to provide storage until free shipping on ships and airlines could be arranged and then the missionaries had to be notified where they could pick up the shipments of books. All of this was arranged by a small committee of volunteers led by Burton and Mary Kirby and myself.

I am always amazed how few people it takes to do so much for so many. Even so, I should not be surprised, for Jesus initially gathered only 12 disciples to do so much that is still touching the heart strings of an ever-growing number of persons across the world and so many generations.

[Handiworks of the Spirit](#)

Much of the handiwork of God's Spirit is discovered almost serendipitously where two or more persons are gathered together sharing and serving along pathways God has lent to their care.

[So It Was at Rinn UMC](#)

I was leading a team that was adding a major addition to a 100 year old church building that soon would be surrounded by a massive number of new homes. This 100

year old church had once been considered a country church east of Longmont, Colorado.

After we had framed, roofed, wired, plumbed, and insulated the new addition, three of us remained at the work site after the majority of volunteers quit for the day. We remained to cut a major doorway from the new sanctuary into the old sanctuary

That morning our UMVIM (United Methodist Volunteers in Mission) worship service had focused on the promised land of Moses' vision, a land of milk and honey.

The cut was right behind the altar of the old sanctuary.

As we made our cut, it soon became evident that we were cutting into a beehive filled with combs of honey. Little did the Rinn congregation know that right behind the altar of their old sanctuary there was a honeycomb over 3 studs wide.

God does work in strange and mysterious ways.

Berkley UMC Reconstruction Project

In three days I coordinated a 72 member team of United Methodist Volunteers in Mission who gutted a long neglected church facility and refurbished its interior and exterior: replacing ceilings, lights, flooring, doors, windows, landscape, and paint.

Since the sanctuary did not have any windows, when an opportunity to acquire two beautiful stained glass windows arose, the head of the trustees asked if we might be able to cut through the stucco which was covering the exterior of the building and frame them into the upgraded sanctuary.

We agreed to undertake this additional need and request.

As we began to make the initial cut in an appropriate place for the sanctuary windows, we discovered that behind the stucco there was already a beautiful window of stained glass that had carefully been covered over.

Before the project was completed, we discovered and uncovered a total of 7 wonderful stained glass windows, 2 of which were over 2 stories high. Only a very old neighbor remembered these windows. No one recalled why they had been stuccoed over. Some believed that they were covered to close out some of the noise of traffic on Sheridan Boulevard.

On that day the mysteries of God's wonderful ways united the hidden efforts of past builders with the able intentions of the today's volunteers.

Church Meal Fund Raisers

Coordinating, preparing, and serving church fund raising meals has been a part of my many commitments throughout the churches I have served since I moved to Colorado in 1968.

In 1970 the activities of the Lakewood United Methodist Youth required more financial support than available in the church's annual budget. There was also a need for additional community activities that would draw potential new members into the

ministries of the church. Thus began an annual pancake breakfast sponsored, prepared and served by the youth of Lakewood UMC.

The meal of pancakes, syrup, sausages, fruit, coffee and milk was served from 7 a.m.-2 p.m. and drew hundreds of people each year from throughout Lakewood, Wheatridge and Arvada. Not only was there an abundance of good food served, but a new sense of broadened community and fellowship expanded Lakewood United Methodist Church's involvement in assisting neighbors to become acquainted with one another as they broke bread with one another around tables prepared for them. Much of the youth budget was raised during these pancake meals.

In 1982 I became a member of BUMMP (Boulder United Methodist Mission Partners). From 1983-1990 I served as Chairman of BUMMP.

In 1982, a need for additional funds to support the mission outreach of the Boulder area United Methodist Churches became increasingly apparent. Thus began a series of fund raising meals. At first our meals were planned with menus in harmony with the nations we were hoping to serve. Initially, Mexican dishes were prepared. Among the dishes was a smorgasbord of tacos, chili, chili rellenos, burritos, salads and sopapillas.

In 1983, I had been invited by a friend, Paul Ralston, to join him for a month to assist his son Craig to begin commercially harvesting salmon at a gill net site they had purchased on the northeast side of Cook Inlet. This was an exciting, new experience for me. It taught me to deeply appreciate the timing, work, dangers and beauty experienced by those who provide sea foods for our tables.

One day, as we separated salmon from the 300' X 20' nets into our boat, I shared with Craig the mission ministry plans of the Boulder area churches. I told him of the fund raising meals we had served. Craig shared with me plans his small church had for building a much needed and expanded church facility. I suggested that maybe the Boulder churches might be willing to assist his church to fulfill their dreams. Then I mentioned that a salmon dinner would surely be a big draw in Colorado and a helpful motivation for bringing together a group of volunteers to assist the North Star United Methodist Church with their construction efforts. I asked Craig how difficult it might be to have some salmon purchased and sent to Boulder some time in the near future. He then made an offer to donate salmon if we were willing to cover the cost of shipping.

Soon a much anticipated tradition of a yearly salmon dinner was born.

Early in 1984, plans were set in place to help build the North Star United Methodist Church near Nikiski, Alaska. In the summer of 1984, 3 teams of able bodied volunteers contributed significantly to the construction of the North Star UMC.

Additional Boulder mission volunteers have since assisted with Alaska church construction in Wascilla and Homer churches and a team of 9 painted the exterior of Soldotna United Methodist Church. Over the course of the many years since 1984, Craig and Linda Ralston have contributed literally thousands of pounds of fish for this annual mission fund raising event. Funds raised from these salmon dinners have been spent only of materials necessary to support teams which have paid their own way and served in many mission areas across the globe: Mexico, Nicaragua, Kenya, Russia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Colorado, Arizona, new Mexico and Texas.

While at Park Hill UMC in 1989-1992, I prepared and served a good number of meals to cut costs and supplement the fellowship and celebrations of our church. Lenten meals, men's banquets and hamburger fries were among them.

For a mere \$3, I led a team of four members in purchasing, preparing and serving a full Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings for over 750 persons in celebration of Rev. Jim Calhoun's time of ministry among us.

In 1993, Jim Richards, Glen Spar and I began an annual fund raiser in which we prepared and served a salmon dinner and also an additional chicken dinner to help raise funds for the mission efforts of the Jefferson County United Methodist Churches. These funds assisted mission teams to work on projects in Oklahoma, Mexico, Colorado, California and with Habitat for Humanity.

During my 10 years as minister of Jefferson Avenue United Methodist Church, we raised over 1/6 of the yearly church budget by preparing and serving a variety of meals. Among the meals were turkey dinners, spaghetti dinners, corn beef and cabbage dinners, pasty dinners, Mexican dinners, chicken dinners, stuffed pepper dinners, lasagna dinners and soup and chowder meals. A much needed deepening of fellowship added to the life of Jefferson Avenue UMC.

Necessary funds were raised, but the real benefits came in the increased involvements, fellowship and outreach to the local communities and churches as we broke bread together.

Learning to Use a Computer

It is amazing how much we tend to take for granted. Until my faithful church secretary in late November of 1993, found herself moving to California where her husband had been transferred, I had never learned how to use a computer. Up to that time, I had not even opened a computer even though my son was significantly skilled and involved in his work with computers. I assumed that my secretary could accomplish any computer work that I needed to have done.

A substitute secretary was not available throughout December.

Since Advent and Christmas seasons were full of worship services that required worship bulletins, announcements and scripts, I found myself having to choose between the use of a manual typewriter or a computer that was at best foreign to me.

One of my church members offered to teach me the basics of using Microsoft Word on our church computer. I gave it a try and somehow or other managed to produce, with some assistance, acceptable copy for the many services needed during Advent and Christmas.

In 1994, Jeane and I bought a user-friendly Macintosh computer. With the assistance of our son we learned to put that computer to much use. I still use it to this day. Additional computers have come and gone during our life journeys, but I have found that the Mac has been a very good beginning instrument.

Roses and the Old Couple

Since I have retired from the active ordained ministry, I have been working at COSTCO part-time as a person who shares samples of products for the customers. I enjoy people!

There are many interesting persons who come into the store where I hand out samples.

One year on Valentine's Day an older couple stood in front of a large portable shed COSTCO was selling across from my sample cart. They stood there for a considerable amount of time. I noticed that every time a man came down the aisle with a cluster of roses in his hand or cart, the elderly woman would glance longingly at the roses and then coldly at the old man standing next to her. This went on time after time.

After a while I heard the elderly man say to the woman next to him, "Why are we looking at this shed? We have no need for one." She responded, "Oh, I am not so sure about that!"

Soon the old man grew restless and came across the aisle to check out the samples I was distributing. I am not sure that it was the samples he was seeking as much as someone with whom to share his questions and growing impatience. I handed him a sample. Almost unconsciously, he asked, "Now why would she want a shed?"

I asked him how long they had been married? He said, "54 years."

Just then I saw another man with a bunch of roses walking down the aisle near us. In response to the elderly man's inquiry, I suggested that he pay attention to his wife's reaction to the man with the roses. He did. Once more the elderly woman looked sadly at the roses as the man carrying them passed by. Then she looked across the aisle at her husband and gave him a crusty glance.

He responded, "Now what's the matter with her?"

After 54 years of marriage, he still did not know his wife.

I then asked him, "Have you bought roses or anything else for your wife for this Valentine's Day?"

He said, "No, this is not my habit."

I suggested that he might form a new habit.

A light appeared to come on. He rushed on down the aisle leading to where the flowers were being sold. In a brief while he returned to his wife and I overheard him ask, "What color do you want: red, white, yellow, pink, or purple?"

In a harsh tone, she responded, "What are you talking about?" He exclaimed, "Roses, dear! Roses! What color roses do you want for Valentine's Day?"

Instantaneously, her coldness of attitude and hurt of heart melted. She quietly suggested that red was the color most appropriate to symbolize one's love. Off they went, I assumed, to get some roses.

Not long after, the elderly man returned to thank me. He said, "You might have saved my marriage!"

I asked him where his wife was?

He said that she was at the checkout booth paying for the roses she had chosen.

Something in me thought, "He is sure a slow learner, but I guess that he has made the first step in responding to one of her needs."

This past year I hoped that I would see this couple once more on Valentine's Day to see if he remembered, but alas I did not.

Replacing Our Kitchen

In 2007, Jeane and I decided that it was time to upgrade our kitchen. Whenever the two of us were attempting to cook or wash and dry dishes at the same time, we found ourselves running into one another. A large counter and storage unit separated our kitchen from our dining area. We decided that it was time to remove that barrier and replace our deteriorating stove, refrigerator, sink, dishwasher, microwave and cabinets.

During the first week in June we began to remove many of these items from our kitchen and dining area. Soon only bare necessities were to be found in the kitchen and dining room. The refrigerator was moved to the den and the stove was sent to a recycling center. Flooring was stripped down to the sub-floor and new backer board was screwed in place. Wall sockets were upgraded, aluminum wiring was replaced and unnecessary ceiling soffits were removed from two walls and the ceiling providing space for larger cabinets.

In the process of removing the soffits, we discovered that our attic only had three inches of insulation throughout it. We decided to confront this deficiency by installing R38 bats of insulation throughout the attic. This addition of insulation has saved over 1/2 of our heating bill each year.

Discarded sheet rock, flooring and unusable cabinets were sent to the dump. The sink, used dishwasher, food disposal and light fixtures were recycled at the Habitat for Humanity distribution center. New appliances were purchased. Sheet rock was installed. Cabinets and countertops were ordered. New paint was spread and after the cabinets were installed, new ceramic tiles were laid. Soon the countertops were installed and the sink and dishwasher once more were connected. In time a new light took its place above the sink.

Throughout those many weeks of construction, most of our meals and dish washing were done on the outdoors patio. The microwave, barbecue, Coleman stove, crockpot, rice cooker and Westinghouse roaster sure came in handy. Many thanks go to Jim and Linda Richards for their constant encouragement, knowledgeable hands-on assistance, and cost cutting insights. Thanks also go to Bob Adair, Don Dirks and Bill Youngblood for their able help at various points throughout our reconstruction work.

Jeane and I are very pleased with the amazing transformation, openness and beauty of our new kitchen/dining area space.

After twenty five years of waiting, our new kitchen and dining room are dreams that have come true; long awaited and much needed practical and aesthetic additions to our home.

With little doubt our kitchen will increasingly be a significant working center of many of the activities of our household.

Finishing Our Basement Bedroom

During the spring of 2009, I decided it was time to upgrade as large basement bedroom in our home. I began by removing all furniture, boxes and clothing from this room. I then took down the ceiling tiles, most of which were in bad shape. Next, a friend of mine, Jim Richards, helped replace the aluminum wiring and plugs in that room. Then we hung sheetrock and replaced the ceiling light with two new fixtures. For the first time in my life I found myself texturing sheetrock. I learned much from this experience. Jeane chose the paint and I painted the entire room.

Soon it was time to pull up the old carpet that had been in the room for more than 30 years. After the carpet was removed, I found that the cement floor needed some repair. When I repaired the floor cracks and sealed the cement with a coat of Kilz paint, it was time to choose, purchase and replace the carpet. While ordering carpet, Jeane and I decided to replace the carpets in our living room, hallway and staircase also. I had painted and upgraded the wiring in the hallway, living room and staircase the previous summer. Piece by piece, week after week I disposed of the old carpet by stuffing carpet scraps in our garbage cans for the garbage man to take away. Over the course of the next month, most of our old carpet was gone. The new carpet sure looked and felt good!

As we began to return some of the furniture to the bedroom, Jeane decided that it would be essential for us to purchase new mattresses for this room. Soon the bedroom was ready for company. Within two weeks our daughter's family tried out this refurbished bedroom. They appreciated our efforts and accomplishments.

It felt good to have these rooms finally upgraded.

Closing Thoughts

It always amazes me when we dare to dream dreams; dare to explore new possibilities; dare to risk moving beyond established comfort levels; dare to let go of that which was once effective and to replace it with something more relevant to the here-and-now; dare to celebrate the joys and face the pains of our lives for the sake of growth; dare to invest in something that might possibly far outlive us; and dare to really listen and respond to God's Spirit moving in the precious moments, unraveling experiences and significant relationships of our brief time together here on earth.

It is then that the mysteries of God's Spirit once more reveal themselves in the possibilities of our intentional choices to become increasingly aware of and a vital part of sharing in God's ongoing, creative movements in life. It is then that we know ourselves called by God and those who journey with us to reach out in faith and fully participate in that which is and that which is yet to be and become. Thanks be to God!