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internationally known impersonator of Mark Twain and several biblical characters, including the gospel writer "John Mark." Not only does the man act, he also owns his own theater.

**Nothing In My Hands (Chapter 3), by Del Starr:** In this third installment of the continuing saga, Dianne's life goes from Great to Horrible, for reasons we could never have guessed.

**A Great Fish Speaks:** S M Chen takes a sharp turn with his prolific imagination this week and records the thoughts of a somewhat bewildered, but obedient, sea creature.

**Richard Garey One-Man Shows:** Learn more about the visual elements in the acting life of the SDA Twain-impressionist who never presents secular-themed material during Sabbath hours.

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**Summer 2015 Issue** A double-length pre-GC Summer Issue of *Adventist Today* has been posted on-line and extra copies (paper-and-ink) are available for sale by phoning 503 826-8600 during daily business hours, Monday through Friday. Response from readers has been excellent, and the magazine is being circulated to GC delegates worldwide.

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Scott is No Longer Pastor of the Adventist Congregation in Keene, Texas

By AT News Team, June 3, 2015: Rumors began to be passed around the clergy grapevine last week and now it is official that Pastor Jennifer Scott is no longer the leader of the nearly 3,000-member congregation on the campus of Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. The Keene Star reported yesterday a text message from Pastor Carlos Craig, president of the denomination’s Texas Conference, to Adventist pastors in the area.

Craig is quoted; “An administrative decision made by the Texas Conference and Pastor Jennifer Scott with regards to her employment” has result in her departure. “This was an employer administrative decision made … between employee and employer.” A for sale sign is in the front yard of Scott’s home, according to the newspaper.

Steve Stafford, the first elder of the Keene Church will address the congregation this coming Sabbath at both the 9:30 and 11:30 am worship services, the newspaper announced. It also stated that Craig will preside at a “town hall meeting” with the congregation at 7 pm next Monday, including “a brief question and answer session,” but primarily to “talk about the future.”

Scott has been unavailable for questions and no one answers her telephone. Speculation has run rampant.

Spectrum, the journal of the largest organization of Adventist academics, ran two stories about Scott’s departure on Friday and Saturday and on Sunday removed the stories from its Web edition and published a letter of apology. Managing Editor Jared Wright apologized in the letter “first to Jennifer Scott and the leaders of the Keene Church … to the Texas Conference … to the faculty of Southwestern Adventist University and Professor [Ingo] Sorke.” He had pointed out in one of the articles that Sorke is an advocate of male headship theology and speculated that fact may have contributed to resistance to Scott’s leadership in the congregation.

Reactions to Wright’s articles and “conversations with leaders in the Keene community” led Wright to withdraw the two news stories because, he wrote, “it became apparent that the situation leading to the end of Scott’s leadership … was very complex [and] reducing it to a single issue proved not only wrong, but also did injustice to the complexity of the situation.”

The outcome is particularly painful to those in hopes of a decision at the denomination’s General Conference Session the first week of July opening the door to the ordination of women serving as pastors in more places around the world. It began in the 1980s in China and started last year in several union conferences in the United States and Europe.

Scott became senior pastor of the Keene congregation less than two years ago. She was invited by a search committee to meet with the congregation in July 2013 and that fall moved to Texas to take the position. She had been pastor of the Adventist church in Shelton, Washington. Before that she had served as an associate pastor at the Loma Linda University Church in southern California and the Green Lake Church in Seattle.

Scott and her husband have a daughter and a son enrolled in the Adventist secondary school and elementary school in Keene, respectively. “I am really concerned about the impact this has on her family,” one pastor from Maryland told Adventist Today. “We should be praying for Jennifer and her family rather than playing politics with this.”

Due to the sensitivity of this story, Adventist Today has not opened the comments feature. If you wish to send a comment to the editors, address an email to atoday@atoday.org.
Scott is No Longer Pastor of the Adventist Congregation in Keene, Texas... http://atoday.org/scott-is-no-longer-pastor-of-the-adventist-congregation-...
San Antonio Media Question Use of Fire Truck to Fill Baptismal Pool for Adventist Evangelism Event

By AT News Team, June 4, 2015: Local news media in San Antonio, Texas, where the Adventist denomination will hold a massive meeting in four weeks, have questioned the use of a city fire engine at an Adventist church last Sabbath (May 30). More than 100 people were baptized at the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church, marking the conclusion of an evangelism campaign by the Breath of Life television ministry. A temporary, above-ground pool was used for the baptisms and it was filled with water by a San Antonio Fire Department unit.

KENS television Channel 5 reported Monday that the fire truck came out and filled the pool at the request of Rebeca Baquero, special projects manager in the office of the mayor, who is an Adventist church member. A spokesman for Mayor Ivy Taylor said it did not happen at the mayor’s request nor was the mayor present at the event.

The mayor “is catching heat” because of the event, stated the Express News, placing the reaction in the context of “a tense runoff election” between Taylor and opponent Leticia Van de Putte. It did not report where the idea came from that initiated news coverage.

When Channel 5 news talked to Fire Chief Charles Hood, he stated that he was aware of the request and “said the department has fulfilled similar requests in the past.” Deputy Chief Carl Wedige told the television station that “it took about $5 worth of water to fill the 5,000-gallon pool.” In response to questions by Channel 5 news personnel about the use of on-duty fire personnel for an event that did not belong to the municipal government, Wedige explained that a certain amount of time is planned for public relations and, along with training activities, these events provide opportunities for firefighters to get practice with their equipment.

Ephesus Church has 304 members and is an historically African American congregation which is part of the denomination’s Southwest Region Conference. There are 21 Adventist congregations in San Antonio with a total membership of more than 3,500 prior to the current evangelism projects underway in the city around the time of the General Conference Session.
Adventist Journal Backs Out of Deal Made with Readers in 1972

By AT News Team, June 2, 2015:  The flagship periodical published by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination has informed readers who purchased a lifetime subscription in 1972 that it will no longer honor the deal. The *Adventist Review* (AR) Gold Seal Program offered subscribers who made a one-time payment of $350 the promise of receiving the magazine the rest of their lives at no additional cost.

Those who are still living received a letter in May informing them that AR can no longer afford to honor the promise that was made to them 43 years ago. The letter said that the “healthy and vibrant publishing house we knew back then is now out of business.” The Review and Herald Publishing Association was closed down last year essentially bankrupt.

“Thankfully,” the letter continued, “Adventist Review is not going away … You can still receive your favorite magazine.” But the promised life-time subscription can’t continue. Instead, AR “would like to return to you the $350 deposit you made back then, minus $19.95, a “special promotional subscription price … to let you to continue enjoying it for one more year.”

The letter also made a fund raising appeal. “Having benefited from the magazine for all these years, you may want to give back a little, so that others may benefit just as you did, at least for one year. If so, we will gladly put [the $350] to work on your behalf for our New Believers Program, which allows us to make a subscription available for one year to any recently baptized individual, absolutely free of charge … As a way of saying ‘thank you’ for partnering with us on this program, we would then continue to send you the magazine, free of charge, for one more year.”

The response card enclosed with the letter stated that should the Gold Seal Program participant not return the card by June 30, it would be assumed that they would like to put their money into “the New Believers Program and to keep the magazine coming to your mail box for one more year!” They would receive a “donation receipt for $350,” the card said. If a Gold Seal Program participant decided “to pass up this offer and elect to receive the full $350 instead” their subscription will be canceled.

The equivalent of $350 in 1972 would be about $2,000 in 2015 dollars, a source told Adventist Today. The original concept of the Gold Seal Program was that the $350 would be deposited in an interest-bearing account and out of the interest, the cost for the subscription would paid “year in and year out, as long as the subscriber lived.” There are 100 individuals in the program still living.

“These are all senior citizens,” another source told Adventist Today. “They are long-time, loyal members of the denomination. A number were denominational employees. They are the kind of people who have read the Review every week for as long as they can remember.”
Summer Camp Begins: Adventist Tradition, Successful Evangelism and Young Adult Ministry

By AT News Team, June 3, 2015: In the next two weeks, Adventist summer camps will begin in about 60 locations across North America. Before the summer is over, some 25,000 to 30,000 children will participate and nearly 2,000 young adults are already arriving at the camp facilities this week to prepare. It is “our brightest young adults doing the most incredible mentoring of next generations,” observed Dr. Allan Martin, young adult pastor at the Arlington Church in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, who once served as professor of youth ministry at Andrews University.

Youth camps started among Adventists in the United States in the 1950s when the Baby Boom swelled the numbers of adolescents in the faith and concern about juvenile delinquency was at its height in the larger culture. It has become a formative experience for generations of youth growing up in Adventist families.

Each of the 58 local conferences in the North American Division (NAD) offers camps for several different age groups and with specialized focus each summer. Typically this will include a Cub Camp for ages 6 through 9, one or more Junior Camps for ages 10 through 13, and at least one Teen Camp for ages 13 through 17. Specialized camps for various age ranges include horse camp, ski camp, music camp, soccer camp and often a family camp where parents come along and participate as well.

It is one of the largest evangelism programs of the denomination with about 3,000 young people making decisions to become baptized members of the church each summer. About one in six of these are actually baptized while they are at camp, often in the swimming pool. Most are sent home with a letter from the camp pastor to the pastor of their congregation back home stating that they have requested baptism. The majority of summer camp attenders are already baptized before they arrive, according to a survey conducted by the Hancock Center for Youth and Family Ministry at La Sierra University.

The camp facilities are funded by the conferences, using a small percentage of the Tithe Fund. The actual cost of operations each summer are generally funded from fees that run about $250 to $300 a week. “Not a bad price for a week of feeding, housing and supervising an adolescent,” one parent told Adventist Today.

Summer camp fills an important niche in the youth ministry of the denomination for several reasons. One is that nearly two-thirds of the children who attend are not enrolled in Adventist schools, according to the Hancock Center survey. One in five rarely or never attend an Adventist church.

“It is not uncommon for an Adventist grandparent to send their grandchildren to camp,” a youth director told Adventist Today. “I was told by a woman last summer that she offered to pay for her grandchildren to attend an Adventist school, but the parents did not want to do that. Yet, they were happy for the kids to go to summer camp.”

It is one of the happiest things for Adventist young people. Three out of four attenders rated their experience at summer camp a nine or ten on a 10-point scale of “how much did you enjoy camp” in the Hancock Center survey. Not a single child out of 4,613 in the sample rated it below a four.

Adventist summer camps have had a very positive impact on the children who have attended over the past seven decades. Today’s adults often cite it as the most important experience they had with an Adventist ministry, even though they may no longer attend church. The Hancock Center survey found that 68 percent of summer camp attenders agreed that “it is important to me that I am an Adventist” and 59 percent agreed that it was important to “attend worship at an Adventist church.”
The summer camp experience also gave children an open, progressive perspective with 84 percent agreeing “I like to try new things,” 91 percent agreeing “I enjoy going to new places,” and 75 percent agreeing “trying new things is important to me.” It also gave young people a sense of respect and fairness toward others with 83 percent agreeing that “It’s more important to play fair than to win,” and 83 percent agreeing “I respect other people.” It also helped to build a strong environmental awareness and positive spiritual development.

The data at the top of this story about NAD summer camps was compiled in late 2013 from reports submitted by all of the conference youth departments to the NAD office. Adventist Today could not find similar data from the rest of the world. A search of the official General Conference Archives and Statistics web site yielded no worldwide statistics on youth camps. Sources have told Adventist Today that there are similar activities in Australia and New Zealand, and a somewhat different approach to camping in Europe, but no information could be obtained from Latin America, Africa or Asia.
Cat’s Paws

by Harry Banks, June 1, 2015: My sailing club is doing shoreline reclamation this spring and I haven’t been able to get my sailboat in the water yet, but I’ve been thinking about cat’s paws anyway.

Cat’s Paws? Yeah, that’s when the surface of the water is smooth, but there is a ruffle of waves coming your direction across the water, which sometimes looks almost like a giant cat silently padding across the water. It’s the wind. You can see the water tell you where the wind is coming from and where it is going. And when you know how to read a cat’s paw you can set your sail to head to your destination.

Tell Tails

Sailors also have little threads or ribbons on the rigging of the boat called tell tails. They also give evidence of the direction and the strength of the wind.

Cat’s Paws of the Spirit

Years ago I had an opportunity to attend a Church Growth Seminar at Ben Lippen campus near Asheville, North Carolina. Ben Lippen is a Scottish phrase which means Mountain of Trust. The campus was on a mountain overlooking Asheville in the distance. The president, Robert McQuilkin, had invited Donald McGavran, founding Dean and Professor of Mission, Church Growth and South Asian Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, to present a brief one-week Church Growth Seminar.

He was asking, “1. What are the causes of church growth? 2. What are the barriers to church growth? 3. What are the factors that can make the Christian faith a movement among populations? 4. What principles of church growth are reproducible?” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_McGavran)

At the beginning of the seminar he talked about learning to see where the Spirit is moving in a community, a region, or a country. For me that meant watching for spiritual cat’s paws. Where is the Holy Spirit moving? What people, what agencies is the Spirit using or able to use?

While parts of church growth theory may be dated now and not as helpful as some had hoped, I for one feel that the observation about watching for where and how the Spirit is moving in one’s area is a most valid lens for what he called “church growth eyes.”

Which got me to thinking about some of the signs of Spirit moving in my area, and maybe it will get more of us watching for those Cat’s Paws of the Spirit.

Observing the Surroundings

My students who are military veterans sit in the back of my classroom, back to the wall and corner, so they can observe the whole room. They have been taught to always be aware of their surroundings.

Sometimes in the “safety” of a local congregation, stories of faith seem inward focused. One of my wag friends calls this the “navel inspection station” (as in gazing at one’s own belly button). In my local congregation, my attracting rowdy kids to help with the sound and video booth attracted some disapproval from a less tolerant board and pastor. The year that followed ended with my receiving a letter calling me to a church business meeting to be disciplined for “strife making,” in spite of my willingly stepping down and telling the upset kids not to tear the system apart but to act like Christians and do their job.
As the business meeting unfolded it was evident the leadership of the church wanted to use church discipline as a form of personal retaliation. Parents of the youngsters who objected were also disciplined en masse. As Larry Downing (the AT columnist, not the Larry mentioned below) has so eloquently articulated, our church is ultimately congregational. At which point I decided that although I may see myself as an Adventist, I could not fellowship in good conscience with a congregation whose pastor and leaders resorted to misrepresentation and vindictiveness as a demonstration of their commitment to “the truth.”

(Some will offer a different view of these events. Some may think I’m being harsh, but let me assure you, I’m leaving out a lot of details. The only reason I offer this note is to explain how I began to start observing what was going on around me in my community. And, please don’t use this as an excuse to whine and carp about local congregations that struggle with actualizing grace and redemption.)

I have no idea what God has in mind for this congregation, I leave that in His hands. I just knew that I needed to take responsibility for my own journey and step away for a while. At least that way I could be assured I would not be “strife making.” In the transcript you can find a quote where the head elder said they had to look “really hard” to find strife making in the manual as a valid reason for church discipline but they “finally found it.” I thought that to be a most telling admission on his part.

But as they say in the movie Airplane, “That’s not important now.”

Starting to Look Toward the Community

The “disciplined” families began meeting in one of the meeting rooms at the city sports arena on Sabbath mornings. They needed a place to hunker down, lick their wounds and have a safety zone to heal. The conference president was notified, so that he would not hear about it through the grapevine but also to offer a direct line of communication if he chose to ask questions.

It Gets Interesting

Here is where it starts to get interesting. The little group called itself “Community Fellowship.” They met each Sabbath for a couple of months and then …

One day one of my adjunct instructors, Cathy, plopped herself in the guest chair in my office and said, “Have you heard what Larry is doing?”

In my mind I wondered, Who is Larry? And what was he doing?

Not only was Cathy teaching for me; she was working part time in my old Information Technology (IT) department for our local government. Here in Alaska we call it a borough, although in the lower 48 they are generally called counties. Our borough/county is nearly the size of West Virginia.

Back to Cathy. Not only was Cathy teaching for me, working in my old shop; she was renewing her personal walk of faith. I had worked at the borough for 17 years. From time to time two or three of my instructors were from the borough. I kept in touch and that IT department was like family to me. Cathy was part of that family. Larry was new, but he was still part of that family.

Larry, come to find out, was also working at the borough IT department. He was a former atheist, had found faith on his own, was a diligent Bible student, and was starting a Saturday morning Bible study group meeting at the local phone company’s education center. The group was called In His Steps Community Fellowship.

It all seemed too be orchestrated by an agency far above any organization we were part of. The Community Fellowship decided to meet with the In His Steps Community Fellowship.

Where Is the Spirit Moving? Where Is He Leading?

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Cat's Paws - Adventist Today http://atoday.org/cats-paws.html
So between Donald and his “Where is the Spirit working?” and Larry and In His Steps … Could it have been His will to have us step away from the local congregation? Did He need to work in a more individual way with the leadership of the congregation and with us? Were we being placed here?

Larry had envisioned an interdenominational place for finding and building personal faith as a bridge to a more formal affiliation with congregations that the individuals choose. What he got was a bunch of Seventh-day Adventists. He said he was meeting on Saturday so he wouldn’t compete with regular hours of worship, only to find a whole group of people for whom this was their hour of worship. It was even at 11 o’clock.

So like I was saying … between Donald and Larry … Lately I’ve been watching much more carefully for the Spirit’s moving.

So This Is Really What I Wanted to Share

I don’t know if you needed all that background but I thought it might help. So here in what appears to be a Divinely coordinated encounter, I have begun to see more and more evidence of the Spirit moving …

One day I passed the phone company later than usual on Sabbath and saw Larry’s car in the parking lot. I went in and found a group of eight or nine church planters discussing their various projects.

Two were working in prison ministries. They talked about the raw redemptive power of Christ in the animal pit we call prison, where there is absolutely no room for phoniness or halfway trust in God’s power.

Some were working with messianic ministries. They were observing Jewish feast days and practices. They participated in the Passover Seder service. But what got my attention was how they emphasized the essential need to love, totally love, their friends to Christ. They were planning on a minimum of eight years before they expected the first signs of their friends fully embracing Christ in their lives. They emphasized how when their beloved friends accept Christ it will bring separation from their heritage, disavowal from their families. They stressed how they must stand by their friends as they learn to fully trust Christ, and again how essential that love must be.

(By the way, did you ever notice that 1 Corinthians 13, the “love chapter,” is not included in our statement of 28 fundamental beliefs?)

Subsequently, Larry has stepped away from his borough position. He became Chief Information Officer, yet he quit his job to follow what he felt Christ was calling him to do … with no means of visible support.

Then he was hired as pastor for a small Baptist congregation, which he serves on Sundays while he continues to commit to the Sabbath community outreach at the phone company.

I’ve also had an opportunity to work with community people who are addressing issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault, child care, food for mothers and infants, alcohol and mental health issues.

No, none of this fits in my little orthodox box. But, is the Spirit moving in ways beyond my small understanding? Most definitely!

Messianic outreach, prison ministry, verse by verse in-depth personal Bible study, domestic violence, God directly converting an atheist with no denominational intervention. Compared to all that, arguments about ordination, headship, and age of the earth have seemed, at least from this context, almost irrelevant.

Until today … Today I was commenting at the group at the phone company on some of the age of the earth discussion. Three of us were talking. Larry said, “I really find that discussion interesting.” He mentioned a book entitled I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist and how evolution is treated as a law not a theory.

Where will this adventure go next? I don’t know. But I feel the challenge of J. B. Phillips’ book Your God is Too
So just for fun: If you were to look for the Spirit moving in your community, where would you look? What are you seeing? Where is the Spirit touching lives in down-to-earth practical ways? Where are Christians committing to love their friends to Christ over years, through thick and thin? Where is the Spirit using the humanity of the church to open to manifestations of God’s superior redemption and grace?

No, I didn’t tell you about all the cat’s paws of the Spirit I am seeing. But, looking at the tell tails around here, it sure looks like the wind is picking up. Hoist that sail! Set that jib! Keep your church growth eyes open … maybe even in San Antonio.

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8, NIV).
At the Garden Gate: A Choose-Your-Own-Ending Story

By Debonnaire Kovacs, submitted June 3, 2015; written in 2007, originally appeared in *Renewed and Ready* magazine.  *This week’s Old Testament passage is from Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve hear God coming and instead of running to greet him, they hide. I thought I’d share a story with you that I wrote some years ago. It is entirely imaginary, and happens some years (even centuries) after that event.*


I cover my eyes, shuddering.

What kind of God would ordain such a thing? My friend Sho’tet* says his spirit gods are better. They tell him this world was, after all, created for us. Our only duty is to enjoy it.

I went to the party at Sho’tet’s house last night. It was wonderful! Lights hanging in the trees, gleaming on the fountain, on silent marble figures, on lively human bodies. Jewel-bright fruit heaped on silver platters, drinks that sparkled in the throat. People dancing, singing, holding each other. *That* was a spiritual experience.

A loud voice drags my unwilling eyes forward again. Grandfather Adam is standing by the altar, his arms stretched to the empty heavens. Red drips from the knife and down his muscled arm. He is crying out, “Oh, Elohim, who is a God like you, loving us still, forgiving us—?” His voice cracks and his head sags. His shoulders are heaving. I want to look away, but can’t.

He is changing, our greatest grandfather. Different every week, it seems. His hair and beard are almost white now, curling down over shoulders that aren’t as broad as they once were. Even his great height seems diminished, and the hand that holds the sacrificial knife trembles.

Not that he doesn’t still tower over everyone else. People are all getting shorter, young and old. Shorter and shorter every generation, as if in the end we’ll be miniatures, like the little carved statues in Sho’tet’s garden.

Sho’tet says that’s Elohim’s fault, too. The Garden—I will *not* look that way—would have kept us young and strong forever. Instead it is shut to us all. My face twists into the familiar frown. It’s not fair! I didn’t eat from that cursed tree!

A movement catches my wandering eyes. Grandmother Eve has gone to her husband. She, too, is bowed and white-haired. Older than he, you’d think. That’s from all the birthing. Speaking of unfair…

I scrunch my scowl tighter, hoping bitterness will keep tears at bay, but it’s not working. Why does the sight of her arms, still strong and brown in the sunshine, holding him while he cries, why does that make *me* cry?

I will *not* look that way!

Movement catches my wandering eyes. Grandmother Eve has gone to her husband. She, too, is bowed and white-haired. Older than he, you’d think. That’s from all the birthing. Speaking of unfair…

I scrunch my scowl tighter, hoping bitterness will keep tears at bay, but it’s not working. Why does the sight of her arms, still strong and brown in the sunshine, holding him while he cries, why does that make *me* cry?

Sho’tet comes up beside me, slipping an arm around me, murmuring in my ear. “There you are. Such a good little Sabbath-keeper. Why do you keep on coming, watching these emotional displays? I can see by your face it’s only
upsetting you.” The love and gentleness in his voice pulls at me, as always. It’s as if he’s a magnet, and I’m a sliver of iron. Maybe he’s right when he says we were meant for each other. “Come on. I’ve got some new musicians you have to hear to believe!” He tugs at my waist, but I resist. I don’t know why.

The stench of burning flesh makes me choke and gives an excuse for my watery eyes.

The ancient couple, still clinging together, turn to face us all, and I lean forward, trying to hear. This, though I don’t like to admit it even to myself – this is why I come. She’s going to begin now. “Oh, Elohim, bless them. Be with them. Thank you for loving Seth, Tirzah, and Enosh...Shoshana, Kenan, and Mahalalel…” The list goes on and on. Her voice drops, trembles like Adam’s hand. “Our lost Cain, and his family…” She still remembers our names. She remembers all our names. How can she? “Jared and Sho’tet…"

Sho’tet’s voice changes. “Look at them, sobbing on each other’s shoulders, crying over the mess they got us all into, wailing to a God who doesn’t listen anyway! Are you coming or not?”

“Maybe later.”

Sho’tet turns away. His low laugh pulls at the iron filing inside me. I shift my feet and hesitate. Then my eye catches the gleam of the sword at the Garden Gate. Oh, Elohim, I wasn’t going to look! Why do You always make me look? The sword turns, turns, flashing so brightly I wince. Behind the angel, I can faintly make out shapes, tall, glorious trees, a flash of red feathers, the shine of quiet waters. All lost to us forever. Finally, against my will, I look at the angel’s face. And I see the tears.

I turn my head to find Sho’tet. His smile is so understanding. I take a step toward him.

Then I hear my name on the lips of the Mother of all living. My heart gives a painful bound, and I lurch back again, tears flowing suddenly.

“And oh, Redeemer,” says Eve in a voice all can hear, “thank you most of all for not being angry with us, but giving us the Promise…”

Not angry? But I thought—

I glance over my shoulder.

...

__________

To ponder...

Which path do you think the character chose? Why?

Have you been in this spot? Which path did you choose? Why?

What are some questions you have about the anger of God?

*Sho’tet is adapted from a Hebrew word meaning whiplash or goad.*
The Adventist Mark Twain

By Debbonaire Kovacs, submitted June 3, 2015

Richard Garey and his daughter were visiting Hannibal, Missouri, looking at all the Mark Twain sites, when someone at the visitor's center asked, “Did anyone ever tell you that you look like Mark Twain?”

Garey smiled. As a Mark Twain interpreter, he wore the trademark whiskers and flowing hair. “Well,” he allowed, “when I’m on stage…”

The woman’s eyes lit up. “Are you an actor?”

“Yes.”

“Would you like to work here? We’re looking for someone!”

Garey talked with the manager, and the rest is history. Today, visitors to Hannibal can meet Sam Clemens nearly any day of the week in summer. Not on Sabbath, though. This Mark Twain is an Adventist.

From the time he was five years old, Richard Garey wanted to be an actor. Growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist church, he was never encouraged to follow that dream. In fact, the attempts to discourage him ranged, he says, from the mild to the very harsh. But the dream wouldn’t die. In school, he was involved in drama in whatever ways he could be. Still, it didn’t seem he could make an actual career of it.

So he went to Southern, where he was a pre-law major, and at graduation he was accepted into several law schools. Then the Vietnam War intervened. Garey’s draft board recommended more school, or else teaching, the latter being the stronger probability of preventing a side trip to a jungle arena. He was offered a teaching job in the Potomac conference and accepted.

Garey discovered that he loved teaching. He also had an opportunity to do some work in acting, and later, at Shenandoah Academy, he started what he believes to be the first official drama group in a denominational school. During his ten years on staff at Shenandoah, he was also doing acting in the D.C. area.

Over the years, acting continued to play a strong role in Garey’s life. Because most community theater productions are heavily involved on Friday nights and Saturdays, and because Garey chose not to do other than religious drama during those hours, he came to be what he calls “an entrepreneurial actor.” That is, he created his own shows, put
together his own productions, either alone or with teams, and offered them to theaters, universities, etc. "I controlled the times I was available. There was an understanding, sometimes in written contract form."

More and more, Garey got into one-man shows. He continued to teach and to be involved in drama on campuses, but he was also always working outside that setting, doing various productions.

These productions included a word-for-word presentation of the gospel of Mark, in first person and in biblical costume. (In fact, during our interview we established that I once saw him perform this gospel, in a church in central Ohio in the 90s. I remember being intensely impressed!)

He also impersonated Mark Twain. Which led him to Hannibal, and a new job that was only the beginning. During his first year doing Mark Twain there, a theater came on the market. Now, this was a special theater. Built in 1849, it had begun life as a livery stable. It was known that Sam Clemens had been in it many times; in fact, the family who owned it, the Bowens, were family friends of the Clemens, and Sam and the Bowens sons became riverboat captains together. A young attorney named Abraham Lincoln even stabled his mules there once. Now, as a renovated theater, it had a unique connection to Twain and his life. And Richard Garey was still a dreamer…

"I put in a ridiculous offer. I would not have accepted it myself. I thought, ‘They’re not going to accept.’ But they did! That was in 2002. I never thought I’d have my own theater. The building is wonderful. It’s a challenge, but it’s wonderful! I get to do the show [Mark Twain Himself] in large theaters in various places around the country, but I love doing it in my own theater." www.heritagestage.com

Garey says his show is unique among Twain interpreters because, rather than simply doing a monologue as Mark Twain, or a story of his life and times, Garey is Mark Twain. He performs the shows Clemens did himself. "I recreate his shows that he did all over the world. Hal Holbrook and I have corresponded—he has wonderful theater show, but it’s like a visit with Mark Twain. I do what Mark Twain did—he’s been called our first stand-up comic. And his comedy is still funny. Comedy often has a short life, but somehow he did timeless stuff and it still holds up."

People from all over world come to Hannibal because of Mark Twain. Garey says it’s one of the most recognizable small towns in the world. People from Europe or Asia don’t know where St. Louis is, but they know where Hannibal is! He has met some famous people: congressmen, writers, actors. He remembers being told by Sean Astin [the actor who plays Sam Gamgee in The Lord of the Rings], “They were telling me I need to come to your show!"

Garey has developed some more faith-based shows, as well. He has recently developed a show on Captain Joseph Bates, the early Adventist pioneer, which he will be doing at Indiana camp meeting this month. He does “The Centurion” at Easter, or can do the first half of that show in secular settings, as well. But perhaps his favorite is a show called “A Shepherd’s Tale,” a first-person telling of the visit of the angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem. He says he did in-depth research about the life of shepherds in the first century in order to do justice to the production.

On top of everything else, Garey is now entertaining on cruise ships. He works on small ships, where there are perhaps 150 passengers, so he gets to know everybody, and move from table to table, eating with all of them.

Because of all this, Garey says, he has opportunities he would never get any other way. He said that even aside from his faith based shows, when he shows “the sweep of Mark Twain’s life,” people then come and talk to him about eternal realities. Samuel Clemens was known to be adamantly opposed to organized religion, but Garey doesn’t believe that means Clemens didn’t believe in God at all.

He told me two things he’d learned:

“I’ve come to believe that we have things in us, that God placed there. The Bible calls them gifts, but that’s an inadequate description. These are things unique to us, and if we don’t use them, we become miserable.”

And:
“I have learned that witnessing, for me, only works when people ask. But if you put yourself in the right circumstances, they'll ask.”

Click on Poetry & the Arts for more about Garey’s Mark Twain.
Nothing In My Hands, Chapter 3

by Del Starr, a pseudonym, all rights reserved. Submitted June 3, 2015

Life is not a Bowl of Cherries

Alex and Dianne moved into their new home and Dianne was delighted. She now had a yard to work in and a freezer to store food in and she could cook real meals for her new husband. He worked the swing shift at Boeing and it was perfect for them. He would come home after midnight and when he got up, they would go shopping or do other things together until time for him to go to work again. Dianne would wait up for him and when she heard his car, her heart would leap for joy.

Grace now felt that it was time to move from her sister’s home and since Alex and Dianne had an extra bedroom, she determined to move in with them. Dianne didn’t really oppose it but she had wanted to have her privacy with Alex. However, Grace was, after all, her mother…and so Grace came to live with Alex and Dianne.

Not too much time had passed when again Dianne began to have feelings of insecurity. Grace was doing things and making comments that made Dianne uncomfortable. When she spoke of them to Alex, he suggested that it was “just Grace’s way” and that things would settle down soon.

The situation became worse rather than better, and one day Dianne approached Grace saying, “If I didn’t know better, I would think that you are trying to destroy my marriage.”

Grace got a sly grin on her face and replied, “There’s something that I know, that if you knew, would destroy your marriage.” Dianne’s heart sank. Whatever could it be? Horrible thoughts crossed her mind but she could not put the pieces together. From what Grace had said, it almost seemed that perhaps Alex was having an affair but Dianne knew better. She was with him every day wherever he went, except to work, and he always left for work within the required time and not a moment too early and returned from work at the same time every night, within a half hour from the time he got off.

Dianne once more began to feel sick.

There was now friction between Grace and Dianne, and Dianne would frequently question Grace as to what it was that Grace knew that Dianne did not. Grace intimated that it might be an affair and with that statement, Dianne approached Alex. She did not accuse him, for she could not understand, if he was having an affair, how or when it could be taking place. She posed her questions in such a way that Alex would not feel that she was accusing him of anything but she wanted him to understand that she was aware that there were problems in their life.

Alex didn’t say much but did not deny that there were problems. Dianne went back to Grace with the statements that Alex had made. Grace spoke more, giving Dianne a bit more to go on and she went back again to Alex.

Back and forth she went until the entire sordid story came out.

When Dianne had gone to George and Ruth’s home to prepare for the wedding, Alex and Grace had begun an affair and it continued now, in their own home while Dianne was sleeping.

Dianne’s life and dreams had now fallen apart. She was seventeen years old with a marriage on the rocks and a mother whom she could not trust. George and Ruth had been quite adamant when Dianne had gone to live with Grace, that Grace was Dianne’s mother and that they were only her grandparents, and Dianne did not feel as though she could run to them with her new problem. She, like her mother before her, did not want them to know that
she had failed.

She called Lorraine and told her the story with tears streaming down her face. Lorraine was aghast but rather than help Dianne sort things out, suggested that Dianne turn it over to the Lord and told her that they would pray for her.

Prayer is wonderful but Dianne needed human support at that time, and she found none. Because Grace was active in the church, Dianne would not approach anyone in church with her problems and she was virtually alone now, living in the house where her mother and her husband continued to have their affair.

Dianne’s frustration revealed itself in arguments with Grace and Grace would become angry with Dianne, telling her that she had no right to feel, act or talk in that manner and telling her that if she did not straighten up, Grace was going to commit suicide. This added to Dianne’s terror.

Dianne wanted very badly to retain her marriage. She still loved Alex with all her heart but realized that changes would have to be made in order for the marriage to continue.

Alex began to look for work away from Washington State and found an opening in a construction firm in Greenfield, Indiana where he would be able to teach construction.

Dianne was eager for him to take the position and so Alex began making plans. Together, they told Grace that they were hoping to move. Grace said to them, “If you move to Indiana, I will come along.”

Dianne was caught, seemingly with no way out. Alex would not discourage Grace and Grace was determined to be near Alex.

Dianne was saved by a letter addressed to Alex, which arrived one day. The heading of the letter said, “Greetings”…

Alex had been called to military duty.

Dianne thought that this might be a way to break loose from Grace and hailed the day that Alex boarded the plane for Fort Ord, California where he took his basic training. As she stood in the airport watching Alex board the plane, tears streamed down her face. A gentleman nearby, seeing the tears, came to her, and reassured her that Alex would be fine and they would be together soon. Little did he know the real reasons for Dianne’s tears.

Grace continued to live in the same house with Dianne. About half way through Alex’s basic training, Grace took vacation time and insisted that Dianne and she drive to Fort Ord together to see Alex. By this time Dianne was no longer able to think for herself. She missed Alex terribly and finally agreed to drive to California.

When they arrived, Grace and Dianne got a motel. They spent a little time with Alex both that evening and the next morning. Then Grace suggested that she and Dianne find employment near Fort Ord and stay until Alex was out of boot camp.

Dianne’s only security at this point was her home and fortunately for her, she was strong enough to refuse to stay in California and told Grace that if she wished to stay, she could, but that she, Dianne, would return to Washington State.

When they returned to Seattle, Grace obtained a good job in a dental lab, making more money than she ever had in her life and she settled down a bit and decided to stay in Seattle.

When Alex finished boot camp, he came home on leave before heading for Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for his AIT (Advanced Individual Training). He and Dianne talked and decided that Dianne would accompany him to Missouri but Dianne told him that she would not go if Grace went. Alex agreed and they packed for the move, leaving Grace in their home.
It was a terribly hot summer in Missouri. Dianne had never encountered such humid heat. Most of the time she was alone in her little apartment about 30 miles from the base. Alex came on the weekends most of the time but not every weekend, and Dianne became more and more insecure as she lived alone and took showers to attempt to keep cool. She sometimes drove to the base to spend some time with Alex. One time when she went, Alex was not there and nobody seemed to know where he was. They thought that he had gone home but Dianne had not seen him nor had she heard from him. This became common on the weekends and Alex rarely came to the apartment anymore. Dianne discovered that he was going to the red light district a little way off the base and spending his weekends there, telling Dianne that he was not allowed off the base.

Dianne was still determined to save her marriage.

After AIT, Alex was transferred to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. He went down on the bus and Dianne drove their car down there alone.

When she arrived, Alex told her that he was unable to leave the base and that she needed to find a place to live. Dianne was so insecure by this time that she was afraid to go looking for a place by herself. She lived in her car for nearly a month before Alex took the time to help her find a place to live.

Life was not all that good for the young couple now. Things that might seem minor in a good marriage, appeared enormous in a marriage that had suffered what Alex and Dianne’s marriage had already suffered. Dianne was not happy and it showed, making Alex unhappy and he did not want to be with her. They had stopped attending church when Dianne had discovered the affair with Grace and Dianne had no support system upon which to lean now that she was so far away from home and family.

Arguments became normal for Alex and Dianne and the last straw came for Dianne when Alex told her that he needed her to get his uniforms ready for an inspection. She was to wash, dry, and iron each and every uniform so that it would be fresh, whereupon she was to pack them in his duffle bag so that they would be ready for the inspection. Alex then joined some of his buddies. As he was leaving, Dianne asked where he was going and he replied that he was headed for Moffatt, Oklahoma, just over the border, where the guys were going to do a little drinking. Dianne was supposed to carry the duffle bag from their home, about eight blocks to the Laundromat, wash and dry them, and carry them home again, where she was to starch and iron them.

Dianne died inside that day. She finally gave up on her marriage. It was late in the evening, the thunderclouds were gathering and Dianne sat on a bench at a bus stop just contemplating life. She did not do the laundry. She never left the house with the duffle bag. She sat on the bench for nearly two hours, sick at heart. A friend of theirs drove by and saw her. He turned around and came back to her, invited her to join him and they just drove around and talked. That night Dianne took a lover. She was so lonely for arms to comfort her, for words of love to be spoken, and though she knew it was not right, she grabbed on to the opportunity to feel some security even if it was misplaced.

Alex was, of course, extremely angry when he returned home half drunk. Dianne ignored him.

It was about three weeks later that Alex learned that Dianne had a lover. That night they had company, as they most often had during their married life. This was a fellow from the base and he was sleeping on the couch in the living room while Alex and Dianne argued in the kitchen. When Alex learned about Dianne’s lover, he grabbed her by the throat and began choking the life out of her. The scuffle awakened the friend in the living room who came to Dianne’s rescue and pulled Alex away from her.

Alex returned to the base and did not sleep at the home again. Dianne once more packed her belongings and Alex agreed, since he had some leave time coming, to take her back to Seattle.

Dianne was now nearly 19 years old.
By S M Chen, Submitted June 3, 2015  Art by Debbilu.  Based on Genesis 7 and Jonah 1 & 2

I ply the waters of earth, the seas, the oceans. My ancestors have been here for as long as our planet has. I can grow to almost 70 feet long and live almost 70 years. I eat a variety of things, but my favorite is squid. On a single breath (which I can hold up to 90 minutes), I will dive well over a mile deep, and sometimes do battle with the giant squid, whose length, including body and tentacles, may exceed my own. Their suckers, which exert tremendous negative pressure, sometimes attach themselves to my massive body as we duel, and leave later scars.

My much smaller cousin, the dolphin, is thought to be highly intelligent, and, indeed it is. Their brains, and mine, are larger than a human’s. It is also playful, good natured, and kind. More than one human has been rescued from the water by dolphins.

But I, too, am intelligent. Because I have my own language and method of communicating, you may not realize it.

One of my ancestors, a very long time ago, recalled a time when it rained—heavier than it ever had, not only downward but upward—for 40 days. Water covered the earth. The seas rose.

We who lived in the sea managed to survive, although my ancestor admits to having been frightened. He remembers a large boat, perhaps a ship (he had never seen anything quite like it, it was so big) floating in the water. He didn’t know what to make of the 450-foot long craft.

Eventually the rains stopped, the waters receded, and the boat disappeared.

Stories as remarkable as that got passed down from generation to generation. My father told it to me one day when I was but a calf. Someday I will tell it to my offspring. A tale like that should not be forgotten.

You may not believe what I’m about to tell you, but it’s true.

One day I was swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, when I was instructed by my Maker to go to the Mediterranean. Sperm whales don’t normally inhabit that sea, but I felt strangely moved (I will not try to explain, because I’m unsure I understand it myself), so I went. Through the Straits of Gibraltar I swam, undetected.

The waters were rough, blown by a strong wind. Swimming was difficult. I was not happy.

I saw, dimly (even though I can retract my eyes, I don’t have particularly good eyesight) a man enter the water. From the way he entered, I think it was not a dive; he was either pushed, thrown in, or fell.

A remarkable thing happened when he broke the water’s surface: the sea became calm. I was happier.

I was told to swallow him, but not bite or chew.
That was not too difficult for me, as I often, particularly when in a hurry, swallow my food whole. My stomach acid is usually sufficient to digest whatever I’ve eaten.

I wasn’t given any further instructions – at least then. I found the Mediterranean to my liking, other than the waters being warmer than what I was accustomed to. And there weren’t any other whales there. I was able to find enough food (I eat about a ton of fish and squid a day) and stayed below the water’s surface so I wouldn’t be spotted.

It went on that way for 3 days. I ate and swam as I normally do. I could tell that the man I’d swallowed was still alive, because, every so often, he moved around a bit. My insides felt strange. This was a new experience for me, as I suspected it might be for him.

On the third day, I got another directive: throw him up on land. This was definitely different. I was actually somewhat relieved, because I wasn’t used to having something alive inside me for that long. Now I would be getting rid of him.

So I swam near shore, closer than usual, and regurgitated him with as much force as I could muster. As I swam away, fluke flapping up and down, I saw him get up and walk, so I know he was still alive.

That strange encounter happened to me only the once, and I’ve never met another whale who had a similar experience.

*

Now what a story I have to tell to the other whales. This is one for the ages.
Richard Garey One-Man Shows

Submitted by Debonnaire Kovacs, June 3, 2015. Photos used by courtesy of Richard Garey.

Visit www.heritagestage.com for more information on any of the shows below.

“A Shepherd’s Tale” is an original play by Richard Garey based on extensive research into the life of shepherds living in Judea 2000 years ago. “A Shepherd’s Tale” is the story of Esrom, shepherd of Bethlehem, a goat, a dog, and the sheep. It is also the tale of two special nights. Travel back 2000 years. Sample the sights, the smells, and the music of 2000 years ago. Visit the first Christmas ever.
Here, you may see clips of the show, Mark Twain Himself

The Centurion is a new show, especially for Easter, based on the centurion at the crucifixion of Jesus. The first part of the show can be performed in a secular setting as well, showing the history, life, and accoutrements of a Roman centurion of the first century BCE.