A Message from Aunt Carole & Uncle Dan

This is the month to remember those you love on Valentine’s Day, so it’s a perfect time to tell you something very important—“We Love You!” Even better, God loves you! So if you’re ever feeling discouraged about something, just remember that you are a very loved person!
Toby Chester stood facing his friends. “I am not a chicken!” he said fiercely, clenching his fists in his pockets.

“Aw, how come you wouldn’t take on O’ Bill when he called you names?” scoffed Alan. “He even took a poke at you, and you just walked away!”

Toby remembered Bill Bradshaw towering over him. Bill was two years older than the rest of the kids in the sixth grade, and big for his age. Toby just stood there, his knees locked together shaking, his hands on his hips, but sticky with anxiety. “You’re a wimp, you know that?” Bill had jeered. “Your old lady’s a freak. Your sister’s a retard...and you’re a wimp!”

His big hand had shoved at Toby’s shoulder, then shoved again twice. Toby had turned with what he had hoped was a superior air and stalked away, as the taunts continued behind his back.

Now Toby faced his pals, Joe and Alan, who seemed no friendlier than Bill. “My mom says it’s stupid to punch someone out,” he said in a low voice. “She says it doesn’t settle anything or prove anybody’s right. It just makes more trouble.”

“What’s your mom expect you to do--kiss somebody who takes a poke at you?” demanded Joe, scornfully.

“Yeah,” agreed Alan. “You’re just making excuses. You’re just chicken, that’s what you are! Chicken Chester!”

“Right!” snorted Joe. “Chicken Chester!” He flapped his arms like useless wings. “Buk-buk-buk-bukadaw!”

Tears stung Toby’s eyes, and he turned away to hide them. His best friends were acting like enemies. But they were wrong. He wasn’t chicken! Why start a fight he couldn’t win—one that would probably go on for months? He wasn’t chicken, was he? He had to admit that he didn’t want a bloody nose! He began to worry about his courage as he walked home.

He was still worrying when his mother shoved open the kitchen door. “What’s the matter with you?” she demanded. She set the bags of groceries on the table and kicked off her “go-to-work” shoes.

“Nothing,” Toby could barely be heard.

“Come on, Toby. Something’s bothering you. I can tell. Did something happen in school?”

Slowly at first, then faster, the story came out—how Bill Bradshaw was harassing him, and now everyone, even his friends, was calling him “Chicken Chester.”

Mrs. Chester angrily shoved cans of soup into the cupboard. “So what do you care about what they think?” she exclaimed. “Sticks and stones.... They probably know you’re right. The important thing is that you know you’re right.” She paused and lifted his chin with her finger. “You do know you’re right, don’t you?”

“Well,” Toby said uncertainly. “I don’t know. I guess I think I was chicken. I was afraid I would get my teeth knocked down my throat.”

“And what would that prove? Big orthodontist bills for me—that’s what! You did the right thing. Don’t let them get to you.” She disappeared into her bedroom to change into jeans and a shirt.

The next few days were tough ones. Toby didn’t seem to have any friends. Alan and Joe kept calling him “Chicken Chester.” Other kids picked it up, and pretty soon Bill started yelling it all over school.

Toby worried less about the names or a fight than that maybe he really was “chicken.” Was he so scared of a bloody nose that he’d let the guys walk all over him? He started going home the back way, through the alley, to avoid the boys he had thought were his friends. His mom didn’t like him going that way. The back alley was full of garbage cans and smelled foul. Three or four mangy dogs, one of which was huge, were sniffing around, looking for food. They growled as he walked by.

On Friday Toby cut through the alley, his math book under his arm. School hadn’t been going so well, and he had a whole page of fractions to do at home. At the end of the alley he met Mary Lou, a six-year-old with big brown eyes and curly, dark hair. She lived in an
apartment next to his.

“Hi, Mary Lou. How’s the
kid?” he greeted her, grinning.

“Hello, Toby,” she smiled.

“Why do you go through that
old alley? My mama says to
stay out of there.”

Well, she’s right,” Toby said.
““You better do what she says.
Where are you going?”

“Just over to Aunt Liz’s. I
gotta go all the way around the
block, ‘cause I can’t go through
the alley.”

“Well, be careful. See ya.”
Toby walked on. Maybe she
was his friend, he thought. At
least she called him Toby and
not “Chicken Chester.”

Suddenly, the air was full of
shrieks--scream after terrified
scream. Toby whirled to see the
huge dog from the alley snarling
and leaping on Mary Lou. The
dog jumped again, its huge paws
pushing down.

The child’s face was a mask
of terror. Her mouth was wide
open, but the screams had
turned to squeaks of fear, as
long claws tore at her clothes
and huge teeth sank into her
shoulder.

Toby dropped his books and
raced as fast as he could.
Grabbing the dog’s tail, he tried
to pull it off Mary Lou, but the
animal held its ground and
barely seemed to notice him.

I need to do something that
will hurt, thought Toby. He
leaped on the dog’s back and
seized its ears in both hands,
twisting and pulling with all his
might. The dog lurched, as if to
throw Toby off, but the boy
wrapped his legs around its
body and clutched the ears even
tighter. The dog clawed at
Mary Lou’s head.

Toby heard a window slam.
Someone shouted, but he
couldn’t look up. Blood was
running down the little girl’s
face. Her shoulder was ripped
open, and she had stopped
screaming.

“I’ve got to get his throat,”

Cont. pg. 17
Vickie: How many seconds are in a year?
Mickey: I don't know.
Vickie: Twelve. January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd, April 2nd....

Q: How many seconds are in a year?
Vickie: Twelve. January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd, April 2nd....

Bob: I lost my pants when I was running.
Rob: Were they loose?
Bob: No, but your dog was.
Bible Snapshots

Illustrated by Victoria Jensen
Based on God Cares by Doris Burdick

Moses, the leader of the Israelites who had become slaves in Egypt, was told by God that he was to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and back to their own land. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, was determined not to let the Israelites go, so God sent plagues to the land to get Pharaoh’s attention and as punishment. When the plagues came, Pharaoh would promise to let God’s people go, but when God, through Moses, took the plagues away, Pharaoh would change his mind. None of the plagues reached into Goshen, the part of Egypt where the Israelites lived.

The first plague came when Moses stretched his rod over the water of the Nile, the great river of Egypt, and it turned to blood. The people didn’t have water to drink and all the fish died. Secondly, God sent frogs to overrun the land—frogs were everywhere, even in their beds! Next, Aaron, Moses’ brother, was told by God to strike the dust of the earth, and the dust turned into lice throughout all the land. Then great swarms of biting flies came. The fifth plague killed sacred animals of Egypt (horses, camels, sheep, donkeys, cattle, etc.), and for the sixth plague, Moses sprinkled ashes into the air which gave painful boils to the Egyptian people. The next was a terrible hailstorm, so bad that Pharaoh was terrified and begged for it to stop. But when it did, he turned stubborn again.

“How long will you refuse?” asked Moses, who told Pharaoh that God would send locusts next. “They’ll eat what the storm didn’t destroy.” And sure enough, not a green plant or tree was spared. And then God sent a total blackout of the sun, moon and stars that lasted for three days. But still Pharaoh refused to obey. So God said he would send one more plague. Read Exodus 11-12 to find out what that last plague would be.

Puzzle Power

Look forward, backward, up, down and diagonally to find the words on the left that were mentioned in the story about the plagues.

ASHES
ATTENTION
BLOOD, BOILS, BUBBLING,
CAMELS, CATTLE, DARKNESS,
DONKEYS, DUST, FISH, FROGS,
GOSHEN, HAILSTORM
HORSES,
ISRAELITES, LICE,
LOCUSTS, MOSES,
NILE RIVER
PHARAOH
PUNISHMENT
ROD, SHEEP
SWARMS OF FLIES
TEN PLAGUES

(Solution on pg. 19.)
Barney slouched against the window and stared at the gray sky. The weather seemed to echo his thoughts. First, there was the upcoming ball game. That was bad enough, but worse still, Mrs. Fogerty was coming to stay while his mom was out of town. He turned, watched his mom packing her suitcases and decided to give it one more try.

"But Mom," he said, trying not to sound whiny.

"No buts about it, Barney," Mrs. Briggs answered impatiently. "I know how you feel about Mrs. Fogerty staying for the week, but there is just nothing I can do about it. She's a kindhearted soul, and I know I can trust her to look after you while I'm at this conference. I admit she is a bit, well, unusual, but...

"Unusual!" Barney said stunned. "Mom, she wears weird clothes and messes up the house with her knitting. And those surprises she cooks up are really gross. She's more than unusual, she's TOO MUCH!"

"That's enough, Barney," Mom said quietly. "I know you think she's a little odd, but if you would try to see past her...ah...unusual ways, you'd find another Mrs. Fogerty who's really quite nice."

"One Mrs. Fogerty is bad enough, Barney thought. It's not that Barney disliked Mrs. Fogerty; it's just that she was so different from anyone else he knew. He shuddered when he thought...his mom was getting upset, so he said, "Not to worry, Mom. It'll be OK. Maybe Mrs. F. will help take my mind off the game."

Just then, the doorbell announced someone's arrival. Barney opened the door and stared at the startling picture that was Mrs. Fogerty. Scarves and shawls were draped over a baggy coat of mud brown. None of her clothes fit, but rather bunched, drooped or dangled after her. A large black hat sprouted feathers and fruit that wobbled and bounced with every move. No need for a suitcase, Barney thought. She has on everything she owns in her bags and on her hat.

With a delighted chuckle, Mrs. Fogerty swooped into the house and almost smothered Barney as she caught him up in a huge, warm hug.

"Hi, Mrs. F.,” Barney managed to say in a muffled voice.

"My dear boy," Mrs. Fogerty said happily, "aren't we going to have fun this week!"

"Yeah, right, fun," Barney said. He tried to sound cheerful, but failed. "Here, let me get those bags," he said in a faint voice. Wide-eyed, he looked at the bags and bags of yarn on the porch. He thought of the mess and clutter she would make as she worked on her projects for her grandchildren. "It's going to be a long week," Barney said to himself.

By Friday, Barney had had enough. "I can't stand it anymore," he said to his friend Mitch, as they walked home from school.

"Ah, come on, Barn," Mitch said. "She can't be all that bad." "Bad? Bad?" Barney wailed "She's got fuzz balls and crawly things of yarn all over the house. Her half-done projects are everywhere. Who knows what they are even supposed to be. And her cooking--unreal!"
“Oh, I don’t know, Barn,” Mitch said. “I think some of the stuff she puts in your lunch is neat. You know, kind of different.”

“You call cucumber cookies and liver and mashed potato sandwiches neat?” Barney asked in disbelief.

“Hey, I like liver, OK?” Mitch said. “Anyway we have the game tomorrow with the Rhinos. That’ll get you away from Mrs. F. for a few hours.”

“Don’t remind me,” Barney said. “We’ll probably lose so badly I’ll be glad to go home to her.”

“Come on, Barn. We might not be half bad. See you tomorrow at the game,” Mitch called as he went on down the street.

“Did I hear something about a game?” Mrs. Fogerty asked as Barney came in the house.

“There’s nothing better than a good baseball game to liven things up. I’ll be there to cheer you on, Barney.”

“Ah, well, no...that is...” Barney sputtered at this news. “We’re just a bunch of kids who play together sometimes, and we’re not really very good. I don’t think you’d enjoy it at all, Mrs. F.”

“Nonsense, my dear,” she said. “I’ll just make some punch and cookies for the party after the game.”

“No, really, please, Mrs. F.,” Barney pleaded.

“It’s all right, dear,” Mrs. Fogerty said soothingly. “Aren’t you sweet to think of saving me work. It will be no trouble at all.”

Barney’s thoughts were far from sweet. Maybe she’ll forget. Maybe they’ll cancel tomorrow. Barney’s thoughts darted about wildly. Things couldn’t get any worse.

Barney and Mitch were both wrong after all. Things did get worse, and the Westlake Falcons weren’t half bad—their team members were a total disaster! “We looked more like a bunch of penguins than falcons out there,” Mitch said as the team gathered around after the game. Everyone nodded their heads in agreement.

Suddenly, a booming voice shattered the quiet. “You kids were really something,” Mrs. Fogerty said, as she bustled into the middle of the surprised group.


“I declare! You kids were better than a TV show. I haven’t enjoyed myself so much in years,” Mrs. Fogerty said. “Enjoyed?” Tommy Moore squeaked in disbelief.

Other members of the team began muttering to one another while darting questioning glances at their one and only fan. “Who is she, anyway?” they asked.

“Beats me,” Barney said, as he backed away from the group.

Mrs. Fogerty began passing out sauerkraut-and-grape-juice punch and cookies to everyone gathered around.

“Hey, this stuff is pretty good,” Mary Sue said. “What’s in it?”

“If you only know,” Barney muttered and rolled his eyes.

While the team munched and gulped, Mrs. Fogerty recalled some of her favorite parts of the game. As she talked, giggles and chuckles began bubbling up from the group. Soon the players were adding their own favorites. “I liked it when Willy swung so hard at the ball he knocked himself over,” Mary Sue said, laughing in delight.

“I liked it when Mary Sue and Barney ran into each other in the outfield, trying to catch that high ball,” Willy added.

“At least we got one run in,” Mark said shyly.
“Oh, sure,” Lisa said, wiping the tears from her face. “That was only because you ran into the second baseman and knocked his glasses off. He couldn’t see to catch the ball.”

They were holding their sides with laughter, remembering the surprised look on Mark’s face as he ran across home plate.

As the team finished off the last of the punch, Mitch joined Barney. “I don’t get it,” Mitch said. “Awhile ago everyone thought this was the worst day of their lives. Mrs. Fogerty shows up, and in five minute they are laughing their head off. You’d think we planned this game as a comedy special. What happened?”

“I’m not sure, Mitch,” Barney said thoughtfully. “She made everyone laugh and feel good. She was so nice they didn’t even notice her clothes or what was in that stuff she brought. They just started having a good time. Maybe Mom is right—there is another Mrs. Fogerty under those weird clothes. She’s still different, but a nice kind of different.”

The gang was beginning to break up and head for home. Suddenly Barney called out in a loud voice, “Hey, Mrs. F! I’ll help carry those things back to our house. Great party, really great!”

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**FOR GENUISES ONLY**

**A Problem with Hay**
*By Kok Heong McNaughton*

A farmer had three bales of hay. He weighed them two at a time and found that they weighed 149 pounds, 150 pounds and 151 pounds.

How much did they weigh individually?

**ANSWER:** They weighed 74, 75 and 76 pounds.

Two at a time: 74-75 = 149; 74+76 = 150; 75+76 = 151.

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**Alligator Tales**
*By Gail Radley*

“If there’s one thing I HATE,” said Stephanie, Glaring at her plate, “It’s broccoli. I hate broccoli awfully. I’d rather eat alligator tails Fried with old snails. I’d rather eat elephant ears Soaked in hippopotamus tears Or tiger feet Simmered with zebra meat. Or whale fins Broiled on camel skins. I’d rather eat barbecued moose In mumbleberry juice. ‘Cause I hate broccoli!”

But I haven’t any alligator tails,” said her mother. “Or any old snails. Not an elephant ear, Not a hippopotamus tear. I haven’t any tiger’s feet Or even a speck of zebra meat. No whale fins Or camel skins. No barbecued moose Or a drop of mumbleberry juice. I only have broccoli.”

Then I’ll sprinkle it with ground snake.” said Stephanie, giving the salt a shake. “And I’ll add melted oil of bear,” She said, slicing a butter square. “And then,” said Stephanie, Looking as mean as could be, “I’ll eat it on a bun!”

And, in a minute, it was done.
Time for Tea

By Martha J. Beckman / Illustrated by Jon Woodard

When the patriots threw the tea into the ocean to protest taxes, they started a war. Can you put the letters T E A, in any order, into the words below, using the clues given?

1. B ___ S ___ 1. Beauty and the ______.
5. ___ S ___ 5. The opposite of west.

Solution on pg. 19.

Chicken Chester continued

Toby said. He heard sirens in the background, as he reached for the front of the dog’s massive neck. The dog backed off Mary Lou. But now, wondered Toby, how could he get himself off without getting killed? The dog circled, Toby still on his back, trying to get the boy off.

“I’ll never make it,” Toby thought.

“Climb down careful, son. Back off slow.” From the corner of his eye, Toby saw a policeman with his gun trained on the dog. Quickly, he let go and the policeman had fired into the air, scaring the big dog backward. Then it whirled and ran off, with several officers following.

Mary Lou started to whimper. Now that it was over, Toby’s knees went weak. His heart pounded, and his hands were so wet he wondered how he had hung onto the dog at all!

Toby’s picture was in all the papers that night. He was called a hero. He was on the TV news, too.

“Were you scared?” a reporter had asked.

“I didn’t have time to be scared!” He had answered, and it surprised him. He hadn’t been scared!

Mary Lou was on television that night also. She was at the hospital, all bandaged up like an Egyptian mummy. But she was smiling sweetly and announced that she was going to marry Toby when she grew up.

Toby knew he’d get some teasing about that, too, but now, somehow, it didn’t really matter. The whole town—including the guys who had been hassling him, now knew that he was anything but “Chicken Chester,” and it felt very, very good!

“NOW REMEMBER, NO SWIMMING FOR AN HOUR AFTER YOU EAT.”
**Hobo Dinners**

By Jane L. Roth

Does the thought of a hobo dinner bring to mind a picture of a can of beans being warmed over a fire? Then you’re in for a surprise. This meal for “weekend hoboes” is a complete dinner, and there’s not a can of beans in sight. If you like to cook, but hate to clean up, then this no-mess meal is for you.

For each hobo dinner, tear off a length of heavy-duty foil about two feet long. Fold it in half so that you have a square. In the center, place a lean hamburger patty (or meat substitute patty). Slice one scrubbed potato onto the hamburger and top with a slice of onion. (You can peel the potato if you prefer, but leaving the skin on is more nutritious.)

This is the basic hobo dinner, but if you like, you can include many other items. Some of the possibilities: carrots cut into slices, celery slices, green peppers, mushrooms, a half ear of corn, a chunk of cabbage.

Bring together two edges of the foil and fold over several times. Fold up the ends, sealing tightly to prevent anything from leaking out as the dinner cooks. Place the dinner on the grill or directly on the coals that have been allowed to burn down to ash gray. No flames!

Cook about one hour, turning once. And if it rains? Simply put your hobo dinners in a 350 degree oven for one hour, but there is no need to turn them since the oven bakes both sides at once.

When done, remove from the coals or oven. Open carefully, as escaping steam can give a painful burn. Then all you need is a fork. After dinner, simply throw your foil “plate” away. No dishes to wash!

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**Time for Tea**

1. BEAST
2. PLATE
3. PASTE
4. TREAT
5. EAST
6. TAME
7. LATE
8. METAL

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**Jr. Detective**

**Houses:** Since all of the houses except one have three windows, Scott’s house has to be the one on the left. Since Lew’s house is on the right of Scott’s house, it is the second from the right. Since Carolyn’s house isn’t an end house, it has to be number 118, the second from the right. And Rick’s house would then be the house on the right (which is a little taller than Carolyn’s).