NPUC Executive Committee Actions
North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC) executive committee members met Feb. 21 in Ridgefield, Wash., and re-appointed Alphonso McCarthy (pictured here) as vice president for regional affairs. McCarthy also serves as NPUC youth, human relations and multicultural ministries director. In additional actions, committee members approved a balanced budget for 2012 and invited Jason and Misty Morgan to join the NPUC as a new evangelistic team. Financial figures for 2011 show a combined tithe gain of 2.85 percent union-wide, with the Alaska and Upper Columbia conferences leading the way, showing 8.52 and 5.09 percent gains respectively.

Northwest Adventist Schools in the News
Two Adventist schools were recently featured in a local television news report about the exodus of public school students to private schools. Tri-City Junior Academy and Hermiston Junior Academy were portrayed on the report broadcast on KVEW which serves Tri-Cities and Walla Walla, Wash. Watch the video report HERE.

New Child Protection Plan
A new child protection program from the Adventist Church’s risk management organization is galvanizing the church’s ongoing efforts to shield minors from abuse and misconduct. Through training for adults and children, as well as background screening for employees and volunteers who work closely with minors, the plan equips local leaders to make the church a safe place. Phyllis Washington, North American Division children’s ministries director, says: "By recognizing that the problem exists in our congregations, we are taking a crucial step toward providing a safe environment, restoring trust, promoting healing and ultimately preventing child abuse." Access more information and plan

Looking Ahead
February
23: April Ad/Article Deadline

March
11: SAGE (Wash.) St. Patrick’s Banquet
17: Ministry Fest South
22: May Ad/Article Deadline
24–25: Vegfest 2012
30–April 1: Ore. Conference Prayer Retreat

April
13–15: NW Prison Ministry Retreat
14: OAMC Spring Festival
19: June Ad/Article Deadline
26–29: ASI NW Convention

May
9–13: SAGE Creation Retreat
17: July Ad/Article Deadline
17–20: NPUC Regional Convocation
18–20: Tillamook (Ore.) Adv. School Alumni Weekend

June
9–16: Alaska Camp Meeting
12–16: Idaho Camp Meeting
13–16: Mont. Camp Meeting
Oakwood University Establishes Adventist-Muslim Relations Center

A new Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations is located on the campus of Oakwood University in Huntsville, Ala. Dr. Keith Augustus Burton, director, (pictured here) is tasked with helping Seventh-day Adventists understand and respect Muslims. He hopes also, when he can, to help Muslims understand and respect Adventists and Christians. The center has developed an online certification program for pastors and church leaders that will begin the end of February. Read more online HERE.

Washington Court Favors Pharmaceutical Conscience

A federal court in Washington State ruled this week that the state board of pharmacy cannot force pharmacists to stock drugs that risk taking human life if the pharmacists have a religious, moral or ethical objection. The court determined that pharmacists should be allowed to do what they have sought from the beginning, which is to refer patients seeking such drugs to other pharmacies. See a statement from the Adventist Church on birth control HERE and access a link to the world church consensus statement on birth control.

Bible Worker Boot Camp

The North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC)-sponsored Northwest Mission Institute (NMI) is gearing up for its first sessions: A three-month boot camp, scheduled for June 18–Sept. 7 in the Tri-Cities (Wash.) area, and a full six-month course beginning Sept. 23. This expanded course on the campus of Walla Walla University will provide all the benefits of a fully accredited academic program. Contact Jason Worf, NMI director, for more information, or join the Facebook friends HERE.

Cindy's Garden Blog

“Aerodynamically, the bumble bee shouldn’t be able to fly, but the bumble bee doesn’t know it so it goes on flying anyway.” Who is the famous tithe-payer who said this? See Cindy's Garden Blog for a new story this week to find out.
Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
Child Protection

Child Protection Resources for Seventh-day Adventist Churches in North America

Thank you for your interest in protecting children from the harm of abuse and adults from the potential for false allegations. These resources will help acquaint you with a series of Child Protection Resources that you can implement at the local church and school level. It also includes information on the Shield the Vulnerable – "PREPARED" Background Screening and Training program that is being implemented across the North American Division in 2012.

Please take a moment to watch the following video "Predator at the Door" on our Youtube Channel

Implementation Resources

- Protecting Our Children Presentation – (PowerPoint)
- Child Protection Plan – Local Church Implementation Plan (Word)
- Local Church Child Protection Plan – 2012 Model Policy (Word)
- Local Church Child Protection Plan – 2012 Model Comprehensive Policy (Word)
- Code of Conduct for Volunteers – North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist (Word)
- Volunteer Information Form – 2012 Revision (Word)
- Volunteer Personal Reference Check Form – 2012 Revision (Word)
- Local Church Sex Offender Covenant Model (Word)

Reference Resources

- North American Division Working Policy – FB 20 (Word)
- SDA Church Manual 2010 – Protecting Children's Ministries (PDF)
- Child Abuse Prevention Guidebook – CDC Publication US Department of Health (PDF)
- Sex Offenders in Church – Solutions, September 2007 (PDF)
- Keeping Children, Churches and Schools Safe From Sex Offenders - Solutions, 2012 (PDF)
WELCOME

It is our privilege to welcome you to the website of the Center for Adventist-Muslim Relations (CAMROU). From here, you can discover more about the resources we have to offer and let us know how we can help you. If you don't find what you're looking for, please let us know and we will do all we can to help you.

OUR MISSION

The center for Adventist-Muslim Relations exists to foster relationships between Christians and Muslims through research, dialogue and fellowship.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

Three core principles undergird CAMR-OU's mission:

1. **Learning.** A willingness to understand the history, doctrine and culture of Islam.
2. **Loving.** A commitment to fellowship with Muslims through planned local events and international humanitarian missions.
3. **Sharing.** A desire to aid Muslims' understanding of Christ and Christianity from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective.

[Click here](http://www.camr-ou.org/) to view a copy of the CAMR-OU brochure.
Birth Control and Religious Liberty: An Adventist Perspective

What principles should guide the Adventist Church's response to the current debate in the United States about government-mandated health insurance coverage for contraception? The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty department, along with the Office of General Counsel, reviews some long-standing values that will help chart our course.

An Adventist Response to the U.S. Health and Human Services Contraception Insurance Regulation

On January 20, 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services issued a final rule mandating that employers including religious employers who provide health insurance to their employees must provide a full range of contraceptive services to women without co-pay, co-insurance or deductible. This will include all Food and Drug Administration approved forms of contraception as well as female sterilization.

Various religious organizations, including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, have raised concerns about being required to provide services that they find morally objectionable. While the ultimate impact of the new rule is not yet known, a number of religious organizations that do not object to contraception have also raised religious liberty concerns.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its institutions the provision of contraceptive services does not impinge on the denomination's religious liberty. The Adventist Church's principles do not prohibit the use of contraception. See Birth Control: A Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Consensus. Health insurance offered by most if not all U.S. Adventist institutions currently covers contraceptive services.

Consistent with its longstanding practice of defending religious liberty and freedom of conscience for all, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned any time government requires a religious organization to violate its religious beliefs. The General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department and the Office of General Counsel continue to watch this developing issue closely and will do all that is appropriate to defend and protect religious liberty and freedom of conscience.
“Aerodynamically, the bumble bee shouldn’t be able to fly, but the bumble bee doesn’t know it so it goes on flying anyway.”  Mary Kay Ash

Years ago, the pastor of my church asked me to address the congregation about raising funds for a children’s learning center. Each Sunday a member of the congregation made a plea for the special collection but the results were always discouraging… $600 – 1,000 a week. At that rate we would not have the building for a long time. I decided I couldn’t do much worse than anyone else had done, so I agreed to make a plea. I was busy at the time, at the office and traveling regularly. But in the back of my mind, I was always searching for the right words to include in my plea to the congregation…

On the night before my speech, we arrived home well after midnight. I was very worried because the right words still hadn’t come. But I convinced myself it would be better to get a good night’s sleep and plan my speech in the morning.

Stop Me When I’ve said Enough

That morning Mel and I overslept. When we awoke and looked at the clock, it was after ten. I had less than an hour to get my thoughts in order and be at the church! When was I going to write my speech? I had fully intended to have some quiet time that morning to work up the best presentation I could. So for about five seconds, I thought of just staying home. But that was impossible; I had to keep my promise.

Mel was already racing around getting ready, and so I did the same. I grabbed the first dress I saw in my closet and as I was slipping it on I thought, “Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile words and stop me when I’ve said enough.

Match Whatever They Give

“You’ll have to tell me what to say, Lord,” I prayed. And then I stopped dead in the middle of putting on my makeup, because a thought came to me so clearly I was shocked: “Mary Kay, tell the congregation you will match whatever they give today.” The thought was so vivid I put down the makeup and said out loud, “Wait just a minute, Lord. I’ve got to think this over!” Fortunately, Mel didn’t hear me talking away in my dressing room.

In the car, I had a moment to think and pray and I was tempted to tell Mel about my idea. “Don’t you dare,” I repeated to myself as we rode in silence. All I could think about was: “Mary Kay, tell the congregation you will match whatever they give today.”

By the time we got to church, the choir was in place and the service about to begin. We had to tiptoe down the side aisle to reach our seats. Hardly had we sat down, when the pastor called me to the pulpit. As I walked up, I realized I still had no idea what I was going to say. Once again I said silently, “This is in your hands Lord…”
After speaking awhile about the benefits of Sunday school, I heard myself saying, “You know, we’ve all been talking about this building for quite some time. At this rate these children are going to have grandchildren before it is built. We must do something about this. You’ve heard me talk about our company and how we operate on a cash basis. Well, I’ll match whatever you give today.” There was complete silence. I took a deep breath and went on. “You know we operate on a no-credit basis, so I don’t want pledges from you today – I want cash or checks.” And then for good measure, I repeated, “Whatever you give today, I’ll match.”

There, I had done it. Whatever the amount was — I knew I was going to have to match it personally. Mel looked shocked and so did a few other people. But for the most part the congregation just sat there. I really could see no reaction at all. How much…?

When the pastor finished his sermon, he paused and added, “I had some difficulty keeping your attention this morning. I hope it’s because you were thinking of Mary Kay’s offer.” Then he looked over at me and said, “Mary Kay, I happen to know that a lot our members make out their checks before coming to church and so they may not have their checkbooks with them. Would it be all right if we gave them until five this afternoon?”

“That’s fine,” I said. I was surprised the pastor seemed to think the congregation would respond, but I hoped he was correct. When five o’clock came nobody called. I kept checking my watch, and the hour kept passing. It was about ten o’clock the next morning before I finally received a call from the chairman of the building committee. “I was waiting for you to call last night,” I said. “What happened?”

“Well,” he said, “we had a meeting about this after church last night and it got to be quite late.”

“Oh. Was it that bad?”

“Oh, no on the contrary. It was phenomenal.”

“Phenomenal? What do you mean?” I asked him.

“Now, Mary Kay,” he said carefully. “Before I tell you the figure, we spent some time talking about this, and we decided we don’t want to hold you to your offer. I have been charged with the responsibility of making that absolutely clear. We know you didn’t expect what happened and we didn’t either.”

“I made the offer,” I said, “and I’ll stick to it.”

“Now, you don’t have to; I want you to know that. We would certainly understand if you didn’t.”

“How much…?”

Finally he spoke. “$107,748.”

I had gone to bed the previous night praying we could collect at least $1,000. I have never in my life had such mixed feelings. That $107,748 along with my contribution and what we already had would be enough to start the building! I had asked God to tell me what to say, and He certainly had. It had succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. On the other hand, my announcement came back to me very clearly: they had to give cash – and so did I – today!

By now, the silence on my end of the line was becoming notable. “Are you there?” he asked.

“Yes,” I sighed. My mind was working furiously. I don’t leave that kind of cash in my account. But those other members came up with it and somehow, I would too. The only solution that occurred to me was to cancel my next appointment and set about arranging a bank loan.

“Now, you don’t have to,” he began again.

“I know, I know. And that’s very considerate of you. But I intend to keep my word. In fact, you be sure the building committee knows that it is definitely my pleasure.”

I hope I sounded cordial; I’m not sure, because the moment I hung up that phone, I had my head in my hands. That was a lot of cash — about one hundred times more than I had expected to need. “Okay, Lord,” I said. “You got me into this. Now you get me out! How am I going to get this money?”
Then the phone rang. It was Richard. Months before this event, Richard had come to me with an investment proposal. A geologist he knew had developed a seismic technique for finding oil. Richard investigated the procedure and had been very impressed with its potential. As a result, he encouraged me to invest in two oil wells. I trusted his judgment and told him, “Go ahead.” (From that day forward, I had never given those wells a thought.)

**We Struck Oil**

Richard was elated. “I’ve never see anything like it in my life! Everything you put your hand to turns to gold.”

“What do you mean?”

“Those wells,” he said. “Remember? I’ve just heard that they’ve come in. Not one, but both of them. And both gushers! It is unbelievable. Do you know what those wells are worth?”

“Tell me.” I’m sure that I’d stopped breathing, because I just had a funny feeling.

“Between the two of them,” he said, “your share this month will be more than $100,000.”

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Posted in Cindy’s Garden Blog | 3 Comments »

**God’s Day Brings Business Blessings**

Thursday, February 9th, 2012

Giving is a blessing, and Eric and Sandra Manro have always been as generous as possible. But four years ago, their giving paradigm began to shift from what they thought to what they believe God thinks.

Eric inherited his father’s business, All American Muffler, when he was 26, and has owned it for the past 20 years. With his wife Sandra and their two sons, now 19 and 17 years old, it’s a family business.

As small business owners, the Manro’s never know how profitable the business is until the year ends.

“We always gave a little bit outside of tithe and offerings,” Sandra says. But with two sons in Adventist school, there wasn’t much left over.

Their giving paradigm began to shift on a Sabbath morning. A church member shared something he was doing to help fund their church-sponsored mission trip. “He had set aside the net income from his business on the last Friday of the month. Eric began doing that,” Sandra explains.

And business on that day began to grow. “God just kept blessing,” Eric says. “There is a fear if we give more we will have less, but that is not true. If you are giving from a generous heart, He is going to bless you.”

**Reading in Proverbs**

At the 2008 Soquel camp meeting, Eric suggested they double their evangelism offering pledge. “We had two teenage sons who were about to enter academy,” Sandra says. “I prayed and surrendered to the Lord. ‘Go for it, but I don’t see how this is going to happen,’” she said.

Ten months later, the school bills were paid and their evangelism offering pledge was completed early. “We knew God was doing something,” says Sandra, who was also dealing with a life-threatening health issue.

Reading in Proverbs, Eric discovered promises about honoring God with your wealth and the first fruits of all your crops (3:9-11). “The promise [to me] in that text was I would have plenty to pay my bills,” Eric says. He told Sandra that he wanted to give God the sales from the first business day of the month — the gross earnings.

“That translates into 100 percent of sales,” Eric explains. Sandra was troubled. Employee pay, parts, supplies and overhead were included in the gross.
“Well, whatever,” she thought. “I still have my paycheck, so we would have groceries.”

**God’s Day**

When “God’s Day” started, customers grew dramatically. “How can we give this much away on faith before the end of the year?” Sandra thought. There was no need to worry — 2010 was their most prosperous year ever. By November 2011, income was 25 percent higher than the previous year.

“Our giving has increased 100 percent,” Eric reports. It’s a simple arrangement. God provides the blessings and then presents the giving opportunities. The latest one is playground equipment for a growing church. “This has really broken the selfishness in my heart. Now, it’s just fun!” Sandra adds.

Others have been watching — their sons, employees, vendors, and nearby business owners. When the owner of a Shell station asked Eric how he was increasing his customer base, Eric told him about God’s Day. “He’s a Christian and is doing a God’s Day. And he is prospering,” Eric shares.

“It is a thrilling, joyous and humbling experience,” Eric says. “The climax for me is that Jesus has given me a testimony to share with others, especially business owners.”


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**J. Willard ‘Bill’ Marriott - Tithe-payer**

Monday, January 23rd, 2012

Pictured here is J. Willard ‘Bill’ Marriott in front of the hospitality chain which bears his name.


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Story By Cindy R. Chamberlin

He was born to a poor Mormon sheepherder. By age 14, his father trusted him to move sheep between states, and complete tasks daunting to even
Cited:

According to LDS Church records, Marriott remained the highest tithe-payer within his denomination. He neither drank nor smoked and remained an avid Mormon. 

He talked his way into college. J. Willard “Bill” Marriott then transferred to the University of Utah, and worked his way through college selling woolen underwear to lumberjacks. His marketing was simple: locate the two “meanest-looking” lumberjacks, dare them to tear the cloth apart; if they couldn’t, they had to buy it. Always, the strategy worked.

Nearing graduation, Marriott became mesmerized by A&W root-beer stands. Soon flashbacks of his time traveling through hot, muggy Washington, D.C., while on mission came to mind. “So on May 20, 1927 — the day Charles Lindbergh launched his transatlantic flight — Marriott launched a nine-stool, root-beer stand in the nation’s capitol.”

Summer heat brought booming business; winter cold halted soda sales. Marriott and his new bride, Alice Sheets, stood to lose everything. What’s more they couldn’t afford to take the winter off like other stand owners did.

Relying on wit again, Marriott boarded a train and traveled to beg Roy Allen (the A in A&W) for permission to change his menu. (“Hot eats/cool treats” weren’t yet the norm.) Simultaneously, Mrs. Marriott befriended the cooks at the nearby Mexican embassy and they loaned her their recipe for spicy tamales.

Rather than shingle down in failure, the two Marriotts reworked the franchise, forming a new display sign and served up “warm” foods with root-beer. By day they watched stand, by night they washed syrupy nickels and took them to the bank.

No Detail Too Small

Sloppy at nothing, no detail too small, Marriott watched his holdings from dawn till dusk. Employee uniforms were starched and regulated — down to one’s stockings. Equipment was turned upside-down and inspected. Over 300 menu items were scrupulously prepared and monitored. One day Marriott asked for oatmeal and was told his store was out of the item. “Oatmeal is not negotiable!” he told the employee, since it was clearly promised on the menu. An early Marriott trademark depicts a uniformed serviceman, in full sprint ready to serve.

Quickly, one store became two, then three, then four... Before long, the hard-working Mormons were running a “small empire” of Hot Shoppe drive-ins despite the Great Depression around them.

One day an airline passenger stopped at the Hot Shoppe to buy a boxed lunch before flight. Quick-witted again, Marriott began boxing up lunches for travelers. This spotted “gap” in the food market caused him to diversify his food niche within airline catering, cafeterias, and institutional food service.”

Later at the insistence of his son, Marriott hesitantly entered the hotel industry — the hospitality chain which today bears his name. This spotted “gap” in the food market caused him to diversify his food niche within airline catering, cafeterias, and institutional food service. “Upon his death in 1985, one month short of his 85th birthday, his company had more than 1,400 restaurants and 143 hotels and resorts around the world, expected from himself, his employees, and others the highest of standards. Marriott's Way, J. Willard Marriott Jr. cites “growing up Marriott” meant while doing a job — any job — “perfection was one notch below the desired result.”

Marriott principles were exacting. The younger Marriott remembers polishing his father’s Sunday shoes for hours in order to pass “grueling inspections.” Marriott expected from himself, his employees, and others the highest of standards.

Four principles he lived by were: 1) clean living; 2) hard work and prayer; 3) staying out of debt; and 4) the golden rule. He also believed if he took care of employees, they would take care of customers and the money would take care of itself. His paternalistic policies are studied models of business schools today. These classes always underscore Marriott’s “impossibly” high standards and his relentless attention to details.

The driving belief of this former sheepherder from Utah “to stick with any job until it is done right,” is cited today as the 'recipe' for taking “a small nine-stool root-beer stand in 1927 ... [and turning it] into one of the largest hospitality hotel chains and food services companies in the world.”

Sources:


Posted in Cindy’s Garden Blog | 11 Comments »

At Lowest Ebb

Thursday, December 15th, 2011

Author Unknown. Editor Dr. Joe Wheeler, from Christmas in My Heart Series.
It was a bleak Christmas that year for the young pioneer minister and his wife. The money was gone, and even the well had given out. God, it appeared, had completely forgotten them.

But someone had forgotten to tell this to little Ruth.

I remember a day one winter that stands out like a boulder in my life. The weather was unusually cold, our salary had not been regularly paid, and it did not meet our needs when it was.

My husband was away much of the time, traveling from one district to another. Our boys were well, but my little Ruth was ailing, and at best none of us were decently clothed. I patched and repatched, with spirits sinking to the lowest ebb. The water gave out in the well, and the wind blew through cracks in the floor.

Each Family Was Struggling

The people in this frontier parish were kind, and generous too, but the settlement was new, and each family was struggling for itself. Little by little, at the time I needed it most, my faith began to waver.

Early in life I was taught to take God at His word, and I thought my lesson was well learned. I had lived upon the promises in dark times until I knew, as David did, "who was my fortress and deliverer?" Now a daily prayer for forgiveness was all that I could offer.

My husband's overcoat was hardly thick enough for October, and he was often obliged to ride miles to attend some meeting or funeral. Many times our breakfast was Indian cake and a cup of tea without sugar.

Christmas was coming; the children always expected their presents. I remember the ice was thick and smooth, and the boys were each craving a pair of skates. Ruth, in some unaccountable way, had taken a fancy that the dolls I had made were no longer suitable. She wanted a nice large one and insisted on praying for it.

I knew it was impossible but, oh, how I wanted to give each child a present. It seemed as if God had deserted us, but I did not tell my husband this. He worked so earnestly and heartily I supposed him to be as hopeful as ever. I kept the sitting room cheerful with an open fire, and I tried to serve our scanty meals as invitingly as I could.

The morning before Christmas James was called to see a sick man. I put up a piece of bread for his lunch (it was the best I could do), wrapped my plaid shawl around his neck, and then tried to whisper a promise as I often had, but the words died away upon my lips. I let him go without it.

That was a dark, hopeless day. I coaxed the children to bed early, for I could not bear their talk. When Ruth went, I listened to her prayer. She asked for the last time most explicitly for her doll and for skates for her brothers. Her bright face looked so lovely when she whispered to me, "You know, I think they'll be here early tomorrow morning, Mama," that I thought I'd be willing to move heaven and earth to save her from disappointment. I sat down alone and gave way to the most bitter tears.

Before long James returned, chilled and exhausted. As he drew off his boots the thin stockings slipped off with them, and his feet were red with cold.

"I wouldn't treat a dog that way, let alone a faithful servant," I said. Then, as I glanced up and saw the hard lines in his face and the look of despair, it flashed across me: James had let go too.

I brought him a cup of tea, feeling sick and dizzy at the very thought. He took my hand, and we sat for an hour without a word. I wanted to die and meet God and tell Him His promise wasn't true. My soul was so full of rebellious despair.

It was a Wonderful Box

There came a sound of bells, a quick stop, and a loud knock at the door. James sprang up to open it. There stood Deacon White. "A box came by express just before dark. I brought it around as soon as I could get away. Reckoned it might be for Christmas. 'At any rate,' I said to myself, 'they shall have it tonight.' There is a turkey my wife asked me to fetch along, and these other things I believe belong to you."

There was a basket of potatoes and a bag of flour. Talking all the time, he carried in the box, and then with a hearty goodnight he rode away.

Still without speaking, James found a chisel and opened the box. He drew out first a thick red blanket, and we saw that beneath was full of clothing. It seemed at that moment as if Christ fastened upon me a look of reproach. James sat down and covered his face with his hands. "I can't touch them!" he exclaimed. "I haven't been true, just when God was trying me to see if I could hold out. Do you think I could not see how you were suffering? And I had no word of comfort to offer. I know now how to preach the awfulness of turning away from God."

"James," I said, clenching to him, "don't take it to heart like this. I am to blame; I ought to have helped you. We will ask Him together to forgive us."

"Wait a moment, dear, I cannot talk now," he said. Then he went into another room.

I knelt down, and my heart broke. In an instant all the darkness, all the stubbornness, rolled away. Jesus came again and stood before me, but with the loving word "Daughter!"

Sweet promises of tenderness and joy flooded my soul. I was so lost in praise and gratitude that I forgot everything else. I don't know how long it was before James came back, but I knew he too had found peace.

"Now, my dear wife," he said, "let us thank God together." And he then poured out the words of praise—Bible words, for nothing else could express our thanksgiving.

It was 11:00, the fire was low, and there was the great box, and nothing touched but the warm blanket we needed. We piled on some fresh logs, lighted two candles and began to examine our treasures.

We drew out an overcoat. I made James try it on—just the right size. And I danced around him, for all my lightheartedness had returned. Then there was a cloak, and he insisted in seeing me in it. My spirits always infected him, and we both laughed like foolish children.

There was a warm suit of clothes and three pairs of woollen hose. There was a dress for me and yards of flannel, a pair of Arctic overshoes for each of us. In mine was a slip of paper. I have it now and mean to hand it down to my children. On it was written Jacob's blessing to Asher: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." In the gloves (evidently for James) the same dear hand had written: "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee: Fear not, I will help thee."

Dreading Nothing so Much as to Doubt

It was a wonderful box and had been packed with thoughtful care. There was a suit of clothes for each of the boys and a little red gown for Ruth. There were mittens, scarves and hoods. Down in the center was a box. We opened it—and there was a great wax doll. I burst into tears again. James wept with me for joy. It was too much. And then we both exclaimed again, for close behind it came two pairs of skates. There were books for us to read (some of them I had yearned for), stories for the children to read, aprons and underclothing, knots of ribbon, a gay little tidy, a lovely photograph, needles, buttons, and thread, and a muff, and an envelope containing a $10 gold piece.

At last we cried over everything we took up. It was past midnight, and we were faint and exhausted with happiness. I made a cup of tea, cut a fresh loaf of bread, and James boiled some eggs. We drew up the table before the fire, and how we enjoyed our supper! And then we sat, talking over our life, and how sure a help God had always proved.
You should have seen the next morning! The boys raised a shout at the sight of their skates. Ruth caught up her doll and hugged it tightly without a word. Then she went into her room and knelt by her bed.

When she came back, she whispered to me, “I knew it would be here, Mama, but I wanted to thank God just the same, you know.”

My husband then said, “Look here, wife, see the difference?”

We went to the window, and there were the boys out of the house already, skating on the ice with all their might.

My husband and I both tried to return thanks to the church in the East that had sent us the box and have tried to return thanks unto God every day since. Hard times have come again and again, but we have trusted in Him, dreading nothing so much as to doubt His protecting care. Again and again, we have proved that “they that seek the Lord shall not want for any good thing.”

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**Velvet Elvis Encrusted Flea Markets**

Wednesday, November 30th, 2011

This story is written by Becky C. Smith.

Shortened by Cindy R. Chamberlin and used with written permission by the author.

*“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4*

Steve and I were paying our bills one night when we came upon an unexpected whopper of a bill. We had to work pretty hard to pull all the numbers to work out, but we managed to get that bill paid, in addition to writing our monthly tithe check which was due at the same time.

As I began to write that check to the church I thought to myself, “I know what the Bible says about tithing. I know what I’ve practiced all my life. I know what we’ve taught our children. However, it would sure be nice, just this once, to take that tithe money and put it on this big bill.” (We didn’t. And I knew we wouldn’t. But I just wanted to confess that I was surely and sorely tempted!)

Because of that large bill, when I headed out to the grocery store the following day, didn’t have a whole lot of extra money left to spend. I shopped very carefully with my main splurges being some extra fruit and a box of Little Debbie Snack Cakes.

The next morning, I happened to hear two families in our church were in need of meals due to some medical challenges... Providing those meals turned out to be an enlightening experience for me because as I started packing up my homemade chicken pot pie and deciding which side dishes to send along, I felt an unexpected but unmistakable twinge of selfishness shoot through my soul.

**The Chocolate Ones**

I knew it would be nice for the families to have some sort of dessert to go with their meals but the only “dessert-y type” things I had in the house were my newly purchased (and highly coveted) Little Debbie cakes.

Sarah loved those green grapes I had just bought. Did I really want to send out the door the groceries I had just selected and purchased with such frugality? Did I really want to give away my Little Debbie Snack Cakes, the chocolate ones?

“Okay. I will give this stuff away and I will be happy about it and I will believe that as we are faithful to be generous with what we have, then God will be faithful to supply our needs...”

Two weeks from then, Sarah (along with three other girls) was taking part in an Honor Stars Crowning Ceremony, which is the culmination of a whole lot of work done in conjunction with her girls’ group at church. Each girl was to have a white dress for this ceremony. I wanted Sarah to have something lovely. However, I knew I couldn’t just sashay into Jewel’s Formal Wear downtown and fork over $100 for one of their lovely dresses.

Well, last Friday on our day off, Steve and I decided to continue our ongoing quest for a gently used couch for his church office. We hadn’t been walking through that flea market for more than five minutes when I glanced up and saw a truly wondrous and incredible sight. I saw... (wait for it)... a white, junior bridesmaid dress.

As soon as I saw the dress, I screeched to a halt, veered off my course and charged across the aisle leaving my bewildered husband wandering in my wake. I wanted to take a closer look at the dress to make sure it wasn’t just an apparition that my overwrought imagination had conjured up.
The Price

I looked at the size; it was Sarah's size. I looked at the price; it was only $15! I sternly laid aside the temptation to do a happy jig in the middle of the aisle and merely asked the man behind the counter if he would hold the dress till the next day.

Later that day when I told Sarah I had found a dress possibility she said, "It sounds pretty. What store is it at?"

I said, "Well...[long pause]...it's at a flea market."

Poor child, she had never even heard of a flea market! She said, "Mom, you want to buy my special white dress for my crowning ceremony at a place called a flea market?"

But Sarah is a chip off the old block and is very open minded in her shopping philosophies. As long as she understood that the dress from the flea market was not going to be infested with fleas, she was all for going to take a look at it.

As we pulled up to the weather beaten warehouse, I had a moment's misgiving. I looked at the place through the eyes of a twelve year old, aware of fashions, brands and style and I thought, "Oh dear. She is going to think this is the worst place ever and she is going to be utterly appalled about the fact her mom is even thinking about buying her special dress in a place that sells rusty tools and velvet pictures of Elvis."

But to her credit, she flung her little purse across her shoulder, beamed at me brightly and happily accompanied me through the doors. When she saw the dress, she liked it. She tried it on. It fit.

As we were getting ready to pay the vendor's wife walked over and said, "I thought you might like to know that this dress was worn just one time. Also, you might be interested to know it came from Jewel's Formal Wear downtown." (This was the very place I knew we couldn't afford to shop.)

I stood there for a moment in stunned, quiet thankfulness as I was reminded so beautifully that God had seen my challenges throughout the week – my struggles with writing the tithe check and my even bigger struggles with giving away the food (especially the chocolate).

The coincidence of finding a dress like that in a place like an old flea market was not lost on me. I mean, what were the chances of it being the right color, the right size, the right style and coming from the very store I had wanted to shop in?

The joy on Sarah's face at finding such a lovely bargain made me smile as I completed the transaction, being extra careful to keep the lovely white frock from coming into contact with the old dirty wrenches and pliers that were flung across the table near the cash register.

I felt like God was saying, "You wrote your tithe check and gave away your chicken, your green grapes and your chocolate Little Debbie snack cakes and in return; I had a white dress waiting for you in the most unlikely of places. Is that a good trade-off, or what?"

What's the bottom line? Don't ever tell me God isn't everywhere, or that He doesn't see everything! He even shows up in dusty, musty, velvet Elvis encrusted Flea Markets.

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Posted in Cindy's Garden Blog | No Comments »

Nelle

Thursday, October 13th, 2011

Re-written by Cindy R. Chamberlin, as adapted from Paul Kengor's work. Permission granted via Dr. Kengor.

“You can be too big for God to use, but you cannot be too small,” an annotation from Nelle's Bible.

On a brisk February evening in Dixon in 1922, shortly after his eleventh birthday, Dutch strolled home returning from a basketball game at the nearby YMCA. His mother, Nelle, was out on a sewing job trying to earn a few dollars. Dutch expected to come back to an empty house. Instead, he was shaken by the sight of his father sprawled out in the snow on the front porch, passed out, flat on his back, freezing, too inebriated to make it to the door. “He was drunk,” his son later remembered, “dead to the world.” The boy leaned over and smelled the whiskey escaping through his dad's long snores. His hair was soaked with melted snow, matted unevenly against the side of his reddened face.
Dark Demon

Jack’s arms were stretched out, recalled his son, “as if he were crucified — as indeed he was.” He had been taken by the “dark demon in the bottle.” Dutch stood over his father for a minute or two, not sure how to react. He wanted to simply let himself in the door, go to bed, and pretend his dad wasn’t there. Instead, Dutch grabbed a fistful of the old man’s overcoat and heaved him toward the door. He dragged him into the house and to the bedroom, out of the way of the weather’s harm and the neighbors’ fixed attention. It was a sad moment for father and son.1

“They were awful poor,” a neighbor reflected years later. Another friend recalled her family sent so many charity food plates over that her father built a hinge next to the family’s kitchen window so food could easily be left inside. Dutch’s father, Jack, a nominal Catholic, alcoholic and unsuccessful salesman, moved his family from town to town, job to job, and rental to rental. Dutch’s family never owned a home and had to sublease the houses they stayed in just to make rent.2 They could afford few decorated Christmas trees, but undaunted, Nelle decorated a table or created a cardboard fireplace out of a packing box with ribbon and crepe paper.3

Bleak Life

Despite the face of alcoholism by Dutch’s father, extreme poverty, and frugal living, Nelle stayed forever optimistic and cheery, accepting her hardships as God’s unerring plan, and throwing herself fully into helping the “poor and helpless.” Dutch’s most vivid, earliest memory of his mother was of her taking a covered dish to someone needier than they.

“If there ever was such a thing as a saint on earth, it was Nelle,” said friends later. Nelle visited the sick in hospitals, bravely walked into tuberculosis (TB) wards, comforted mentally ill in institutions, and gave weekly Bible studies to jail inmates. Nelle’s flair as an “elocutionist” — notably in her “dramatic readings” of Scripture — made her a favorite among prisoners.

As a prodigious newspaper reader, Nelle followed international events closely out of personal interest and with a sense of Christian obligation. Doing some work for Russian believers, in the summer of 1924, she helped raise money to erect a chapel for the Russian church in New York City — a symbolic act showing solidarity for Russian believers.

Frugal Life

There is no doubt if she had the education, today she would have been ordained.1 Sources claim Nelle lead her church virtually single-handed, writing bulletins, preparing Sunday programs, prodding the congregation ... Nelle’s True Blue Sunday school class was the largest (even more popular than the pastor’s) and her church was described by one historian as, “the voice of democracy and individualism in the religious sphere.”

Blessed with an engaging voice and the confidence of a natural performer — Nelle was renowned in Dixon for her recitations both outside the church and within, self-written stories and poems frequently published locally, and for acting in plays. Dutch, always in tow, absorbed his lifelong love for drama and language skills from the time at his mother’s church.1

Did Nelle ever wonder if her prayers escaped the ceiling? In her frugal life, was her dedication for good in vain? Her heavenward petitions lost?

Nelle’s prayers and good deeds came to fruition decades later, echoing in the voice of the 40th president of the United States of America, Dutch — a.k.a Ronald Wilson Reagan. President Reagan, habitually and unapologetically declared his mother’s God. He projected Nelle’s youthful optimism, exuded her cheerfulness, captured her love for theater, and championed her good deeds.

Tear Down this Wall

Reagan’s words at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, Germany, on June 12, 1987, “Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall,” effectively toppled the Berlin Wall and ended the cold war. But these were not accidental words; these were straight from the pew at his mothers’ church. Common recurring threads within his speeches, freedom and opportunity were non-other than Nelle’s winsome optimism peeking out. In his two presidential terms, Reagan was unapologetic for his Christian beliefs and often referenced “God’s unerring divine plan,” in the face of obstacles— a pattern learned in childhood.
Nellanomics

When random requests arrived at the White House that he could fulfill, historians say he did so. Once, an elderly gentleman wrote to him and asked him for a rocking chair, it was the formative Dutch, who took the oval pen and ordered it delivered to the needy address. Nelle’s charities showed themselves in the president’s small kindnesses: He chose to stay at the White House for Christmases rather than return to his beloved ranch so his secret servicemen could be near their families. His most lifelong treasured Christmas gift was a letter describing how his brother brought Christmas to a needy family.

Trickle-down Reaganomics brought about the longest peacetime economic stability in U.S. history, surpassed only by a short time in the 1990s. But in reality these were “Nellanomics,” the trickle down of one godly woman who inculcated a young boy and formed a president in the process.

Nelle did not live to see her son become leader of the free world. However, she always credited her son’s ascent in Hollywood and his financial success to her tithing. As president, Reagan advocated and paid a regular tithe, quoting his mother’s scrupulous training to give 10 percent. During his youth he “tithed” to his brother’s college tuition because the boy had no other way to go. Reagan quoted Nelle’s belief, “The Lord [would] make her 90 percent twice as big if she [made sure He got] his tenth.” (Leviticus) He said she believed being faithful would grant her a tremendous spiritual and earthly blessing in return.

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6 Ronald Reagan’s Democrat to Republican, p. 68

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Blackbirds to the Rescue

Thursday, September 22nd, 2011

Story by Arthur Maxwell

“I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty,” (Malachi 3:11 NIV).

The tomato plants – twenty-seven acres of them were all coming along well. Already they were covered with blossom, with promise of a very large crop. Looking over the big field, Farmer Jones naturally thought of the harvest, soon to be reaped, and how much he would get for it. “Those tomatoes mean at least $4,000 to me,” he said. “I hope nothing goes wrong with them; they are all I have.”

An Army
But even as he spoke an enemy was on the way. It was an army, not of men, but of worms – small, hungry creatures like caterpillars that move in such large numbers that they are called army worms. They will eat a field clean of every green thing with the speed of locusts.

One morning, as Farmer Jones was walking around his field to see if all was well, he saw the worms in one corner of it, and cold fear seized him. He knew it would be but a matter of days before they had swarmed over all his precious plants and devoured the lot.

He hurried indoors to tell his wife. “Come, look, the army worms are here,” he called. “Our crop is lost.” Mother ran out to see, and her heart sank also, for she, too, knew what it meant. The family’s living was at stake. Food, clothes, home itself – all depend upon that tomato crop, and now the army worms were eating it up.

Then the children ran to look, and they were worried, too, for they had worked long hours helping father to prepare the land, plant the tomatoes, and irrigate them. “What are we going to do?” asked Jamey. “We can never kill them all.”

“No, we can never kill them all,” said father.

“There are too many, and they seem to multiply every minute Father,” said Mary, “we must ask Jesus to help us.”

“But what can He do for us in trouble like this?”

“But doesn’t it say somewhere in the Bible, Father, ‘I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes’: Why don’t we claim that promise?” said Mary.

“Perhaps we should,” said father, “but it’s pretty hopeless, now.”

Rebuke the Devourer

“I am going to look it up in the Bible,” said Mary. And she did. She found it in the book of Malachi, and read it out to the others: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts,” (Malachi 3:10, 11).

“There it is, Father,” she said eagerly. “I knew it was there. You see now it says that if we are faithful in paying our tithe to God, then God will ‘rebuke the devourer’ for our sakes. You pay your tithe, Father, so God must do what He says. Maybe He is just waiting for us to ask Him. Why don’t we pray right now?”

Somehow the others caught Mary’s spirit of faith in the heavenly Father. They knelt down in that tomato field and prayed to God as they had never prayed before, claiming His promised protection. Father prayed. Mother prayed. The children prayed. They told God how they had tried to be faithful to Him; how they had paid their tithe honestly to His cause to the best of their knowledge and ability, and how they wanted to serve Him loyally all their days. Then they told Him of the terrible thing that was happening to them, and how much they needed His help. “Fulfill Thy promise, Lord,” they cried. “Rebuke the devourer!”

Then something happened. You may find it difficult to believe, but I know it’s true. I have visited that field, which is less than a hundred miles from my home. I have talked with the farmer and his wife and his children. They saw this miracle with their own eyes and will never forget it.

Hardly had they ceased praying than a blackbird appeared. Then came another, and another, and yet another. Dozens of blackbirds. Scores of blackbirds. Hundreds of blackbirds. The sky was literally black with them. They came and settled on that field and ate up every army worm that was there. They stayed exactly two hours, but when they left, rising up like a black cloud and flying away, chattering excitedly to one another, there was not a single army worm to be found on that tomato field. Not a single plant was lost, and the whole crop was gathered in.

So God kept His promise! He even called upon the blackbirds to go to the rescue of His faithful children. Wonderful God. Wonderful Savior. Let us trust Him more.
Quaker Oats
Story by Cindy R. Chamberlin

In 1881 he bought the “bankrupt Quaker Mill at Ravenna, Ohio, and its most important asset, the brand name – Quaker.” Quakerism was synonymous with scrupulous honesty, simplicity of life, purity of character, and dealings of fair trade — all of which embodied Crowell who is said never to have compromised principle even when it would have been clearly in his advantage to do so. (The original Quaker Man was a registered trademark emphasizing purity so much it carried a scroll with the word “pure” inscribed upon it.) Within ten years, Quaker Oats was a household word to millions.

Breakfast Autocrat

Henry Parsons Crowell, (1855–1943) founder of the Quaker Oats Company, called “the autocrat of the breakfast table,” or “the man who invented breakfast,” changed what Americans ate, reinvented the way storekeepers stocked shelves, and revolutionized modern marketing and merchandising methods respected even today.

His father, brothers, and he contracted tuberculosis. Sadly, they died. He lived, but spent seven years under doctor’s orders rebuilding his health outdoors in a moderate climate. He was left with a large inheritance and could easily have had a life of luxury, but instead chose hard work.

A life-changing moment occurred for Crowell when he went and heard Dwight L. Moody speak. Moody said, “Do you ever think big things for God? The world has Good Businessman yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.”

This resonated with Crowell and he prayed, “Lord, by your grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, I’ll be that man! I can’t be a preacher, but I can be a good businessman. God, if you will let me make money, I will use it in your service.”

Without a college education, but showing trade acumen, Crowell strived to be the best possible businessman. Up until this time, American store owners ordered what they thought would sell, from wholesale vendors. Rather than convince storeowners to buy his product, Crowell believed he could go directly to buyers with his product. Whereby, he created his own consumer. “Advertising to the consumer was considered a crazy idea … even more, no one knew what
might happen if someone tried to sell a legitimate product with honest claims.”

Crowell saturated the country with Quaker Oats advertising. He ran a train with boxcars covered with the Quaker Oats name from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to Portland, Oregon. He “sponsored exhibits at fairs and expositions where salesmen offered and prepared oatmeal and cereal samples in their booths and explained the production process through fancy displays.”

In the 1800s, shoppers got their food out of bulk bins (like bulk sections). Crowell was the first to product package, wrapping his oats in bright papers, featuring the Quaker Man logo. (The Quaker Man was the first American advertising icon placed on a food product). He also introduced the first-ever “trial-size samples. “The 1/2 oz. Quaker Oats samples were delivered to every mailbox in Portland.” These were new concepts and the public loved them.

Crowell Trust

In 1926 the company purchased Aunt Jemima; in 1961, Life Cereal; in 1963, Cap’n Crunch; in 1965 Quisp Cereal; in 1978 Cinnamon Life; in 1983 Stokely-Van Camp (who owned the Gatorade brand); in 1986 the Golden Grain Company (makers of Rice-A-Roni); and in 1994 the Snapple Beverage Company. In the 1980s they branched out into Chewy Granola bars. In 1946, 1955, 1958, 1970, 1972, elements of the Quaker Man trademark were redesigned, but for the most part, the company has stayed true to the original image.

Crowell was a non-denominational Christian, who “made the business a part of his daily prayers.” Although he had a “great capacity for creating wealth,” he used it solely to advance the kingdom of God. The most recurrent and unified theme summarizing his life is this: “Henry Parsons Crowell, Quaker Oats founder, was one of the wealthiest men of Chicago. When he died, he had given away nearly 70 percent of his earnings for more than 40 years. But Crowell viewed all things as a stewardship from God — including influence. Over the years, one businessman after another would comment on how he came to know Christ personally because of the life of integrity lived by Henry Parsons Crowell.”

Prior to his death, Crowell chaired the Moody Bible Institute’s Board of Directors. He “set up a wisely administered trust as a vehicle to be used to faithfully serve God’s work in perpetuity.” Today, the Crowell Trust continues his legacy and grants to organizations dedicated to “the teaching and active extension of the doctrines of Evangelical Christianity.”

Upon the businessman’s death, it was said: “The world has indeed seen what God can do through a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to HIM.”

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Giving Opened up Scrooge's Heart

Thursday, December 9th, 2010

By Catherine Ford, Calgary Herald December 9, 2010

... When Tiny Tim looks longingly into the window display of toys that are so far beyond his reach both physically and financially, all he can do is hope for a miracle. We know the rest of the story. We know the miracle did happen and the original Christmas Grinch, Ebenezer Scrooge, saw the error of his miserly ways. Tiny Tim didn’t die. Scrooge became a man much loved in his world. But even before that, Christmas and its spirit thrived in spite of humbugs. It flourished even in the face of the “squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner,” as Charles Dickens described Scrooge.
In December of 1990, one year before the Calgary Herald started the Christmas Fund, I wrote about the long lineups for food on the streets of Moscow. “Those of us who share a climate with the Russian capital appreciate the exquisite pain of standing in the cold. What must it be like to do so out of necessity?”

It wasn’t the lack of food available to the ordinary people that underscored the want, it was the lack of hard currency. Moscow’s 19th-century farmers’ market on Tsvetnoy Boulevard was bursting with fresh food of every variety. I know. I walked through it, marvelling at the quality and the amount available, so unlike the state stores with their nearly empty, grimy shelves. There was none of that “mystery meat” as we dubbed dinner at our hotel; no boiled-to-extinction vegetables. Just stall after stall of marketable goods, from food to flowers, coffee to chickens, much like the Calgary Farmers’ Market, only in Russian with Cyrillic signs.

But like Tiny Tim, whose parents couldn’t afford store-bought toys, the food was priced out of the reach of the ordinary Russian citizen who was paid in rubles. One kilo of beef was 15 rubles at a time when a Moscow apartment rented for 10 rubles a month and a doctor earned 200.

There are such people in our midst, those for whom hard times are a reality. Today can be seen as a mirror reflection of 1990 — the beginning of the decade that followed the greedy 1980s, a return to reality, a time when few of us were optimistic in the face of a recession.

We’re human, so we forget. When the money rolls in again, a recession becomes just another minor point in our city’s history.

Every recession is different, and so is this one. It’s similar to Leo Tolstoy’s truism which opens his novel, Anna Karenina. … He writes: “Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way,” he is reminding us, in a fashion, that happiness and good times are shared experiences, while unhappiness and recession are individualized.

Christmas really isn’t about how much money one spends, but what one does with it. It’s about remembering the best present one can give herself is the small part each of us plays in ensuring a measure of happiness for others.

This is the best news of all: That by giving to others, we make ourselves happy.

At the very end of A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens writes about Scrooge: “He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town or borough.”

And each year at Christmas, I cherish Scrooge’s sentiment: “His own heart laughed; and that was quite enough for him.”

Catherine Ford is a retired Herald columnist and writes a weekly opinion. © Copyright (c) The Calgary Herald.

And God said, and there was…you!

–Cindy R. Chamberlin

Field of Flowers

Thursday, June 25th, 2009