VOP Cruise Guests Get an Alaskan Education

More than 500 guests are enjoying the Voice of Prophecy-sponsored Camp Meeting at Sea on a cruise up Alaska's Inland Passage. The cruise, which left Vancouver, British Columbia, on June 1, will reach its destination by Friday, June 8, near Anchorage, Alaska. Those on board have enjoyed guest speakers, Dwight Nelson and Derrick Morris, and a bevy of VOP musicians. They have also received an eye-opening dose of education from Ken and Colleen Crawford, Alaska Conference president and his wife, on how life and mission intersect throughout this vast North American mission field. Each day during the cruise, the Crawfords have shared a different video produced by Todd Gessele, North Pacific Union Conference communication associate director. Watch videos 1, 2 and 3 via You Tube.

It's Camp Meeting Season Again

Adventists and community guests from around the Northwest are making their last-minute plans now for 2012 camp meetings. The Alaska Conference will lead with a camp meeting June 8–16 in the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage. This weeklong event includes the Voice of Prophecy Revive series of meetings to be broadcast via satellite each evening. Four such events kick off next week: Idaho Conference Camp Meeting on the campus of Gem State Adventist Academy in Caldwell, is June 12–16; both the Montana Conference Camp Meetings at Mt. Ellis Academy in Bozeman and the Upper Columbia Conference Camp Meeting at Upper Columbia Academy in Spangle, Wash., will be held June 13–16; and, Washington Camp Meeting, held at Auburn Adventist Academy, will run from June 14–23. The Oregon Conference Hispanic Camp Meeting is scheduled for July 12–14 in Gladstone, Ore., with the main camp meeting following, July 17–21. A focus on evangelism is a high priority for each of these events. The Washington Conference hopes to raise its largest evangelism offering goal ever — $500,000.

What Goes Up in 20 Seconds?

The big tent for the Upper Columbia Camp Meeting — that's what. Well, it really took much longer than that, but you can see the whole "uplifting" experience in 20 seconds, courtesy of a time lapse video HERE. The 190 by 100 foot tent was raised this week on the Upper Columbia Academy ball field in preparation for next week's camp meeting. City officials say the structure is the largest tent to be erected in recent memory.

Looking Ahead

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Positive Life Radio Listeners Sponsor 170 Third World Children

During the recent Positive Life Radio Days of Compassion, listeners from throughout the inland Northwest, signed up to sponsor 170 needy children from countries such as Colombia, Haiti, Uganda, Peru and Guatemala. “We team up with Compassion International every year,” says Sali Miller, promotions manager. “Sponsorship makes a huge difference for these kids. Thirty-eight dollars a month means food, clean water, medical care and education opportunities.” Read more HERE.

Soy Can Help Lower Blood Pressure

In the United States, about one in three adults has high blood pressure of 140/90 or higher. Left unchecked, high blood pressure can lead to serious complications such as blood clots, cholesterol and plaque build-up on artery walls, heart attacks, or strokes. In most cases, high blood pressure is preventable and treatable, and medication may not be required. For example, in a recent study, researchers found that eating soy protein helped reduce blood pressure. Read more on this HERE and other current health topics at Wellsource.com.

Will Rome be the New World Capital for Religious Freedom?

Read the commentary from John Graz, world church religious liberty director HERE.

Cindy's Garden Blog

Chocolate through the depression. Who is the famous tithe-payer that built a town during an economic recession? See the tithe story at Cindy's Garden Blog.
Compassion is more than just a word for 170 children in countries such as Colombia, Haiti, Uganda, Peru and Guatemala. For these children, compassion is a person living in the College Place and Walla Walla area—someone who cares enough to provide hope.

That hope has come in the form of sponsorship. During the Positive Life Radio Days of Compassion, listeners from throughout the Inland Northwest signed up to sponsor children who otherwise would face a life of poverty and disease.

“We team up with Compassion International [www.compassion.com] every year,” says Sali Miller, promotions manager. “Sponsorship makes a huge difference for these kids. Thirty-eight dollars a month means food, clean water, medical care, education opportunities and life-skills training for a child. Meeting these basic needs gives children a chance to build a better future.”

Of course, it’s not always easy reaching out to help someone. It can stretch the family budget here at home. But, as one sponsor says, “Being financially uncomfortable is worth it.”

“It’s not too late to join the program,” Miller says. For more information visit the Positive Life Radio website at www.plr.org or call 1-800-355-4757.
Soy Helps Lower Blood Pressure

In the United States, about one in three adults has high blood pressure (higher than 140/89 mmHg). Left unchecked, high blood pressure can lead to serious complications such as blood clots, cholesterol and plaque build-up on artery walls, heart attack, or stroke. In most cases, high blood pressure is preventable and treatable, and medication may not be required.

Recent research showed that eating soy protein may help reduce blood pressure. In a study of 45,694 women, those who consumed 6 grams or more of soy protein per day had blood pressure readings of 120/80 mmHg or lower, compared to non-soy eaters.

In another study, researchers looked at soy protein consumption for a group of 5,115 people over a 20-year period. Those who consumed at least 2.5 grams of soy protein per day lowered their systolic pressure by an average of 5.52 points.

An average serving of soybeans (1 cup of cooked soybeans, or 8 ounces of soy milk) contains just as much healthy protein as an egg (5-7 grams per serving), and almost as much protein as red meat. The only thing missing in soy is the high level of artery-clogging cholesterol. (Like all plants, soybeans have zero cholesterol.) Soybeans also contain more protein than any other legume.

For people who do have high blood pressure, medication may be necessary. But increasing soy protein in the diet – with tofu, soy milk, and other soy-rich foods – can also help lower blood pressure and keep it in within the normal range.

Sources:
American College of Cardiology Study, 2012.
Rome recently launched an “Observatory on Religious Freedom,” an initiative aimed at making Rome the “reference point for the defense of religious freedom in the world.”

This initiative is supported by the mayor of Rome, the Roman Catholic pontiff, Vatican officials and several international diplomats. According to news reports, the observatory is a conference “dedicated to the status and protection of Christian minorities in the world.”

I had mixed feelings as I considered this report. Four years ago, I shared a similar dream with my colleagues as we met together for an International Religious Liberty Association Meeting of Experts. I asked, “Where could we organize a World Forum on Religious Freedom in a city that has long associations with the cause of religious liberty?” We considered possibilities – perhaps Richmond, Virginia, home of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, America’s well-known “fathers of freedom”; La Rochelle, in France, in memory of the persecuted Huguenots; Geneva, Switzerland; or Toronto, Canada.

But we never considered Rome. We knew that throughout its long history, Rome has been more commonly associated with religious repression than with religious freedom.

For more than three centuries, the emperors of Rome pursued brutal campaigns against Christian believers and against the church. Even after the Christianization of the Roman Empire, religious persecution didn’t go away; only the identity of the victims changed. For the next millennium, non-Christians, dissidents and heretics became the targets of Rome’s repression.

There’s no doubt that the situation has changed dramatically. Since the Second Vatican Council of the early 1960s, the Roman Catholic Church has become more open to the right of individuals to choose their religion. Several Pontifical statements in recent decades have affirmed this ideal.

But as an institution, the Catholic Church’s conversion to the cause of religious freedom came late in the game – many years after the groundbreaking work of religious groups, including the Mennonites, Baptists and Seventh-day Adventists. The Catholic Church began to embrace religious freedom some 70 years after the IRLA was chartered by Adventist leaders, and more than 15 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was voted in Paris on December 10, 1948.

So are latecomers to religious freedom now preparing to lead the way? And if so, is this is a positive development?

It depends. Religious liberty around the world today needs as many defenders as it can muster,
regardless of their historical track record. If a church or organization expresses its unqualified support for the right of individuals to believe and worship freely, this can only be a positive development.

But questions still remain if Rome, through this new initiative, will truly defend the rights of everyone, no matter what their faith tradition. It must demonstrate that will be a passionate voice for people such as persecuted evangelicals and Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide, as well as for the rights of “mainstream,” traditional churches.

Last year, we saw the Russian Orthodox Church – not historically known for its zeal in defending religious freedom for all – organize a symposium in Moscow focusing on the persecution of Christian minorities around the world. The IRLA chapter in Russia, which has held successful meetings and symposiums in Moscow every year since the collapse of the communist regime, welcomed this new initiative by country’s dominant religion.

Times may be changing. Voices that have historically been muted when it comes to the rights of religious minorities may indeed be preparing to become active religious freedom advocates.

Only time will tell if the Observatory on Religious Freedom will push Rome forward as an international "religious freedom capital." And only time will tell if Rome intends to champion a broad notion of religious freedom, which reflects the ideal articulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

—John Graz is Secretary General of the International Religious Liberty Association, a non-sectarian organization, which was established in 1893.
Milton S. Hershey, Tithe-payer (1857–1945)
By Cindy R. Chamberlin

Although, he experimented with cocoa and sugar his candy-making attempts were far from “sweet.” In fact, he had failed so miserably in two candy enterprises, his uncle refused to provide him another loan. Milton S. Hershey was penniless, an elementary school drop-out, and a failure twice over.

For a time, he served as a printing apprentice, but he was dismissed from this too for lack of attention. By age 29, he returned home to Lancaster, Pa. Eventually he got a third loan and purchased the ingredients to begin a caramel business. Making candy by day, and peddling the confections by night, he got a “break” from an English candy importer, impressed with the fresh taste and the quality of his caramels.²

From this, Hersey made enough money to pay off his loan and launch The Lancaster Caramel Company in 1886. Merely four years after his failures in Philadelphia and New York, Hershey became one of Lancaster’s most successful businessmen and a millionaire.² By 1894, he produced baking chocolate, cocoa and sweet chocolate coating for caramels under the name Hershey Chocolate Company.

As a leading employer, Hershey felt as much concern for his fellowmen as he did with milk chocolate. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, he strategically kept employees on payroll by having them create their own model town. Hershey, Pa., the Chocolate Capitol, provided a “recipe” for creating more jobs, instilling workers’ pride, and providing new, safe havens for workers bringing up families. Hershey Town became a “delicious” assortment of streets with namesakes bearing sweet candies and dreamy confections, the Cocoa House, Chocolate Ave, etc. Consequentially the town drew tourism. Amidst severe economic times, Hershey went on record stating not one of his employees was laid off, but he instead added to his payroll.
As young boy, raised in the strict Mennonite faith, Hershey’s mother instilled in him these words, “Watch every penny son. God gives us all we have.” Hershey remained a faithful tithe-payer throughout his life. Company records display his good-sense frugalities, practicing creative buying and wholesale sugar storage. Additionally, Hershey “practiced extensive philanthropy, supporting many churches and worthwhile causes.” On one service spree, he reportedly gave $20,000 to all of the denominations in his community alike. Additionally, in 1910, he and his childless wife, Catherine, established a school for orphaned boys. Hershey watched over the boys’ school and in 1918 he endowed it with the large majority of his fortune.

Those who knew the entrepreneur say, “He always placed the quality of his product and the well-being of his workers ahead of profits.” After his death, the Hershey Company continues to reign as the world’s largest chocolate manufacturer with more than 11,000 employees and almost $5 billion in sales. Hershey Town continues to draw tourism, and the Hershey Company generates new brands each year.

Post Script: One might say a dab of chocolate and an honest tithe may go further than we once imagined...

-CC-

Sources:

Posted in Cindy's Garden Blog | No Comments »

Heinz ‘57, Entrepreneur, Tithe-payer

Thursday, April 19th, 2012

“Heart power is better than horse power.” Henry James Heinz

“At age six, young Henry started helping his mother tend a small garden behind the family home. At age eight Henry was canvassing the neighborhood with a basket under each arm selling vegetables from the family garden door to door. By age nine he was growing, grinding, bottling and selling his own brand of horseradish sauce. At ten he was given a ¾-acre garden of his own and had graduated to a wheelbarrow to deliver his vegetables. At twelve he was working 3½ acres of garden using a horse and cart for his three-times-a-week deliveries to grocery stores in...
Despite his knack for growing and selling, his Lutheran, immigrant parents wanted him to be a minister. At 14, they took him away from their garden and enrolled him in the Allegheny Seminary. However, he went against their dreams and dropped out of seminary. Later, he took bookkeeping classes at Duff’s Business College in Pittsburg, Pa., yet continued selling vegetables.

Consumers readily bought his goods because he used only clear bottles. In the days before strict Food and Drug Administration packaging laws, vendors frequently sold items in murky bottles which contained cheap, unwanted fillers. Heinz’s commitment to biblical honesty earned buyer confidences and made his name synonymous with purity and quality. By seventeen he was grossing $2,400 a year — a handsome sum for the times.

In 1869, he founded H.J. Heinz Inc., in Sharpsburg, Pa., (a suburb of Pittsburgh). Primarily he made a name with pre-grated horseradish (saving consumers arduous labor), but his pickle line soon followed. Heinz’s painted bold pickles on buildings and landscapes EVERYWHERE. His hard work culminated in over 60 garden goods lines. One day while on the train, he saw an advertisement for 21 kinds of shoes. Fascinated with the concept (before multiple listings like 31 Flavors were commonplace), Heinz combined his wife’s and his favorite numbers “5” and “7,” for the trademark 57. Light years ahead of branding campaigns, the Heinz 57 trademark became the slogan of all slogans, and is still studied by marketing gurus today.

Business models today cite Heinz’s food production plants as paternalistic institutions, where workers were treated with respect. Predating government interventions mandating workers’ just treatment, at a time when factories owners were often harsh and working conditions poor, Heinz operated his factories under the Golden Rule. He was the first to furnish employee benefits. These included pensions, health-care packages, social services and “sociological department[s]” where he pioneered what would today be considered human relations departments. More than 100 years ago, he promoted women employees to supervisory positions; arranged for immigrant citizenship tests; provided ongoing cooking and sewing classes; hired company doctors and dentists; provided carriage rides; sponsored free concerts and athletic facilities including a swimming pool; and created rooftop gardens for employee relaxation. Because his staff worked primarily with their hands, he kindly hired an onsite manicurist. As a token of their devotion, Heinz’s workers collectively paid for and presented him with a statue memorial of his likeness while he was alive.

**Devoted, Religious Man**

Heinz served as a Sunday-School leader and superintendent, and spoke in churches around the country. Throughout his life, he remained a devout tithe payer on all his income and a deeply religious man.

Today the Heinz Company is a $10 billion global company, enjoying one- and two- market-value shares in more than 50 countries with 650 million bottles of iconic ketchup sold yearly and employing approximately 32,500 people around the world. To this day, the Heinz Company boasts: “[We] continue to follow the advice of [our] founder: ‘To do a common thing uncommonly well brings success.’”

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**Sources**

4 *a,b, Discover the World of Heinz. Web. 30 May 2011.

I reached for my aching, swollen jaw — and looked down at my three toddlers playing and smearing Play Doh. Never down, much less out, I "sprang" for the "decadent" root canal but disregarded sage advice: “Give oneself a week to recover.” Now, even Tylenol 3 was as effective as candy.

As the hours wore on, my children grew restless. The toddlers needed walking, reading, playing with, meals — a mother. I needed sleep. I looked at my options as a single mom: my own mother couldn’t take time off from work; my friends could spare but a few hours. And so I reached for my check ledger and crunched the numbers. I realized there was budget enough, but certainly none for a babysitter or helper while I recovered.

Messy Toddlers

I worked the numbers again. Suddenly I noticed something: I hadn’t paid my tithe. Why that would be just enough money for a nanny-for-a-week. And so I began to wrestle God for His check. Wasn’t my swollen jaw comparable to a mission field? Weren’t these messy toddlers His toddlers? Shamefully, I went over all the misuse/abuse/miss-appropriation of tithe funds I ever knew. I even made God a list. If that wasn’t enough, I pointed out church workers driving Cadillacs (this was low). Finally, I asked what kind of deity “asks his ‘girl’ to recover about miserably for such a relatively small check?”

But somewhere in that argument, I couldn’t squelch the microscopic-size voice telling me different. It was as if God was saying “You’re right. You’re right. But put the check in the mail anyway honey; put it in the mail —” And so seconds before the postman came down my walk, I threw it in the box. I’d like to say a happy, contrite woman put that check in the mailbox; but that would be lying. I remember instead, actually slamming it into the mail and saying “whatever” and “there you go.”

Lake Lot

I heard the postman click my mailbox shut. And now for the record, I don’t believe in writing from the clouds, audible voices, or silly dreams, but just as the postman walked down my sidewalk and the mailbox clicked shut … my phone rang. Literally it rang; and as long as I live I’ll hear that ring.

Jean-Anne, a nearby friend from Tri-Cities was on the other end and delivered the words faster than I could make sense of them. “Cindy how long has it
been since you and those boys have had a vacation? Hurry and pack your suitcases right now. We’re headed to our lake lot in Canada and insist on taking you and the boys with us! We won’t take any money and we won’t take ‘no’ for an answer.” Instantly both hot AND cold tears streamed together and uncontrollably past my swollen, throbbing jaw. Now Jean-Anne had no idea I was recovering from a complex-root canal, but she felt impressed RIGHT THEN to invite us to her family’s lake lot.

My children and I spent a six-day first-class vacation at a fine resort, enjoying homemade meals, with three adult friends acting as doting nannies to each toddler, unlimited fun, water toys, boats, skis and more. It wasn’t until I was laying face-up on a sunny deck in flip flops sipping iced tea, with the children on a boat excursion that I thought again of the babysitter I hadn’t been able to obtain. And from somewhere I heard that same faint, microscopic-size voice ask if I wanted my measly tithe check back.

With a smile, I realized my jaw was — healed.

P.S. Years have passed; one “toddler” goes to college this year, the other to academy, the baby to middle school. God, forever the gentleman, never ceases to honor the handshake He and I made that dark day at the mailbox, and what a trip it’s been.

Pictured here are the "three toddlers" as they are today.

A Story of ‘Grape-fullness’

Thursday, March 22nd, 2012

“His pastor had been urging him to pursue it, but when he watched a friend sink back into a drunkard’s life after tasting wine in the communion service, Dr. Thomas B. Welch was finally motivated to develop a non-alcoholic wine.” 2

(Dave Harness Sr., pastor)

Thomas Welch (1825-1903) was a 19th-century Methodist minister, physician, and dentist who thought it hypocritical that his church opposed consumption of alcohol, but served wine in its communion services. To rectify this problem, Welch used the process pioneered by Louis Pasteur —
he filtered and bottled grape juice in his kitchen, and then boiled the bottles, which had the effect of killing any naturally-occurring yeast, thereby preserving the juice while preventing fermentation. In 1869 Welch began taking his “Dr. Welch’s Unfermented Wine” to other churches, but few clergymen expressed any interest, and he was often told that the notion of serving “unfermented sacramental wine” was tantamount to heresy.

When Welch’s grape juice failed to prove popular, it soon faded into the background of Dr. Welch’s busy life—he was also running Welch’s Dental Supply Company, marketing Dr. Welch’s Neutralizing Syrup and Dr. Welch’s Dental Alloys, and publishing his long-running Items of Interest (later re-named Welch’s Monthly), a leading dental journal of the time. Welch was deeply involved in the temperance movement, and was sworn as a policeman in Philadelphia, where he worked to apprehend illegal sellers of liquor. Until the Civil War was won he had been involved in the Underground Railroad, helping escaped slaves find their way to freedom in the North.

Demand Grew

The early 1890s, when his son Charles became active in the juice company and started advertising Welch’s, demand grew rapidly, and Dr. Welch devoted himself full-time to the juice business. After a splashy showcasing of the juice at the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, the business boomed and the Welch Grape Juice Company was incorporated in 1897. Welch died in 1903, but his name remains synonymous with grape juice. In 1930, as a Christmas present, at the height of the Depression, Welch’s grandsons distributed 10 percent of the company’s common stock among its 300 employees [the four Welch brothers made the gift from their personal holdings in memory of their father, Dr. Charles Edgar Welch...]

In 1952, the company loaned $28M to the farmers that supplied it with grapes, to finance the farmers’ purchase of the company. Since then Welch has been owned by the National Grape Cooperative Association, an agricultural group comprising more than a thousand American fruit farmers.1

Editor’s Postscript:

Early Welch’s marketing focused largely on temperance themes rather than financial gains. Catchy slogans like, “Lips that don’t touch Welch’s grape juice won’t touch mine,” were common.

The founder of Welch’s grape juice was a known tithe payer2 and the company continues to be blessed today. The most current website boasts, the American family-farmer-owned business exists as an American icon and despite the economic downturn, Welch is—thriving. It’s Concord and Niagara grapes are still grown in U.S. vineyards in Pennsylvania, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Washington. And you’ll find Welch’s products on store shelves across the U.S. and additionally in 50 countries around the world. According to their annual report, net income rose by $10 million (+56%) following a $21 million increase in 2009.3 The 100% Grape Juice slogan, a hallmark of its founder, still proudly rests on labels today as a testament to its Christian founder.

Sources:
The ‘Tithes’ that Bind

Thursday, March 8th, 2012

“While Jesus was attending a wedding in Cana with his disciples the party ran out of wine. Jesus’ mother told Jesus, ‘They have no wine,’ and Jesus replied, ‘O Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come.’ His mother then said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’. Jesus ordered the servants to fill containers with water and to draw out some and take it to the chief steward waiter. After tasting it, and not knowing where it came from, the steward congratulated the bridegroom on departing from the custom of serving the best wine first by serving it last.” John 2:1-10

Following a storybook courtship, Chris placed a velvet gift box alongside 12 long-stem roses and we began planning a “perfect wedding” on a not-so-perfect budget.

As nearly as we said yes, Chris’ hours were cut significantly at work. I knew my parents couldn’t help with wedding costs, and neither of us expected any unusual bonuses. Simultaneously, I read a book about tithing: Giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s. The book advocated paying tithe on gross income and I became convicted to tithe this way instead of my usual net giving. But the “conviction” couldn’t have come at a more inconvenient time. Psychologically, I struggled considering this put us in greater financial strain.

Starting Marriage with Debt

Both Chris and I felt convicted not to start off our marriage with debt. Therefore, giving more tithe was a real test of faith. But we determined and prayed for God to MAKE our budget work; truthfully it didn’t seem possible.

No sooner had we made our resolve, when two escrow checks arrived unexpectedly in the mail for $500 and $1000. Additionally, I was able to skip a mortgage payment for a refinance. The timing of the funds was perfect.

Other blessings followed. A wedding dress store closed everything and I obtained a dream dress at approximately a fifth of the price I expected to pay. The dress had to be altered down three dress sizes. But when it was done, the seamstress refused to charge anything. Additionally, my mother got a large sum of money unexpectedly and provided funds. My family scheduled several work bees, creating a beautiful stage and all the arrangements for our reception flowers and decorations. The musician gave his services as a wedding gift.

Not a Dime over Budget

We were able to have a beautiful wedding and a honeymoon to Maui without incurring a dime of debt and saved over $10,000 in six months. Afterward, we realized we had just enough money for the wedding of our dreams — down to the exact dollar!

We just celebrated our second anniversary. Yes, Chris’s hours are still down. But, even so, we are doing financially well. We continue to pay gross on every paycheck and God keeps blessing and we trust him with the years ahead. –CC–
“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.

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.”


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. Picture from Marriott on the Move at Marriott.Blogs.Com.
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 grown men. Like most Latter-day Saint (LDS) males, he went on a mission. When he returned home, he found his family entirely bankrupt. Quickly, he assessed his only window out of poverty was education. But he had missed so much school, hadn’t earned a high-school diploma, and lacked tuition. By sheer wit, he talked his way into community college and agreed to teach theology classes in exchange for tuition.1

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.4 “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.”4

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 wits 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 yank their shingle down in failure, the two Marriotts reworked the franchise, forming a new display sign1 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.”2 Later at the insistence of his son, Marriott hesitantly entered the hotel industry — the hospitality chain which today bears his name.

“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, which together earned revenues in excess of $4.5 billion.”1 Marriott is an international chain today. Additionally, the top-end Ritz-Carlton Hotels are a subsidiary of Marriott International.

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

Growing up Marriott

But it is said the Marriotts did not take their success for granted. They taught their children success was NEVER final. In Spirit to Serve: 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.”(1997)3 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.”2

Sources:

At Lowest Ebb

Thursday, December 15th, 2011
Author Unknown. Editor Dr. Joe Wheeler, from Christmas in My Heart Series.

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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 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, clinging 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 woolen 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 tiddy, 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 get all the figures 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 fleas 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.

Sources:
1 Smith, Becky C. “Velvet Elvis Encrusted Flea Markets.” Smithellaneous. Web. 20

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