

CHILDHOOD REMEMBRANCES

EDITED BY KIM BOND

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Once, But Never Again

By Wanda J. Burnside

My life was blessed growing up in a home with parents who were loving, caring, respectful and honest. They served in ministry and lived honorably. My father, Elder Minor Palm, Jr., was a preacher and Bible scholar. Mama, Evangelist Willie Lee McCann Palm, loved outreach ministry and helping others. They sought the ways of the Lord in what they did in our family, community and everywhere.

Daddy and Mama cared about us, their three children. I'm the oldest; Rodger, my brother, is next and Regina is the baby. We were a close family of five. Our parents lived by example and taught us the ways of the Bible.

In 1950's into the 1970's, we went to public schools and lived in a lovely home in Detroit, MI. Daddy worked and Mama

stayed home caring for us. We had our home chores and did our homework assignments. We grew up going to Sunday school and church.

Back then, we were sent to the store to purchase food or things from neighborhood stores. However, on a hot summer day in 1962, when I was 12 years old and my brother Rodger was 10 ½ years old, my parents drove us to a supermarket to shop.

“Wanda, go in and buy baking powder, milk, bread, and chocolate chips,” Mama said as Daddy parked our big car.

“Okay,” I said with a big smile.

“Can I go?” asked Rodger. Mama said yes. Regina wanted to go, however, Mama said no.

Rodger and I got out of the car. Mama handed me the list and money. “Hurry back,” Mama said.

We ran to the market and I got the shopping cart. "I'll push it," I said to Rodger. "What should we get first?" I asked him.

"The milk! It's over there," Rodger said. "I'll get it!" He ran and got it then put it in the shopping cart.

"Thanks, Rodger," I said. "Now, we need...the bread." We walked past a few aisles and then we stopped when I saw the baking items. "Rodger, get the bread. I'll get the baking stuff."

I turned the cart down the baking aisle. I got the baking powder then looked at the list. We needed the chocolate chips.

I went down the candy aisle. I slowly pushed the cart... and...I saw some Reese's Peanut Butter Cups on the floor... I looked around and...picked-up one...opened it and put it in my mouth. It was creamy, chocolaty and delicious!

I picked up two more... looked around and unwrapped them then popped

them into my mouth! I chewed them up...
and then, quickly picked up a handful.

“WANDA!” said Rodger standing there with the bread in his arms and staring at me.

“Rodger, these fell on the floor! Eat them!” I whispered. “Nobody can see us!”

Rodger tossed the bread in the shopping cart and took the handful of candy out of my hand. He held them. I said, “Rodger, eat them before they melt!”

“Ugh,” he said.

“Go on...they’re free! They’re lying here,” I said. Rodger unwrapped one...and ate it. He smiled and said, “Good.”

On the shelf the bag of peanut butter cups were burst opened! I reached my hand in and grabbed a big handful! Then, Rodger did too!

“STOP! YOU KIDS ON AISLE 6!” It was like a voice out of heaven. We didn’t see anyone. We just heard a loud voice!

“I’M UP HERE...I SEE YOU! I’VE BEEN WATCHING YOU,” said the loud voice.

We looked up and saw the manager looking down from a window at us. We cried and cried.

“HEY! BOY AND GIRL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?”

We looked up, there was a man dressed in a police or security uniform. We couldn’t stop crying.

The manager was standing with him. “I was going to let you eat those few pieces of candies off the floor...BUT, when you put your hands in the bag on the shelf...that’s STEALING!”

I thought I was going to faint! I felt lightheaded. Rodger just kept crying.

The manager asked if we had finished shopping and we said yes. He said, “Now, I was thinking about putting you both in jail.”

“How old are you, little girl?” asked the officer with an angry look.

“I’m twelve...” I cried.

“And you, little boy?” He asked with his hands on his hips.

“He’s too little to go to jail. He’s my little brother,” I cried.

“Well, I want both of you to go. I’ll get these things in the bag. You come and pay for them. Then Officer Johnson will walk you out.”

“Our parents are in the car...waiting for us!” I cried.

“Is that so? Well, I know that they want you, right?” asked the manager.

“YES! YES!” We cried. “Please...we won’t do this again!”

The manager rung up our food and put them in the bag. I gladly gave him the money! Then, he gave the officer our bag and we walked out of the store.

We were surprised to see Daddy out of the car, standing there looking at us! He

said, "We were worrying about you. Why are you coming out with this officer?" My heart fell out of me.

"You've nice children. I'm sure you want them to grow up right," said the officer with a grin.

Dad was silent.

We got in the car and didn't say a word.

"Why do you smell like chocolate and peanut butter?" Mama asked as Daddy drove us home.

Rodger and I told them what happened with tears coming down our eyes. Regina stared at us.

Mama said, "Tears are no good if you are not sorry and if you do it again."

"You must tell the Lord you are sorry. Tell the truth. Ask Him to forgive you for stealing," Daddy said.

That night, Rodger and I knelt in prayer beside our beds. We cried out to the

Lord to forgive us and help us to do right.
And, He has ordered our steps.

*Dear Parents,
Continue to teach, fervently pray for and
train your child(ren)! God will lead them and
bless their lives.

*“Train up a child in the way he
should go: and when he is old, he will not
depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6:8 KJV).*

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teacher and publisher/founder of *The Lamp
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He Leaves A Light On ...

By Sandra L Hickman

Edited and excerpted from the working manuscript, "The Great Light-Keeper"

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As a child I was always afraid of the dark. Quite terrified really. It was the unknown of the darkness. The unseen lurking in the black shadows which captured my imagination for a great many years of my life. When I was a little girl I would always have dreadful night terrors. My imagination would run wild with fear! I shared a bedroom with my older sister. My parents always left the door open, so I could see the light from the kitchen. My poor long suffering sister would often complain, "*Dad, can't we close the door, or turn the kitchen light off? I can't sleep!*" But Dad always left the kitchen light on and the door slightly ajar

so that I wouldn't be afraid. My sister would roll over with a disgruntled sigh, pull the covers over her head and go back to sleep without much bother.

I recall one such direful night. The light was peeking in through the slit of the doorway almost fearful to enter, not knowing what it might find in the room. I was laying in my bed terrified! My mouth was so dry. I could feel the fear rising, wanting to yell out but I couldn't. I was too afraid to move. In the dimness of the room I looked around, glancing at all the darkest spots to see if he was there. Suddenly, I could see him! On top of the wardrobe, he was always on top of the wardrobe. Blending in with the books and boxes, the toys and things shelved up there. My eyes played tricks on me. One minute I could see his menacing outline then he disappeared into the stuff on top of the wardrobe only to reappear again! I covered my head under the blankets, I couldn't bear to look! Unable to stand it any

longer, my need to end the torment would overcome my fear, and with a huge burst of panic.

I screamed out ... "Daddy!" My dad came running pushing the door open widely. The presence of my dad and the added light instantly began easing my fears! He looked around the room, checking in every corner and on top of the wardrobe, patiently proving to me that no one was there. My dear dad knew how much I hated the darkness. "Don't turn the light off Dad, I'm so scared!" I cried. He understood my fears, he held me with soothing hugs and comforted me with loving reassurance, "It's okay Sweetheart, I will always leave the light on for you."

Even as an adult I didn't like the dark. It still stayed with me when I became a born again Christian. Until one dark night in 2005, standing under the shadow of the cross and the watchful eye of God, I captured the unseen of the darkness and

overcame my childhood terrors in victory with Christ once and for all! I had temporarily moved residence into a small cottage. I loved having this gorgeous little place all to myself. It was like a little girl's doll house. It was cuter than cute, with polished timber floorboards, soft pastel pink and blue painted walls, and a wallpaper border of gorgeous old teapots all around the kitchen walls above white-washed cupboard doors. I was alone but never lonely, I always felt the presence of the Lord.

The very first night in the cottage I left the kitchen light on, "...to find my way to the bathroom..." I reasoned with myself! But really I'd grown so used to having the kitchen light on even into my adult life, "... a night-light for my two daughters..." (another thing I told myself!) However the second night there I stood in the middle of that tiny cottage and prayed out loud, declaring, "Lord, tonight the light goes off! It's time to

banish the fear of darkness. That terrible spirit of fear has held onto me long enough!" I never slept with a light on again after that. In fact from then on, I hated the disturbance of any light invading my sleep-time, and I still do.

Many years later in 2017, upon arriving home alone in the wee midnight hours, I sat awhile inside my car under an open carport. I looked up past the eaves of the house, gazing up up up, into never-ending depths of darkness at the sky a canopy of thick velvety black, so black, it caught my breath. The moon and the stars had disappeared. There was not a speck of light! A jolt of uneasiness intruded my thoughts, threatening to bring that old childhood nemesis of fear out of its hiding place. Until suddenly, the moon emerged revealing itself from behind the darkness. It was as though my sovereign Father who was watching from the sky, had put a light on for me as I arrived home.

Right there in the black-ink sky the moon blinked and peeked shyly out to see me, catching me unawares, to present itself in bold and splendid fullness. Like a large round bulbous light. A bright glowing lightbulb defying all fear to come! It appeared like a silent sentinel with a white glow piercing the darkness just for me. I felt like a little girl again, transported back to my childhood. In the same way as my dad always did, I knew my Heavenly Father was watching over me. I sat staring, mesmerised, as undulating darkest black and indigo curtains in the heavens were brushed aside by my Father's hand. I heard in my spirit, words of such love....

"It's okay little one, there's nothing to fear. The light's on! You can see even in the darkest night. I will always leave a light on for you."

*Sandra Hickman is an Australian writer, poet and songwriter. A contributing author

to five Christian publications, and *The Lamp Newsletter* located in Michigan USA. An Intercessory Prayer and Ministry Leader, Evangelist, Missionary and Bible School graduate, residing in Western Australia.

My Best Day Ever

by Leslie Anne Wood

It was October 5, 1962. I was 10 years old and on my way home from school. The day was like many other autumn days in Michigan – sunny with a brisk bite to the air and brightly colored leaves littered the ground. But this day was different. As our school bus drew up to our driveway to let us off, I saw my parents standing there waiting for my sister and me. “What’s up?” I wondered. It didn’t take long to find out.

Daddy called to us to put our books down on the ground near the driveway and to follow him and Mama to the barn. “What? Why would we be going to the barn?” When we approached the big door, I smelled something that I had never smelled before. There was a peculiar odor. “Hmmm.”

As Daddy opened the door and called us to go inside, our eyes quickly adjusted to the dark interior. Daddy led us around a wall and to a small corner in the rear of the barn. There, tied to a ring in the wall, was the most beautiful pony ever! She was chocolate brown with a lighter mane and tail. She had white feet and a white strip across her shoulder area. “This couldn’t be! What would a pony be doing in our barn?”

Daddy quickly explained that this pony was for us. It was our Christmas present from Mama and him. But there was one caveat – the pony was wild. We couldn’t touch it! As I slowly approached, the pony backed away from me. There was a look of fear in her eyes, but she didn’t seem to be mean. I slowly extended my hand toward her. Daddy told me to be careful because she had never been touched by a human before that day. As I reached out to her, I spoke in a low,

soothing voice. I told her everything was okay and she was going to be my best friend ever! She seemed to know that I wouldn't hurt her, but she continued to move back.

At that point, Daddy told us that she was a filly, a young female Welch pony. She had been born about six months earlier in a pasture and no one had ever bothered with her; she simply ran wild with her mother. He purchased her for \$50 from a man that he worked with. That was a lot of money!

We named our pony Princess. I stayed out in the barn with that pony all evening, talking to her about how we would be best friends. I told her how one day she would let me pet her and then one day, even ride her. My sister was very afraid of her so the newness of Princess' arrival quickly wore off for her. But not with me. Having a pony was what I had dreamed of my entire short life.

Princess didn't let me touch her that day, but it wasn't long before she got accustomed to my visits. My sister was still very scared of her so she would stand back and watch. Eventually, my sister would not join me in my visits to the barn. But I spent every moment I could with Princess. I patiently would edge my way closer and closer to her with each visit. I was careful to approach from the side, near the front of her body. Daddy had told me not to stand in front of her and to stay away from her hind feet. I listened to all of his advice.

One day, as I was talking to Princess and reaching my hand out to her, she didn't pull back. She stood listening as I told her that I loved her and that I only wanted to touch her. She seemed to understand and that day, she let me pet her. I only touched her neck, lightly petting her and scratching the area. I didn't try for more, but I was ecstatic with each touch! "Oh, my very own pony!"

As time went by, Princess grew to love my approach and my touch. I brought her treats like apples and carrots and sugar cubes. (I soon found out that sugar cubes were a no-no, as she would nip at me if I didn't have one for her!) I helped Daddy to build a pen for her in the barn, and we built a small, fenced-in area just for her.

When spring came, we fenced in the land adjacent to the barn. I would spend hours each day with her. I pet her, carried her, and led her all over that pasture. Sometimes, I would not put the halter on her, but just run with her. I would run as fast as I could and she would run alongside me. I loved doing that because she was running with me of her own free will. Sometimes, I'd find her lying down, so I'd lie down with her, curled close to her, telling her my deepest thoughts.

The hardest part of having that pony in those days was that she was not old enough or strong enough for me to ride her.

But that day eventually came. Daddy had purchased a saddle and bridle for her. I spent hours putting them on her and leading her around the field, sometimes even walking her down our country road. But the day did come when a man that my parents worked with came to our house and broke my pony. "Oh, I could ride her!" And ride her, I did.

Princess and I spent many hours and covered many miles on those old dirt roads. She lived to be 36 years old. And I loved her. And even though she's gone now, the memories last and I still love her! I totally understood the sacrifice that my parents made to get that pony for us. Above all, I learned patience.

*Leslie Anne Wood is a Christian motivational speaker and writer from the west Michigan area. Her ministry, Transforming Faith, helps non-believers to develop a personal relationship with Christ

as their Savior and encourages believers to
deepen their spiritual walk with the Lord.

Learn more about her at

www.TransformingFaithMinistries.com.

Reawakening Moment

by Saranya Sridharan

As a kid, I used to get sad a lot. Even now I become sad sometimes, but I can remember one incident that helps me overcome my sorrow. I try to remember it often. I was a silent and moody girl, and I used to keep my problems within myself.

This particular day seemed like the worst day of my life. I had many problems and felt like I had no reason to live. I was on the verge of depression. Life seemed so empty. It felt like a lonely journey with many sad footsteps. I was very upset and walked aimlessly as the sad memories repeated in my mind. When I reached the road, it started to rain. I sighed, but I found a bus stop and sat in that shade.

Opposite of that bus stop, I saw a family. Their hut was completely destroyed by the wind. They were trying to save their

small possessions and rushed to the bus stop. Among the family, there was a small girl playing in the rain without any sign of sadness. Sometimes I have a strange tendency to take other's sadness as my own, and I looked at them with empathy.

After the rain stopped, they started to build their hut with smiling faces. I was rooted to the spot, and tears flooded down my face. This family had taught me a lot that day. I realized there were people like them in this world who can manage every challenge of life with happy smiling faces. What had I been doing all of these days? My dream of a perfect life had blinded me to the things I already had. I blamed God for every small reason I could find.

Even though I didn't have a perfect life, it was a good and easy life. I had spent my time dwelling on things I didn't have. I had never thanked God wholeheartedly, and I realized life is not as miserable as I had made it seem.

It is the way we take things. For example, we need tea powder, milk, and sugar to make tea. We cannot use only sugar because that is our favorite. Likewise, a life full of happiness would be boring. More importantly, we can enjoy the real happiness only after passing down the path of sorrow. Life is perfect only with the mixture of happiness and sadness in equal amounts.

From that day forward, I decided to value the things I have and to accept my sad times with a strong heart. In retrospect, that day was not sad at all. It gave me lots of reasons to live. After all, it was one of the rare occasions that made me smile. Never belittle your life living in regret. One way or the other, life has lots to provide. That day, I walked home as a new person with the hope to face my problems.

*Saranya Sridharan is an Indian Software Engineer by profession and a passionate

author by choice. She has been blogging for around 6 years and has recently published a book titled *Poetic Medley*. She believes in motivating other people, inspiring them to be positive in their life. Her personal blog can be found here www.ani1dotme.wordpress.com/.

A New World

by Judy K. Haught

Seventy-four years ago, I was in a protective womb nourished by an umbilical cord by my mother. Her body told her it is time to let this wee infant be born into a new world. My mother had been busy all day—washing clothes, cleaning the house and scrubbing the floors. She was the only adult in the house when her back began to ache from my small frame starting up her labor. The pains became more intense as I pushed my small body into the birth canal. She knew it was time to call for help. Having no phone, she sent her young niece to get the doctor and the preacher.

I could not wait for them to come and hurried her labor along. As I came out into this new world, Mom delivered me by herself. She picked me up and exclaimed with joy, "It's a girl!" She beamed with pride

as she looked into the eyes of her five-pound baby girl.

On my birthday each year, she told anyone who would listen, "I delivered her all by myself." My mom is not here now, but I will always remember her on my birthday. Who knew what life would be like for this 'wee' one? I am grateful for my mother and her being protective. She was a good and moral woman. God gave me to her to bring three new lives into this world. Today, Mother rests in peace with my oldest daughter who was her pride and joy.

I cannot believe seventy-four years have passed. There may not be many left, but that is okay. I will be ready to see Jesus when He calls me into His world known as "Heaven." Today, I pray: "Jesus, please tell Mom I love her and thank her for giving me life and for always being proud of the one she delivered all by herself. Amen."

*Judy K. Haught, Christian 48 years. She began with short stories, and poetry. She discovered her writings were always ending with Christ as Victorious, showing Him as the “Great I Am.”

The Smoking Lesson

By J. Ross Archer

On a hot August afternoon in the small country town of Fitzgerald, Georgia, four of us 12-year-old neighborhood kids hid in the bushes behind my granddaddy's work shed passing around a cigarette. We figured we were doin' somethin' pretty grown up.

"John, are you sure nobody can see back here?"

"Nah, I ain't worried a bit."

They soon burned the one cigarette they had so short they could no longer hold it.

"We are out of smokes. I didn't want to take more than one from my granddaddy's pack for fear he might notice if two cigarettes went missing.

“It’s getting’ late fellas, we better go home before our folks start huntin’ us,” and we walked our separate ways.

Grandma called me to supper as soon as I entered the back door. Five minutes later, granddaddy arrived and came straight to the dinnin’ table taking his seat at the head of the table.

“John, why don’t you say the blessin’ this evenin’? Your daddy told me you could use practice at prayin’.”

We bowed our heads; I cleared my throat and started prayin’, although I had no idea what I ought to say to the Lord.

“Lord, this here is John talking, and I’m ‘spose to tell you thanks for the food. Well, thanks, Lord. Amen.”

We did a lot of small talkin’ durin’ the meal – mostly Grandma gossipin’ about the church ladies. Grandpa put his napkin on his plate, pushed back from the table, and announced he was goin’ outside for a smoke.

“John, you come with me. You and I need to discuss somethin’.”

I followed Grandpa outside. My gut told me this meetin’ could not be good. We sat together on the front steps, and for a few minutes grandpa grew silent, then the hammer dropped.

“John, before I got home from work this evenin’, I got a telephone call from Miss Hattie, next door, and she had some disturbin’ news for me.”

He paused a long time. I though he employed the silent treatment to make me nervous. It worked and he finally continued.

“Miss Hattie said she walked out on her back porch at five o’clock to hang out clothes and saw smoke comin’ from the bushes behind my shop. She said three of you boys came out from behind the bushes and left. She said you were one of those boys, John. I looked at the bushes when I came home and I didn’t see where those bushes had burned. Do you suppose you

boys might have been smokin' in those bushes, John?"

I had been caught! Grandpa had me dead to rights, and there seemed to be no use in lyin' or tryin' to talk my way out of this. I figured I'd be grounded for the rest of my life – if not longer. "Oh, Lord. I sure need your help now."

"Ain't no use in me lyin' to you, Grandpa. Yeah, we passed a cigarette around – but only one."

"I understand, John, I truly do. You know I was a boy myself once upon a time. I tell you what. Why don't we smoke one together? If you're goin' to smoke, you might as well learn to do it right. After all, this is the year 1947 – times are changing.' Excuse me, John, I'll be back in a minute."

When he returned after a couple minutes and sat down, he held two unusually large cigars in one hand. My stomach instantly knotted up 'cause I knew whatever would take place had to be

terrible, awful. He lit the cigars, kept one for himself, and handed one to me.

“Now, John, here’s the first thing you do to enjoy your smoke.”

He drew on the cigar deeply, pulling the smoke into his lungs and slowly he blew the smoke back out through his mouth. “It’s your turn now. Do as I did.”

Well, I did as Grandpa did, but not with the same enjoyable results. I immediately began to cough uncontrollably; my ability to breathe air into my chest left me. My nose and lungs felt as though they were on fire and I got dizzy.

“Now, do it again, and you’ll start to get used to it. Go on, take another puff.”

I reluctantly took several puffs thinkin’ they might not be like the first one. Boy, was I wrong. My supper made its way up from my stomach into my mouth. Regurgitation claimed every bit of my food and more. The heaving brought up green stuff with an awful, bitter taste. Before I

could catch my breath and stop heavin', Grandpa insisted that I take another deep puff.

This scene was repeated over and over until my stomach had nothing left in it to throw up. Puke covered me but I didn't care, I only wanted to die. When I tried to stand up I fell flat on my face; a second try failed, I tried to stand again but couldn't, and I peed in my pants.

"Think you've had enough smokin' for one day, John?"

"Uuhhhhh."

"I take that for a 'yes', son."

Let's get you inside and cleaned up before you go home. I'll call your Pa and tell him how well you have learned to smoke, and cigars at that. You want a couple cigars to take home with you, son?"

"No! No, please, Grandpa, I'll never smoke again."

Grandpa helped me into the house, and he and Grandma got me cleaned up

and took me home. I walked in the door at home dressed in a huge pair of Grandpa's overalls. Ma and Pa were waitin'.

“Well, tell us son, how did your smokin' lesson go? Did you learn how to smoke well?”

That was 71 years ago and I remain smoke free.

*John Ross Archer is a retired Colonel from the US Army where he served 23 years. He is an active Rotarian and a Gideon. He and his wife reside in Thomasville, Georgia and share five children, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Weird Childhood Dream

By Sumeet Manohare

What was your dream when you were little? It may have been to become a pilot, an actor, a police officer, a dancer, a doctor, etc. Children are the most beautiful and free human beings. They find happiness in the littlest things, and they have more pure hearts than anyone else. Children aren't worried about what people think or that someone will judge them. They are free and wild. With a single smile, they make everyone happy.

Everybody had a dream when they were a child. Didn't you? I would love to share my weird childhood dream. I call it weird because I don't think many kids had this kind of dream. So my childhood dream was to get old and retire from my job. I know it is hard to believe. Let me tell you about the logic behind this weird dream.

When I was a kid, I was pretty good in studies. I always stood in the top five students of my class, but I used to get irritated with studies sometimes. My dream was to grow old soon and retire because I wanted get rid of all the stress. I used to think that when I am retired from my work, I will be at peace. I can sleep as long as I want because there will be no school or work to show up to every morning.

That's why I wanted to grow old soon. I was a crazy kid, always quiet and composed. I used to smile a lot. I miss those times when even strangers used to compliment me and adore me.

So this was my childhood dream. What was yours?

*Sumeet Manohare writes a self-improvement blog with some photography and music. Visit the "Accidental Blogger" at www.writingmyheartout25.wordpress.com.

The Fuzzy Edges of Camp

Tehema

by Molly ~ woundresser

The year was 1957. (Or, maybe it was 1958?) I'm not sure anymore because the photos in my memory are getting a bit fuzzy around the edges. Anyway, I think this was the first time I traveled away from home by myself. I was seven years old and it was my very first grand adventure.

Now I'll grant you...Camp Tehema was probably pretty tame stuff as grand adventures go, but to a little girl who had never experienced anything but home, school, or church...It was grand! I can't remember if we slept in huts or tents. I can't remember what we ate. I don't remember who else was there sharing my adventure with me...But her? I shall never forget her!

Oh, I have long ago forgotten her name, but I remember her hair; dark with

soft curls. I remember her always smiling face and the kind voice that never forgot my name. That lovely woman was destined to change my life forever.

You see, on a summer day while sitting on a log by a camp circle, she read me a story about Jesus. Then she looked right at me. She had been so kind all week. (I had always done my best to disappear in any crowd.) But she wasn't having it—not on that day.

This sweet woman looked right at me—the gangly seven-year-old with knobby knees, and skinny legs—who was so painfully shy! And when she asked me this life-changing-question? I couldn't wait to say, "Yes."

So right there, in the middle of the woods, sitting on that big old log at Camp Tehema, we bowed our heads, and prayed together. And my destiny became forever linked with hers.

It surely wasn't a long prayer. I'm equally sure it must have been worded simply, but I know that when I asked Him to come into my heart, Jesus whispered, "Yes!" and into my heart He came.

And, someday, when I get to heaven?

I believe Jesus will acquaint me with that dear sweet woman again. The woman who gave one week out of her life, and LIVED the gospel out, in front of me. I know we will laugh, and cry, and hug the "stuffins" out of each other! (Jesus will probably just stand there shaking his head and smiling.) And I will "thank her"—for being the one—to introduce me to The One who changed my life forever.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

My journey in life hasn't been an easy one. This Scottish lassie has had lots of ups and downs...Including ten foolish years as "a prodigal" trying desperately to run away from God. Yet, through it all, God

has been loving and faithful to me, His Prodigal Sheep.

At the age of twenty-eight He chased me down; "found me" in my depression and broken dreams; and began teaching me just how much He loved me! I put up quite a struggle—but in the end—He won! (He always does!)

Now, I write for other "PRoDiGaL sHeeP" because I want them to know and believe that God can redeem ANYTHING—even, "...the years that the locust has eaten." Joel 2:25.

It is through my own personal experience that I now understand God's grace can find anyone; redeem anything!

I also KNOW how relentless His love is. He was determined to finish the work (Philippians 1:6) He had started so long ago at that kids camp. Part of her destiny—was to change mine.

We often think that having "a grand destiny" is about having some big important

job, or standing on a stage speaking or singing to thousands. But I think destiny is more about faithfulness to our LORD, "living-the-gospel-out-loud" wherever or to whoever He chooses to send us. It might be in some big important ministry... Or, it might be simply loving some sweet kids in a Sunday School class each week, or serving at a kids church camp once a year.

You know I've always wondered, "How many destinies did she change?" Jesus knows.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Matthew 25:21

*Molly ~ wound dresser These are desperate days and people are losing hope in record numbers. "People need the LORD" just like the old Steve Green song said. My desire is to bring the gifts God has

given me, of encouragement and teaching,
to a world dying for hope and searching for
the healing, I believe, only Jesus Christ can
bring to the wounded heart.

Learning to Ride a Bike

by Rebecca D. Bruner

I don't remember how old I was the Christmas my grandma and grandpa gave me a new ten-speed. They clearly believed I was old enough to graduate from my little red tricycle to a two-wheeler. They must also have believed I was much taller, since the frame was about four inches too big for me. That glossy white bike with red and blue accents stood in the middle of our living room on Christmas day, a colossal monument to my inadequacy. It was a gift that carried with it the unspoken expectation that I ought to be able to ride a bike, and I knew I was a failure because I didn't know how.

All the kids in my trailer park knew how to ride, except me. Even kids much younger than I was seemed to have mastered the skill. Baba-Jean, the youngest

of the three kids who lived in the trailer two spaces over, could ride a two-wheeler. She was at least two years younger than I was. I felt terribly inferior.

When I attempted to ride my shiny, new bike, it became apparent that I could never learn to balance on that huge thing. Although it had training wheels, I could barely climb onto the seat. I was certain to crash, and it was a very long way to the ground.

Eventually, my mom traded in the ten-speed for a bicycle in the correct frame size. I finally had a bike I could hope to ride. The frame was blue, and it had a banana seat covered with large, multi-colored daisies, which were quite a thing in the 70's.

I tried and tried to learn how to ride my little blue bike, but I kept falling and falling. My closest friend, Lisa, was a year older than I was. She would steady the bike for me, holding on to the metal bar that extended up behind the banana seat. I

would mount the bike while she held it steady, then start pedaling. Lisa would run behind me, keeping the bike from toppling as I rode. When I appeared to be balancing okay, she would let go. As long as I believed she was still running with me, I could keep the bike upright. But I would look down at our shadows on the blacktop, realize that she had let go, and immediately crash to the ground.

This process felt like it would never end. I was the only kid who didn't know how to ride a bike, and I would keep on being unable to ride forever. Staying upright and balanced on my bicycle was a skill I was convinced I would never master.

Then one afternoon, I had a talk with a girl named Erika. She had been watching Lisa's futile attempts to keep me steady. Lisa was frustrated and ready to give up for the day. I sat down on the curb in front of Erika's trailer.

She told me about how hard it had been for her to learn to ride a bike. She said that she had kept falling and falling, too. It had somehow never occurred to me that any of the other kids ever struggled to master this skill like I did. They all seemed so good at it.

After hearing Erika's story, I realized I was not alone. That was all it took to get me over the learning curve. The next day, I got on my little blue two-wheeler and rode without any difficulty. I didn't wobble or fall. I could balance with perfect steadiness. I was so enthused about the skill I had finally mastered that I wanted to ride the whole morning. My friends and I rode all over the trailer park. Lisa finally complained that she was tired of riding and begged to quit for the day.

Erika hadn't imparted any special secret to bike riding in our short conversation. What she had provided was the perspective I lacked. Realizing that I

was not alone in my struggles enabled me to face the challenge of bike riding with a new confidence. I was able to press on and succeed, just because of the boost I got from knowing that others before me had faced similar struggles.

I think too often we hide our inadequacies. We don't share openly about our struggles—the ones we have overcome, or the ones we continue to wrestle with. On the surface, we can look like confident Christians, who have it all together and never fall and scrape their knees. It's important to recognize that being open about the process of learning and growing and failing can provide a huge boost to those around us who may feel highly inadequate in their own walks with God.

Sharing your story may be precisely what someone else needs to be able to dust themselves off, get back on their own bicycle, and ride like the wind.

*Rebecca D. Bruner is an inspirational speaker and the author of six books. The longing of her heart is to see people fall deeply in love with Jesus. Connect with her online at www.rebeccabrunerauthor.com.

The Impact of Chickens

by M. Liebchen

I grew up with chickens, but didn't realize the impact they had until I was much older. Now I look back to when senses were bright as yellow peeps and life was a chicken yard full of delights.

The chickens I knew were free-range. That meant they ranged not only in the chicken yard, but also in the barn, the hay shed, the back yard, and under the boxwoods. In summer, those boxwoods were the bane of my existence, for they caused me to dread thunderstorms.

It was my sister's and my job to corral the half-grown chicks before the storm broke. They would zig-zag, flap their little wings and head for underneath the boxwoods. As the thunder growled, we'd scuttle around barefoot and terrified, trying to nab them before lightning struck.

My earliest memory of chickens was peering into a cardboard box punched full of holes. The box held dozens of yellow, mail-order puffballs. A black chick would be a bonus.

We helped feed them baby-chicken mash, oatmeal and crushed boiled egg, watching daily as brown wing feathers replaced soft down. I learned their various chicken sounds: the murmur of crowd satisfaction, the hum of chow time, and the croak of being lost.

The sounds changed as they grew older. The teenage chickens that hid under the boxwoods had hoarse voices and impertinent, piping crows.

The crows weren't around long. The lone, lucky rooster chosen to escape the frying pan developed a magnificent cockle-doodle-do that woke us every morning. He ruled his harem with authoritative commands. There were the "come-and-see-what-I've found" call, the

"hawk-at-one-o'clock" alarm, and the "snake/dog/woman-coming-for-a-chicken-dinner" warning among his calls.

The hens had their own special noises. The layers bragged with a "just-laid-the-biggest-egg-in-the-yard" cackle, and the setting hens menaced with a "keep-away-from-my-nest" cluck. One of the sounds that could be music to relax to was the low cluck-cluck of a flock picking up grain in a yard.

I remember the scratchy feel of a yellow peep's feet and the tickle of its pecks, the sleekness of a nesting hen's back and the smoothness of a warm egg underneath soft feathers.

I liked to gather the fresh eggs in a split-oak basket and watch my grandmother break them into a pan, their bright yellow yolks mounded above the whites. At Easter, though, I hated those eggs, for they had brown shells and dyed a washed-out

hue. How lucky were the kids who had white eggs to dye!

My sister and I helped feed cracked corn to the flock. The corn came in cotton print sacks. We looked forward to the arrival of a new sack, for that would be our next outfit. One sack made a blouse, two a skirt, and three a dress, in the brightest of floral prints. You could spot us a block away, fantasy gardens on the move.

The sacks were kept in what we called the "feed room," entered through a Dutch door with a rusty squeak. The room had an aroma that made my mouth water. When I scooped corn from a sack, the grains rattled into the can like rain, and I imagined I was scooping gold.

When I called "here, chick, chick" and scattered the corn, the hens would appear from all directions. The rooster would cluck to his favorite hen, and they'd cluster around in the proper pecking order.

I always saved some grain for the hen at the bottom of the social scale.

One year, this was the offspring of a maverick hen that brooded in the apple orchard, away from the hay nests in the hen house. She raised a lone chick.

The other hens shunned the chick as she grew because she was different. Instead of a reddish face and dark eyes, she had a pale comb and blue eyes. I named her Chicken Little.

I carried her around, stroked her feathers and listened to her clucks. She learned to come to me and walk up and down a clothesline pole. She was the chicken I loved.

The chicken I feared was the guardian of the flock, a Rhode Island Red rooster. He flaunted a bright-red comb that flopped over one eye like a military beret. He strutted about in brick-red feathers and a flouncy, bronze-and-blue tail. He sported

spurs sharp as bowie knives on his speedy yellow legs.

That summer, my involvement with chickens came to a sudden end. That was when the rooster chased me around the house, wings flapping, head lowered, spurs flashing, and me screaming and yelping one jump ahead.

That was also when Chicken Little disappeared. I missed her after about a week and asked my grandmother where she was. My grandmother, who believed in recycling hens that didn't lay, hadn't known she was my pet. We had eaten her for dinner.

It was a communion of sorts, only I hadn't known it at the time. Chicken Little became me.

She must have tasted good, for she'd been nourished with love. Sound, smell, sight, feel and taste—of these are childhood memories made.

*M. Liebchen grew up with dogs and cats, chickens and cows, and knows how they can impact our lives. She remembers her affection for them and theirs in return. Now she writes middle-grade novels that feature challenged characters and unusual animals, and short essays with a Christian slant.

Moving In

by Deborah Hansen

The roaches always came out the first night, skittering in the dark as we lay on mattresses flung across the floor. Our belongings hadn't caught up with us yet, the cardboard boxes following us from one duty station to the next, our identities neatly wrapped and taped up yet again. We had scrubbed and mopped all day, but the armored residents had been there longer and weren't going to give up their territory without a fight.

It was the same on every moving day, a succession of agonizing upheavals for my siblings and me. New schools, new friends, new houses, a carousel of experiences that affected each of us differently. As the middle child (which may or may not have anything to do with it, I'm done examining that), my reaction to a new dwelling whose walls

echoed with the memories of dozens of previous tenants was annoyance. A new school, however, was terrifying. Give me roaches any day, but all those eyes and the whispers as I was introduced with the dreaded designation of “the new girl,” my blue-framed eyeglasses giving all of them more to snicker about as I slunk to my new desk. It was too much for me. Stop looking at me.

I wonder if my parents ever thought about this as they traipsed across the world fulfilling their dreams or sense of duty, dragging their children along with them like suitcases, bits and pieces of their lives spilling out along the way. Did they consider what it did to my soul?

At first, I reached out to new friends, usually another girl who didn't fit into the puzzle of her peers any more than I did. We would bond as best we could, misfits who stuck out like sore thumbs when all we wanted was to blend into the scuffed

woodwork, unnoticed except by each other. By the time I reached adolescence, a minefield in itself, I succumbed to the pain and loneliness of leaving newly-minted friends behind again.

I spoke little, either at home or in school, and wandered ghost-like through the hallways of high school. College was a blur of gymnasium-sized classes, but at least I wasn't expected to participate other than to occupy a place on the seating chart. It didn't really have to be me in the seat, and often it wasn't, because I didn't know who I was from one day to the next. I changed clothes four or five times a day trying to find out. My soul today yearns to revisit those lost opportunities for personal expression, the give and take of sharing opinions and different ways of looking at the world.

My days of silence are over, though. I have finally joined the flow of life rather than remain an obstacle around which it meanders. My daughter grew up in one

house, the tree in the front yard growing strong and tall along with her. The marks where she hammered wooden steps into its bark are still there, although she has moved on herself, a young woman now with her own life.

I've managed to move on, too, taking the little girl on the mattress by the hand, the child who listened in terror to the demons skittering around her family on the floor of yet another new home.

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Free. Her third book, in progress, is a collection of her Haiku.

He Slapped Luluboy Williams by Ben Fine

In 1952 my parents, Reuben Fine, an international chess grandmaster and Sonya Lebeaux, a social worker, divorced, and I went to live with my grandparents George and Ray Lebeaux in Brighton Beach. My mother worked at nearby Coney Island Hospital and my daily care was in the hands of her parents.

Brighton Beach in the nineteen fifties was a tough neighborhood; set apart from the rest of Brooklyn. A one square mile enclave built over a filled in swamp on the southern tip of Brooklyn, it appeared more as a European village than as part of New York City. It was crowded; crisscrossed by tiny beach bungalows and low rise apartment buildings and was a sort of Jewish Chinatown with a hefty mix of Italians thrown in. English was not the

primary language and on Brighton Beach Avenue, the main shopping thoroughfare, it was more likely to hear Yiddish or Italian. Brighton was so insular that when Kennedy was running for president although I was in junior high school I didn't understand the hubbub over his being Catholic. I thought all the presidents were Jewish. By their names I knew they weren't Italian and they certainly weren't black so what else could they be? It was a fun place to grow up. My friends and I wandered the alleys, ball fields and the beach, playing baseball and a myriad other games.

My grandfather, who I always called Papa George, was the towering figure in my world. He had spent his life doing a bit of everything: farmer, prize fighter, circus performer, dues collector for the teamster's union, chef and bartender. An incident when I was seven, cemented my view of Papa George and taught me about bravery and bravado. His actions are locked in my

memory and still affect decisions I make in dangerous situations.

He was not a big man; five foot four and 145 pounds maximum, but at seventy he looked fifty, with big muscles and the chiseled physique of the prize fighter he had been. He had dark skin, dark eyes and thick jet black hair. He wore a beret cocked to one side French style with an ever present cigar between his teeth.

We lived on an alley off of Brighton Fourth Street, a quiet tree lined street. My grandfather treated his tiny bungalow like a mini-estate surrounding it by tall groomed hedges and flower gardens. The back yard had a grape arbor from which he made wine. Attached to the house he built a green house where he kept exotic trees.

The adjoining neighborhood to the west was Coney Island, the location of the famous amusements. This was a poor, rough, predominantly black area. Luluboy Williams, a tall thin fourteen year old lived

on West Fourth Street and led a gang that terrorized the neighborhood. They roughed up whomever they caught and it was rumored that they carried knives. As we got older and bigger they became less fearsome and by high school years they were just another bunch of neighborhood kids. In high school Luluboy, became a skinny 6'4" running back and from the team, I became friendly with him.

Each afternoon, Luluboy's gang passed our house en route to the PS 253 playground where they played dodge ball. One afternoon a gang member tossed a rock through the plate glass in my grandfather's greenhouse. Papa George came outside enraged. He was wearing a tight tank top and looked like a shorter more muscular version of Marlon Brando. I and three friends Barry, Ira and Calvin had hid in my backyard as the gang walked by.

“Who did that?” my grandfather asked, looking at the Williams gang running away through the next alley.

“Luluboy Williams and his gang,” we told him. “They go to play ball at 253.”

My grandfather, still fuming, went into the house, put on a shirt and stormed off the two blocks through the alleys to the school.

The schoolyard was filled with kids playing ball and tall Luluboy stood out in the crowd. Marvin a large pudgy fellow with a marine buzz cut was the recreation director.

My grandfather, even with his muscles, was a short seventy year old, and not very impressive or frightening as he walked up to Marvin.

“Who’s the leader of these kids?’ he demanded.

Marvin called Luluboy over. There were many dangerous older wise guys in the neighborhood and my grandfather with his dark eyes and angry stare could easily

have been one. Marvin knew better than to question.

Luluboy sauntered over with his tough guy strut. He towered over Papa George and then grunted at the short man, “What do you want?”

My grandfather signaled for him to lean over to tell him something. As Luluboy did this, my grandfather grabbed him by the collar and slapped him hard with his open palm across the face. Everyone gasped. My friend Ira blurted out “Your grandfather just slapped Luluboy!”

“What the...” Luluboy said as he tried to back up.

My grandfather had the grip of an alligator and his huge hands were like sledgehammers. Luluboy could not escape from that grasp. He tried but couldn’t move. There was complete silence in the schoolyard.

Then my grandfather turned and walked out of the school yard. We hustled

after him; the four of us in complete awe after what just happened. Luluboy Williams' gang never walked through our alley again.

As I think back on this experience, it inspires me to be courageous no matter what. In dangerous situations, I simply recall the day Papa George slapped Luluboy Williams. Then I can stand up for what is right with no fear.

*Ben Fine is a mathematician and professor at Fairfield University in Connecticut in the United States. He is a graduate of the MFA program at Fairfield University and is the author of thirteen books (eleven in mathematics, one on chess, one a political thriller) as well over 130 research articles, twelve short stories and a novella about Pirates. His story August 18, 1969 published in the *Green Silk Journal* was nominated for a Pushcart prize. His latest novel *Out of Granada* was released in July.

His author website is
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Remembrances

By Sandy Loam

Those were the days... Our parents were working weekdays in Manila, and we grew up with my grandparents staying with us ... I remember living in a rented house near the university, in a piece of land where some fruit trees grew. My siblings would catch various colored leaves falling in the wind, such as the leaves of the star apple tree, known as “kaimito” in my native language of Filipino. There were also papayas, two “chico” (sapodilla) trees in front of the house and two coconut palms, with stumps made into a small table and chairs around after they had to be cut. We had bananas where we went sliding when these fell after a storm-- and got our clothes stained. There was another tree beside the house, with shadows of leaves seen from the bedroom window when lights were put

off. What tree that was evades me now. Birds also visited and hopped around the lawn, but we hadn't been introduced.

I remember picnic days on the lawn when we spread a mat or blanket, and lay down on not too hot days. Why has our grandmother's singing us to sleep really become part of my sugary memories in that house, which I'd later do a lot of with my own children: singing lullabies. How I paid attention when "lola" (Grandma) sang and told stories. As the house was elevated, my sister and I dug under the house for this insect called babuy-babuyan, whatever its scientific name is. We had hot champorado on stormy days, which really left a warm glow in my heart.

There was fresh milk delivered at our doorstep. When we had leftover stale milk, we had a problem, which we solved by making pastillas from the stale milk. We made papaya candies too. And we played with leaves of plants (except the

dieffenbachia– which we were warned was poisonous). These we used as money when playing store. We played with other small items to sell like “bubot na buko” (small, immature coconuts as chicos in size), soft drink caps, popsicle sticks... I quarreled with my “ate” (older sister) too, or maybe she quarreled with me, for she was older and must know better what she was doing!

I was about seven when we moved to our new house, even when it was not yet finished being constructed. We had grills in front of the house, but doors were not finished yet. Now we solved that with whatever materials could cover the grills when it rained so we did not get wet inside. We had no architect, and my parents, with my older siblings I heard, planned and discussed about what kind of house we’d have.

When they decided on having a basement... such fun we had going to the

dug-out area after the workers have left in the afternoon! My brothers carved out road-like diggings on the sides, where we drove and raced small model cars around the big “balon” (pit). It was also in this house I learned to teach myself to play piano, with attention full on piano books many years, for lack of a more knowledgeable other (MKO) to teach.

As my parents had to work in Metro Manila for many years, they stayed at a duplex. For some reasons, I can still remember our first telephone number from that house. I can remember neighbors who we did not really know, which I saw from the upper storey window when we looked down at the bungalow in front, or the two-storey apartment from the rear windows.

I remember the morning sun in our kitchen, when we had pan de sal and butter or Star margarine and jams for breakfast, before I rushed to school for two years studying there. In summer our parents left

for work and we were left at home to play school or “bahay-bahayan” (play house)... and eating my father’s roasted peanuts hidden in their cabinet. I especially remembered my snacks at school, when we could have junk food like Chiz curls, and a chocolate drink... Then the bauhinia trees with their striking purplish flowers at my parents’ place of work were very memorable as we waited in the parking lot for their time off work.

The concept of memory and remembering are part of learning, from the time we were small, being carried in our mother’s arms. For a long time, I only knew there’s short- and long-term memory, but not understood how they functioned. Now I am understanding more. Our brain’s memory capacity is said to vary wildly from 1 to 1000 terabytes (Humanmemory.net), and am I glad to have some of these precious recollections.

Some say it might be nice to have the memory of a computer, but I say this is enough, what God has endowed. I may not be as fast or efficient in processing information, but do we have to be? This reminds me of the '80s movie "Short Circuit", one of the most loved movies our family saw again and again. The experimental military robot, Number 5, gobbles up info as a very hungry learner with a sizable memory storage, shouting "Input, input!" What the transformed friendly robot lacks is the neuron or brain cell, the "electrically excitable cell that processes and transmits information by electro-chemical signaling."

When I had my family, I first started to think "How old am I..." as I mused about nursing the children and singing lullabies. They may have long forgotten that, but I know I'll never forget those days when I stopped working before our second son was born. These were days I wish they'd never

grow, which of course they did— and our youngest is now taller than me!

Writing this reminds me of a local song, “Hindi Kita Malilimutan” (“I Will Never Forget You”), the Lord not forgetting His people and a mother her suckling child, based on Isaiah 49.15-16:

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”

*Sandy Loam is the pen name of a wife and mother from Los Baños and Bay, Laguna, Philippines. A researcher at heart, she occasionally writes as the Lord leads. She also loves to sing and play some instruments, making melody in her heart, as well as gardening and sketching for the Lord.

Note to Readers

Some people have childhoods that are filled with joy and happy memories. Others remember only pain and tragedy. Most of us recall a mixture of both. Children experience an innocent wonder, and that awe causes some to look around at the world and say, “God is real, and this Creator of all things is good and loves me.”

However, some people who experienced more pain and sorrow than wonder may see this world through a black filter of hurt and rejection. They may not have come to the same conclusion about God’s goodness and incredible love.

The truth is that mankind is full of sin. The wrongdoing of others has the potential to block our view of God’s good character. Unfortunately, we are all infected with this sinfulness.

God is just. Every just judge punishes wrongdoers. Without payment for our sins, we are doomed to pay for our wrongdoing eternally. Yet, there is hope!

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins because He loves us. Since Jesus never sinned, the grave could not hold Him down. After three days, He was raised from the dead.

If we ask the Lord for forgiveness and trust His Son for salvation, we will be washed clean of our sinfulness. We will be reconciled to God and made pure to live with Him in heaven. If you have never made the choice to put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, I urge you to pray this prayer right now:

Lord, I want to accept Jesus Christ into my heart today so my sins will be washed clean. Forgive me for the sins I have committed. Guide me by Your Holy Spirit to do what is right. Show me Your will for my life, and help me to live it out. I

believe You are a good God who wants good things for me and loves me in spite of my past. Thank You, Lord, for making salvation such a simple thing that even a child can do it. In Christ's Name, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer with your whole heart, then you are now a Christian with the Holy Spirit living inside you to guide you through your whole life, and you will one day be joined with God in heaven. Congratulations on your great choice! Please take some time to read the Bible so you can learn more about our loving God and Creator. Also, please consider finding a Christian church in your area to encourage you and pray for you.

Thanks for reading *Childhood Remembrances*. I pray you have been entertained and inspired to share your memories with your children, grandchildren, and friends. God has blessed us each our own unique experience on Earth. Let's make the rest of it really count.