



MARCH 1977

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

PUMPELLY TIRE CENTER, INC.
1000 N. W. 10th St.
Fort Lauderdale, Fla. 33304
Tel. 464-4444



Civilian Marriage

Elder Dan Lewis

My Witness: God Provides

Individuality is a man's privilege ...

My Senior Yearbook

This document is Copyright © 2016 by the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>), version 3.0 or later.

Prologue

It was the second weekend of February, 1969. Susan was just beginning her seventh month of pregnancy. I'm not sure what had led her to get so agitated, but it might have been the future that we were now facing.

I would have completed my four years of active duty service the end of April. A little bit before then, I was also scheduled to begin as a student in the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) during the Spring quarter.

I had some income from the GI Bill while a student. But, what about more permanent employment? In other words, what were we going to do? This could have been really weighing on her mind.

As the result, she went into premature labor on Sunday Evening about 20 miles from her parents home. In the end, she would up staying with her parents until after Kevin's birth.

While I did not recognize it completely at the time, God was working in the background to smooth out our lives. The right people were present with the help that we needed. Otherwise, things could have become disastrous. They were bad enough at times because of the mistakes Susan and I made.

Transition to civilian life

Susan was in the last trimester of her first pregnancy. She was staying at her parents during this time.

I was settling down in my one room apartment in Hattiesburg, MS. The spring quarter at the University of Southern Mississippi had just begun, and the weather was still cool to a little bit cold. I had a refrigerator and stove in my room, so I could fix my own meals. It also meant that I had shopping to do weekly as well.

There was no central heating, so the cold morning presented a problem temperature wise. So, I improvised. I would like the top burners and the oven. It really did not do a whole lot of good, but I was sort of cool rather than having goose bumps.

The apartment was across the street from the Hattiesburg railroad station. So, I got to hear the trains go through once in a while. I suppose some of these sounds reminded me of my childhood when we had railroad tracks at one end of our block. Were they somewhat soothing?

And then there were my classes. Now this is something that I did not really understand. They were so much easier than I remembered just four years before. Was this school that much easier than the U of I? Why did I grasp the information so fast? Why was I able to just read my textbooks once and understand the subject matter?

I thought that the type of tests given had something to do with this. Seems like all of them were multiple choice. Well I had been working with this type of test for the past four years. By sheer practice, I had learned how to pick out the answers that were obviously wrong. Sometimes, only one of the answers was obviously right. So, getting high

grades was easy. So at the end of the quarter I had earned 1 B and the rest A's.

Actually, I was 27 years old which meant that my nervous system had fully matured. It was still immature while I was attending the University of Illinois. This had a lot to do with everything.

Kevin's birth

Susan was due in early May, so it was not really unusual for her to experience some contractions the first weekend of April. But when this happened, I was not really prepared for it, and neither was Susan. I'm not sure about her mother.

I should mention that Dr. Todd whom Susan was using had his office in Newton, MS, which is 20 miles south of Union. Any hospitalizations would be also in Newton.

It was the evening of Saturday, April 5th when she began to feel some twinges which got stronger. Given the problems she had two months earlier, the decision was made to check this out. So we drove 20 miles south to the hospital. Doctor Todd happened to be at the hospital at the time. After checking her out, he decided to keep her overnight as a precaution. (Her contractions in February probably had something to do with this.) By Sunday, the contractions quieted down, so we were sent home. False alarm was what I was thinking at the time. So, come Monday morning, I was heading to Hattiesburg for my college classes.

Then I returned the following Friday for another weekend. This passed quietly. Besides I think that Susan's father had taken her to see Dr. Todd for a normal office visit, and everything seemed normal. So, I got in another week of schooling without any interruptions.

It was now Friday, April 18, and things were still quiet. But by Saturday evening, the contractions were back. Time to have them checked out at hospital. Fortunately, Dr. Todd

was making his evening rounds, so he checked her out in the emergency room. She needed to be admitted as a precaution just to see if she was really going into labor or not.

By Sunday afternoon, the pains were still coming and going. So she was given a shot that would either put her into full labor or stop the contractions.

By Monday afternoon, nothing seemed to be happening other than she was up and down a lot of the time. So the doctor asked her point blank if she was having any pains. She said, "No." (Shouldn't he have been able to tell by examining her? Likely she lied.) This was another time when what she wanted to do and what she should have done were two different things.

Anyway, I took her back to her parents' home. That entire night, she was walking back and forth to the bathroom every 30 minutes or less. (The intensity and frequency of the pains had increased.) There was very little sleep for me that night, and I had the easy part!

Early on Tuesday morning, I headed to USM for the day's classes. Before the last of my classes that afternoon, I decided that I needed to go back to Union to check on her. (I even told one of my professors that I might not be to class later in the week because of my wife's condition.)

On Tuesday afternoon, Her parents had taken her to see the doctor because their concern, and he had sent her back home saying she had another couple of weeks. From what I understand he did not do a pelvic exam which he should have. (Her mother said so.) But then Susan had lied to him the previous day, so it was not **all** his fault. There is no telling what answers she may have given him this time either.

I arrived shortly after they had returned from seeing the doctor. They were definitely glad to see me! Mildred was

worried that something was wrong. With me there, Susan could be taken to the hospital if necessary. And yes, she was continuing to go to the bathroom very often. She was miserable to say the least!

About 9 PM, her water broke. (What a mess!) So as soon as we could get everyone in the car, we headed to the hospital. (It took far longer than I would have liked.) Before we left, I called the hospital telling them that we were bringing Susan in and why (all the mess I had just witnessed). Dr. Todd was there at the time, but he left before we could get there.

Fortunately, another doctor was there when we arrived close to 9:30 PM. Kevin was born within 10 minutes of our arrival.

(So much for the first baby taking a long time to be born. But I am not counting the length of time she was in labor while denying it. Later she would tell that she had been in hard labor for 72 hours. Sometimes I think she might have even been proud of herself as if this was an accomplishment. It was not!)

When Dr. Todd reappeared during delivery (his home was only a couple of miles away), Susan remarked, "A couple of weeks, huh? More like a couple of hours." I doubt that she understood just how much of that was her fault. As it turns out, she and possibly Kevin could have died that night because of her decisions.

Me? I was the usual nervous new father during delivery: walking around (all over the hospital) and very nervous. While the doctors were working with Susan and Kevin, an ambulance came in with a car accident. Unfortunately, the young man was pronounced dead on arrival.

(Newton Mississippi is a very small city of about 2,000 people. The hospital had 20 or fewer beds. So, it was a small

one to say the least. This is why I could walk around so easily.)

Sister Mildred said that this night one person had left this world as another had entered. She felt badly for the family of the young man who had died.

After what seemed like a long time, we were told that Susan and I had a baby boy. (Sister Mildred heard the news first because she remained immediately outside the delivery area. I was nervously walking around the halls of the hospital.) It would be 10 PM before we could see Susan and Kevin because they had had problems getting Susan to stop bleeding.

Kevin was 3 weeks premature and was put into an incubator to keep him warm. (We were having a cold snap at the time.) He sure was tiny, very tiny! He was only 18" long weighing 6 lbs. 3 oz. We also learned that he had been breach. Sister Mildred noticed that his right arm did not seem to move around as much as it should. So, over a period of days she began exercising it to improve its movement. It certainly helped.

The first thing I did after seeing Susan and Kevin was call Bro. Curtis to first tell him that he had a new grandson and secondly to get permission to use his phone number to charge my call to my parents and Brother Lonnie.

Etta had already had two girls by this time, but Dad had said that he was not a grandfather until he had a grandson. So, after I got to see Susan, I called him. When Dad answered, I said, "Congratulations, grandpa, you finally made it!" Then I told him about the birth and Kevin's name: Kevin Scott Lewis. His comment to this was that in time it would be "Great Scott!" This would of course refer to when Kevin got into something that he was not suppose to. (Now did Kevin ever do this?...)

Bro. Lonnie and Shirley were also expecting at the same time. She had become pregnant earlier than Susan by about 2 weeks. She delivered the night before Susan did. So, his comment to me was that he would come to see us, but he had just had an addition to his own family (Becky).

Pre-me

Things did not go well with Kevin. He was small enough that they were using a pre-me nipple on his bottle. The only problem was that the nurses did not know how to cut it properly for a good flow of formula. (They did not cut the nipple at all. More likely they expected the nipples to be cut just like those for more mature babies.) I don't know whether the doctor did not want Susan to breast feed Kevin, or did he believe she was not strong enough to do so? Maybe he did not think Kevin was strong enough to nurse. (He never told me, and I did not ask as I should.)

I remained by Susan's side the rest of this week instead of going to my college classes. It took a little getting use to him being so small. The Baby and Child Care program at Keesler Air Force Base earlier had sort of prepared us for a baby's size, but Kevin was smaller than that. We practiced diapering baby dolls in this program.

I watched the nurses "feed" Kevin, but the formula did not seem to be going down in the bottle. Actually, he did not get any nourishment for the two and a half days he was in the hospital. We just did not realize this. Even so, I saw the nurses try to do something about it without any real success.

By Friday, Kevin was down to 5 lb 8 oz when they released Susan and Kevin. So, I drove them home. That is when Susan did it again. She had to carry Kevin into the house. If he had been only wrapped up in a receiving blanket, that might have been OK.

We had earlier bought baby furniture including a baby bed, and a bassinet. There was also a metal something that he could lay in. In this he could be laid out flat or have his upper body elevated a little. Well, she decided that she would walk up the front steps with Kevin in this. This was entirely too much weight. When she first saw Susan do this, she first fussed at her and then at me. Both were well deserved!

By Monday morning, I needed to get back to my college classes. So I drove south. I was still worried about the very small or no formula that Kevin was getting into his stomach. But it was another member of the family that came to our rescue.

Her sister, Joan, had had two pre-me's, and she was the one that noticed the problem early in the following week with the nipple and corrected it. (Susan called me in the middle of the week to tell me that Kevin had taken a couple of ounces of formula for the first time. [In fact, he had not had any nourishment since he was born until a week later.]) After that he quickly began to take much more formula than he had in the past. By the end of the week when I came home, he was taking more and more formula. Crisis averted. Yet, because of his lacking nourishment for several days, what effect did this have on his physical and mental being?

Meanwhile I was back in class again. One of my professors had written the following on the chalk board: "It's a _____." So, at the beginning of class, he asked me to verbally fill it in. I replied that it was a four letter word. He took me to mean a girl. With a grin, I corrected him: "It's a baby." (Well, it was.) Then I admitted that it was a boy.

Susan had doctor visits after Kevin's birth. Because of my being 100 miles a way during the week, her father took her to these. So I had little interaction with the doctor. This might have resulted Susan losing two girls later on. Dr.

Todd told her that she should not try to have any more children because of the damage caused by Kevin's birth. (I was never told this by him or Susan.)

Within the next few week I moved from the one room apartment on the second floor to a two room apartment on the ground floor. I probably gradually moved some of the things we would need for Kevin here as well. The baby bed remained in Union, but the bassinet went to Hattiesburg and served as his bed for the summer while there.

Then came the first of June and the time for Susan's six week check up. I took her to this one. He said everything was fine. Well it would be nice if he had told me then what he had told Susan earlier, but he did not. Even so, his office staff was quite happy to inform me how much having Kevin would cost me. Even so, she and Kevin were both able to travel to Hattiesburg. I certainly was glad to hear this!

So the first of the following week, the three of us headed to our apartment. It was already warmer in the apartment than I would have wanted it to be...

Penni the cat

We had had her since December, 1967. Since then she had matured and gone into heat. Whether it was the first time or a later time, she became pregnant. Sometime around the middle of February, she was moved to Union to be with Susan. She delivered her kittens a few weeks before Kevin was born.

Mildred had some concern about Penni causing a problem for Kevin. Since he was taking formula, the thinking was that she might get on Kevin's bed and put her mouth into his mouth trying to get to the milk in his mouth. This could prevent him from breathing. It did not happen. In fact, she remained on the floor during anytime she was in Susan's bedroom.

With the weather getting a little warmer in early May, Penni and her kittens were put outside to live. She was also fed outside as well.

There were a couple of hound dogs that could have been a threat to the kittens. Well, I saw a couple of them that were threatening Penni one time. They should not have tried that! She reacted as any mother would in protecting her young ones. They rather quickly backed off and never tried to come close to her ever again.

After the kittens were weaned, they were given away to people who wanted them. We also found a good home for Penni. We would certainly miss her antics!

Summer in Hattiesburg

We did visit with Bro. Lonnie and his family quite a bit during this summer. Did we spend too much time with them? Did we overstay our welcome. I really do not remember.

Hind sight is better than foresight especially when it comes to being a new parent. I have mentioned that Susan and Shirley had time to talk hopefully about how to take care of a baby. Yet, you have not yet read that I took the time to ask Bro. Lonnie about the same topic. Why, because I did not take advantage of the opportunity. Now, I know; then I did not stop to think about it.

So, now we had to settle down as a family of three. This being summer in the south, it was hot, and it would only get worse. We did have a box fan which helped a little, but moving air around when the temperature was in the 90's does not help all that much. Night time temperatures did not cool down very much either. Our landlord helped us some by allowing Susan and Kevin to spend some time during the day in her apartments which was air conditioned.

Some of the weekends we would go to church in Petal, and other times we would go to Union to be with her parents (sort of my adopted parents).



Mom and Dad came down to see their new grandson, and we met them in Union. It was our home away from home. This picture made it official! My father had become a grandfather: here he is feeding his first grandson.

Toward the end of the summer quarter, Susan was spending some weeks with her parents. Was it cooler there perhaps? Or was there another reason?

There were some Apollo moon shots already this year. Every launch was successful included the last one. (Well, three astronauts died in a fire on the launch pad during testing of systems.)

Apollo 10 had circled the moon several times. This is when the lunar module with two of the astronauts descended into a smaller orbit around the moon (altitude about 5 miles above the moon). Then they returned it to the command module.

All had gone as planned. So far they had proven that we could orbit the moon, use the lunar module to descend

toward the moon, and dock it back to the command module. The next thing to try was to actually land on the moon.

Now it was late July when Apollo 11 lifted off. Like others, we were following its progress. Then came Sunday when I returned to Hattiesburg by myself. I arrived just as the lunar module was beginning its descent to the moon's surface. As I walked to my apartment, my landlady heard me come in the front door and quickly invited me into her family's apartment to watch the actual landing on their TV. It was amazing!

One thing that I noticed was that this landing was nothing like what I had seen in movies. That was because this was obviously real while movies can only simulate such a maneuver.

Even so, I missed some of the things that were going on even though my eyes were glued to the TV. It was the words being spoken by the crew in the lunar module as well as a count down time in the background. But what was it a count down of?

The astronauts were reading off the forward speed as well as the how fast the module was approaching the moon's surface. This gave the people watching how fast the module was approaching the moon. Ideally, forward and downward motions should be near rather close to 0. They were.

But the voice in the background? I later learned that this was indicating a potentially very serious problem. The time count down was giving how much longer before the module ran out of fuel! When the astronauts set the module down on the moon, there was only a few seconds left of fuel. They were really calling this one very close.

I also saw them "walk" on the moon. This was far different from space movie simulations as well. But the most fascinating thing that I saw in this mission was the

broadcast of the take off from the moon. I had watched the mercury, Gemini, and Apollo rockets leave the launch pad at Cape Canaveral many time before. But they were always so slow as they took off. But the take off from the moon was very, very quick. It was faster by far than anything I had seen in movies or TV broadcasts. This was when I was absolutely convinced that they were actually on the moon!

Schooling was nice since the GI Bill was paying for it. But I needed a job. So, I began spending more time in looking for them. The university had an employment department which had the listing of the teaching positions available. There were listing of other types of jobs as well.

Sometime during the late summer, I got a job with a school at Greenwood, MS. I would be starting in late August. My salary would be \$5,200. (\$4800 was the state pay scale and the LeFloure County Schools added \$400 to that.) So, now I knew where we would be going for the next school year.

But first, I needed to finish the summer quarter. Well, in early August, classes were over and final exams taken. It was time to move what things I had in my apartment to Union.

Carol and Susan came down to help me with the move on Saturday. We got everything packed and headed back to Union. The weather was not all that bad yet even though there was a hurricane way south of us in the Gulf of Mexico. Where was it going? It was literally anyone's guess anywhere from southwestern Louisiana to the panhandle of Florida.

Hurricane Camille

Sunday morning we went to church where our uncle was a deacon. That afternoon we took Susan's cousin home with us. That is when I saw the clouds billowing up and moving north very rapidly. This reminded me of Hurricane Betsy in

1965. It this was looking worse and worse. By late afternoon, I did not like the looks of the weather, so I said that I was going to take her cousin home then. I did not want to be out in what could be some rather stormy weather that evening!

Others thought I was over reacting to the situation. They had been in hurricanes before, but these storms had all lost their strength before they got this far north. I have to admit that they had good reason for their beliefs. However, Camille was not a run of the mill hurricanes. It was much smaller and more intense as well. This meant that fewer people would be affected, but those who were would suffer far more damage.

This was one time when I was stubborn enough to get my way. But then I felt the situation was serious enough that I would have taken the cousin home regardless of what anyone else did or said.

What happened over the next 24 hours is described in a movie: *A lady named Camille*. A few years later, this movie was shown in the schools in Mississippi showing as part of disaster preparedness. This was done annually.

On this Sunday afternoon, Civil Defense personnel along the Mississippi Gulf Coast were out telling people to evacuate. For those who said were staying put, the personnel asked for their names and next of kin for their records. They might not be alive when this was all over. This was a serious situation!

What happened in Union, MS, that Sunday night vindicated my feelings and actions. Things were much worse than they thought possible and not as worse as I had expected.

I looked outside Monday morning and saw a mess everywhere. There were a couple of mimosa trees in the

front yard that lost several branches that night. Even so, things were worse a mere 20 miles west of us. Sharon Church in Lake, MS, had tree damage and a lot of things blown around by the wind.

In fact the damage began along the Gulf Coast going north northwest all the way through the Delta area of Mississippi. Then it curved eastward to cross the Appalachian Mountains. Flash floods from the heavy tropical rainfall drowned many people in the mountains.

Having a baby and using cloth diapers, we needed to wash them on Monday. This hurricane had been strong enough for everyone to lose power in Union except for one short block. We were going to wash Kevin's diapers, but we could not. So we got out in our car and checked the only coin laundromat in town. There was no power here either. We were getting a little worried. What were we going to do?

Then someone thought to call Joan just in case. Sure enough, she had power. She lived on the only block with it! (So when we drove to her house, we noticed that almost all of the places were dark, and this included two local grocery stores.) So, the diapers were washed and dried there. Otherwise I don't really know what we would have done. Yes, paper diapers were a possibility, but without power, where were we going to buy them?

Then Tuesday morning we headed to Greenwood to look for housing. What I did not know was that we were following in the path of Camille. Well that is why we saw so much trash all over the place.

We drove into Greenwood and then around in it. Somehow we saw a house on the western side of town. It seems even stranger as to how we found out that it had been divided into two apartments. One was already rented, but the other one was vacant.

By this time, I was getting tired and did not know if I would find another one. We went to the man who owned the building and made arrangements to rent it. For some reason, we did not stop to ask about anything else he might have vacant at the time either. Bad move.

The house was Antebellum. So, it was old, drafty, and the ceilings were high. Did I mention that the walls were not insulated? They were not.

So as the school year progressed and the outside temperature gradually became lower, so did the inside temperature. Space heaters do not heat rooms with high ceilings at all! This apartment was becoming more and more uncomfortable.

Besides Susan was in the apartment alone with a very young baby. Not having someone to talk to for long periods of time are not very good on a person's emotional health. How could she talk to anyone? She had a phone did not know anyone to call. The people next door both worked all day.

Susan's complaints became enough that we talked to the person we rented from about the situation. He was nice about the situation that he allowed us to move into the upstairs of a building much closer to the downtown area. (It was also around the block from his office.)

This apartment had a similar problem: space heaters in each room were the only source of heat. Furthermore, the kitchen area had windows all around it. Rather than windows that slide up and down, the glass was in frames that opened inward. Needless to say, these frames were not air tight!

First teaching job Sept 1969 - May 1970

School began August 25 with preschool meetings. This is when we got our information and class room assignments. It was an all black student body and an integrated teaching staff. The previous year, the principal and vice principal were both black.

This year to please someone, an additional white co-principal was hired. That is because someone thought that having a white co-principal was suppose to attract some white students. Because of the attitude of the residents toward race, nothing could be done to the school to attract anyone unless there were no black students in the student body. It was really a waste of money. The co-principle was not much of an administrator either.

Greenwood is in the Mississippi "Delta" which is really the Mississippi valley and very flat. As a result, the winds did not have much to stop them. Well, it was during one of those windy days that the white co-principle told me that I was lucky with my slim body. I could turn sideways, and the wind would blow right past me. He, with his girth, would be blown over if he turned sideways. I could almost see him rolling along the ground blown by the wind!

Since that time, I have wondered about what he said. 48 years later, I was outside in windy weather. So, I tried turning sideways. Sure enough, I could walk easier sideways to the wind compared to walking into it. hmmm...

Tom and Elaine's wedding (Sept 30)

I skipped the last two days of preschool meetings (with permission of course). Instead, Thursday morning we headed to Ohio. The Interstate Highway system was still under construction in various areas, so sometimes we were driving on Interstate and sometimes we were not. Nashville was one place that would not have Interstate for a few years yet. This was not a fun place to drive, let me tell you.

Our trip took us from Greenwood to Memphis mostly on I-55 and then Memphis to Knoxville on I-40 in places. From there we headed north on I-75 to Cincinnati spending the night in either Tennessee or Kentucky. There we took I-74 which took us to Marion, OH, and the Hite farm.

Traveling in a VW fastback with a young baby can be a challenge as we found out near Dayton, OH, when Kevin had a large bowel movement. The problem? Finding enough space to clean him up while parked on the side of the highway! But we managed and arrived at the Hite's farm a couple of hours later.

Mom, Dad, and his parents were already there when we got there. Of course, my grandmother wanted to hold my new son. Since she was already 80 and had been in poor health for more than a decade, Mom thought it best that Kevin be given her while she was sitting down and we we did. This had to be a happy time for her since she got to hold "Danny's" new son. She already had several great-grandchildren including Etta's two girls. But I like to think that mine was special.

Friday night, the Lewis' were at a local motel. (Well I do not know for sure where Webb spent the night.) Mom, Dad, and his parents shared one room; My three and Etta's three shared another room. Very possibly, Webb had a room to himself.

I was a little uncomfortable sharing the room, but I got over it after a while. Kevin was in paper diapers, and Etta was potty training Terri. Wendy was 5 years old. Needless to say, but Terri was not always cooperative. But a young child requires some time to learn what and how to do things. This means some wet spots for a while.

Saturday morning, we went to the Owl Creek Harmony association meeting. (We may have stayed for the afternoon service as well.)

The Hites served supper on Saturday about an hour before the scheduled start of the wedding. All of my parents' children were present for the supper and wedding. Aunt Ida and Gwen (her daughter) and Gwen's husband, Ken were also present. Eunice was the only one of Aunt Mildred's (Mom's sister) children that made the wedding.

Then it was off to the wedding and reception at Rocky Fork Church. I can pull up some brief glimpses of the inside of the church, but that is about it.

One thing that shook me up was when Tom and Elaine started to leave after the reception at Rocky Fork. One person had put shaving cream on Tom's car door while someone else had jacked up one of their left rear tires just enough so that the car would get no traction.

Tom got behind the wheel messy white hand and all. When he tried to drive off, the jacked up wheel spun and threw rocks at the church, close to a window! I was behind the car and off to one side, so I did not get hit. Then again, I was not all that far away from where the rocks hit the church either.

Given the ruined car finish on the rental car I was driving at my wedding and this occurrence, I come to frown upon childish behaviors of wedding guests. Grow up folks!

After spending another night in the motel, we went to the association again. (Etta was heading to West Virginia.) However, I do not really remember very much about any of the sermons preached that morning.

As all association meetings, there was "dinner on the grounds." Gwen and Ken were also at the meeting. Being the motherly type, she insisted that Susan and I get our food while she took care of Kevin including feeding him. I had already been warned by my Mom about even thinking about crossing Gwen about anything she wanted to do for Kevin. Namely, she would not have listened to me if I had

said no about anything she wanted to do. The only thing Mom did not know was that I can be very stubborn also. After all, this was **my** son. Well, I did not object to her helping us at all. So there was no class between the two of us.

Then we headed south again since I needed to be in Greenwood before Tuesday morning when classes began at Amanda High School. As we approached Columbus, I saw where the Ohio State Fair was going on.

Since I was born in this city, I had this feeling that it would be nice to go by the place where I was born. But I was on the Interstate going around the city (its beltway?), so this side trip would take too long. It did not happen. Besides I did not have a map of the city required to even think about doing this.

Everything went well until we got back to Nashville. Somehow I missed a turn in the city. So, I wound up driving on a truck route through this city. It probably took me longer, but I still got back to Greenwood by Monday evening. Of course, the fact this Monday was Labor Day did not help any either!

"Integrated school"

It was suppose to be an integrated school as in racially mixed student body. In reality, the whites assigned at Amanda Elsy school went to private schools instead. The only integration at the school was the faculty and this did not bother me very much at all.

One thing that I noticed was that the county school offices were in two locations in the courthouse: one for the white superintendent on the first floor, and the other in the basement which is where the black assistant superintendent's office was.

I thought this seemed rather strange to be this way, but later in life I decided that this is what segregation is all about: taking the best for one's self and giving the other race things with a lower status.

The one time I was in Amanda Elsa's office talking with her, my feelings toward her was that of total respect for the office she held. For that matter her actions commanded my respect. She was in charge, and she knew it. This was perfectly natural to me. For that matter, I was very impressed with this lady.

Church caused problems

There was a church in Greenwood that we began attending, and I was even considering moving my membership to it. But then the pastor told me that had I tried to do this, I would not have been accepted. They feared that I might invite some of the Negro (they used a "different spelling") teachers to go to church with me.

If they didn't want me to bring any of the Negro teachers to church with me. How would they have acted if I had brought any of the other teachers? Specifically, one couple who taught there were from South America. After all, they were from a different race (part Caucasian and part Indian, probably Inca.)

First of all, I had not even thought about doing this. Second of all, they did not bother to ask me about this nor explain their concerns. After a while we stopped even going there. Thereafter we went to Yazoo City on first and third Sundays and Sharon (Lake) on fourth (perhaps second Sunday night). They may have been "Christians" by name association, but they were Pharisees by practice (personal opinion obviously).

Society in that area consisted of four parts: rich white folks, white trash, rich Negroes, and niggers. There was not

real mixing between any of the groups. Well, as a school teacher, I was not rich... Jesus taught that we should love one another as He loved us. I did not find people in that area living up to what He taught.

Dangerous journey

One of the Negro teachers across the hall from me, Mr. Jones, had some property in Jasper County, MS. (Susan's parents owned property in this county, so I was somewhat knowledgeable of its roads.) One of our conversations got around to how to drive there from Greenwood. That is when he told me how he drove to get there which was much longer than what it should have been. So, I promised to show him a shorter way the next time the two of us were heading in that direction at the same time.

So one Friday night, he followed me as I drove that way. We ran into a slight snag as we drove through Holmes Country as it had a reputation of stopping Negro drivers if they were driving over 50 MPH. So, I had to slow down to allow him to keep up with me. But once we got through that county, we could drive faster, and the trip went without a problem. I stopped at the road that led to his part of Jasper County. We spoke our good-bye, he headed southeast, and my family headed north to Union about 10 miles away.

At the time, I did not think about the possible problem this trip could have caused. Had he been stopped in Holmes Co., I would have stopped also and gone back to see what the problem was. It did not occur what they would have done to me if they learned that we were teaching at the same school. Specifically, they would have hated the idea of me teaching Negro students. In such a case, I might even have been treated worse than Mr. Jones.

Other activities

I became part of a bowling league, and the three of us would go once a week for this. I never got very good at it. The comment I made about the society around Greenwood came from another member of my team. He worked for USDA. He was not rich either... But then again, another member was a pediatrician who was...

I had bowled while a student at the University of Illinois, but I had never been a member of a team. For that matter, I could have taken bowling as a PE course, but I did not. I can only guess how I became a member of a bowling team while in Greenwood.

Susan and I must have gone bowling the night this league was there. Somehow, I was invited to join and did so. As a result, I got a monogram shirt with the team name to wear. Later one of the team members gave me a bowling ball so that I could use the same one each week. That was nice of him.

To equalize our scores, each one of us had a handicap score that was added to our bowled score. This was determined by our average score for the first several games. My handicap was fairly high perhaps in the 60's to 70's. This was probably recalculated once in a while. Then it was adjusted up or down depending upon how well I bowled.

The team consisted of five men, but only four would bowl at any given time. The man with the lowest score for a given game sat the next game out with the odd man taking his place. Since I was the team's lowest bowler, I sat out a lot of games.

There was one night that one of them men could not come, so I got to bowl all three games. This time, I did rather well for me: far above my usual scores. With my handicap, I had a 600+ series meaning that I had averaged 200 for the three games! Unfortunately, my bowling went

back to its usual poor level the next week when all five men of our team bowled.

School athletics

Home football games were played on Friday afternoons instead of afternoon classes. They were not really all that good. For that matter the students did not seem to get any enthusiasm up for the game: the cheers were not all that good either. I do not remember if we won any of the home games, but I doubt it.

The lack of enthusiasm was based upon the social status differences. Some of the students had parents who were professionals, some were very poor. These two groups did not like each other. In fact, there was a fight outside the school one day between two boys who were from different social groups.

Basketball games were played at night though. First the girls team would play followed by the boys. And I was expected to be at a certain number of games as part of my teacher responsibilities. I don't remember if I attended any more games; I might have.

Once a year, our school played the black school in Greenwood, Thredgill. Since there was a lot of bad blood between the two schools, I was told not to go to this game. (It was not safe.) So, I did not.

The next day, I did learn that someone had done something to one of our girls during the game. That led her brother, who was on the boys team, to throw a folding chair across the floor at someone. He was not going to allow anyone to mess with his sister. The situation got calmed down, so no one really got hurt.

There were times when Susan came out to the school with Kevin in a cab and spend some time, usually in the

library. Some of the female students were happy to have a young child to play with too.

Her actions really surprised the cab driver needless to say. He would not have dared to walk onto the campus, and yet he saw Susan not only do it, but she did it with a small child! Oh the prejudices that limit what people think they can do. But then again, I was a teacher there. So, they knew not to mess with a teacher's family. The principal was not going to allow that to happen.

Getting our washer and dryer

Our apartment had a place for a washer/dryer pair, so we needed to get them somehow. (Susan did not need to be getting out to go to a laundromat all of the time. Well, there was a pair that I had put a layaway payment the previous February in Hattiesburg. Could I get them? If so, how?

Susan's sister (Rachel) allowed me to take their pick up truck to do exactly that. At least we now would have a washing machine to wash the diapers and dryer to dry them. We already had a refrigerator in the apartment, but I planned to get it also.

So we drove to Philadelphia, MS, to their home, probably on a Friday night. Then early Saturday morning I headed in the truck to Hattiesburg while Susan and Kevin stayed with her sister.

Upon arrival in Hattiesburg, I learned that the lay-away payment would not be honored for the refrigerator because it had been nearly a year since I had given it to them. (So I lost it.) However the store where I had made the lay-away payment on the washer and dryer were nicer.

So, after paying the rest that was due on these appliances, I headed to Greenwood. By the time I got there, it was already after sundown. With a lot of grunting and sweat, I managed to get them off of the truck, up the stairs,

and where they belonged. By this time it was after 9 PM. Then I left for Philadelphia.

It was close to midnight before I got back to their house, and I did not think about filling the tank up. That did not go down well even though I offered to pay for the gas. (Did they really believe me?) Anyway I should have given them the money at a later time regardless of what they might say, but I didn't.

We actually had a TV and watched it during the evenings. Of course by this time it was getting colder. This meant that we were depending upon the space heaters to help keep us warm. Considering that the walls had never been insulated, they did not do a very good job. Health wise, this did nothing good to the health of either Susan or Kevin. Because of this, Kevin slept in our room most of the time.

What was a popular TV program that school year? Well two of them were *Mod Squad*, and *Room 222*. Do an Internet search if you want to know what they were about.

This being an old house, there were mice in the walls as well. It was during the time that I had to remain home with Susan because she could not keep even water down. I just happened to look toward the opposite wall from our bed when I saw a mouse run into a hole. So, I got some mouse traps.

During this time, she remained in bed. So at some point I went into the bedroom to check on her. She had company! A mouse was laying very quietly next to her open mouth. I suppose it liked having her warm breath going over its body. When it noticed me, it ran as fast as it could. So, I had seen possibly two mice. There could be more of them. In fact, this was very likely.

I took her to a doctor for her problem. He recommended I give her a teaspoon of soda pop every couple of hours. It worked! So I tried giving her a couple of teaspoons at one

time only to have it come back up. That is when I went back to following doctor's orders. In time, she got over it completely, and I could go back to work.

Then I was able to locate a mouse hole in the wall of the bedroom. So I set a mouse trap at its entrance and another one somewhere near the refrigerator. I think I managed to kill one mouse with the second trap.

I killed a couple of mice at the mouse entrance in the bedroom. One of them was hit directly behind its head which broke its spinal column. It died instantly.

The other one was not so lucky. It must have been running into the hole in the wall when it set off the trap. It caught it at the base of its tail. There was no way for it to escape; it died of starvation.

Sharon Church

Brother Winfred Hollingsworth had been exercising his gift of the ministry for a period of time. He was also going to other churches and exercising his gift in their services as well. The consensus among ministers who heard him was that he was ready to be ordained.

Finally, Sharon Church decided to ordain him as an elder. He had been the church clerk and deacon up to this time, but his ordination as an elder required him to give up the clerk position.

After an evening service, I was asked by one of the deacons if I would take this position. I declined for a couple of reasons. First, I was living a hundred miles away in Greenwood Ms. I felt the church clerk needed to live in the same area as the church. Secondly, I also felt a calling to the ministry even though no church had sought to help me develop this calling.

Kevin

He did not do well that winter. The first apartment was drafty which was not good. The second one was not that much different. Besides both were heated with space heaters and were poorly insulated. It is a wonder that he even survived it.

For that matter I am not sure that Susan was giving him the proper nutrition as would be evident later. But then again, neither one of us really knew how to feed a baby properly and did not seek out this information from others nor did others seek to give it to us. (Were they assuming that we already knew? Or were they put off by our actions? Or, was Susan determined to do things her own way regardless of what others said?)

Dr. Todd had told us to begin giving him baby cereal sometime early in the preceding summer. Then at some point after that, he was started on baby food fruits and vegetables. But what about nutrition? How was Kevin going to get his proteins, carbs and fats from these baby foods? I did not know, and I am not sure others did.

The thinking seemed to be that you get a jar of baby food and start spooning it into his mouth. It did not seem to make any difference which fruit or vegetable jar. Maybe they did not really understand nutrition as it applies to babies. I know I really did not. What I now know is that people need to eat certain foods to help keep them healthy.

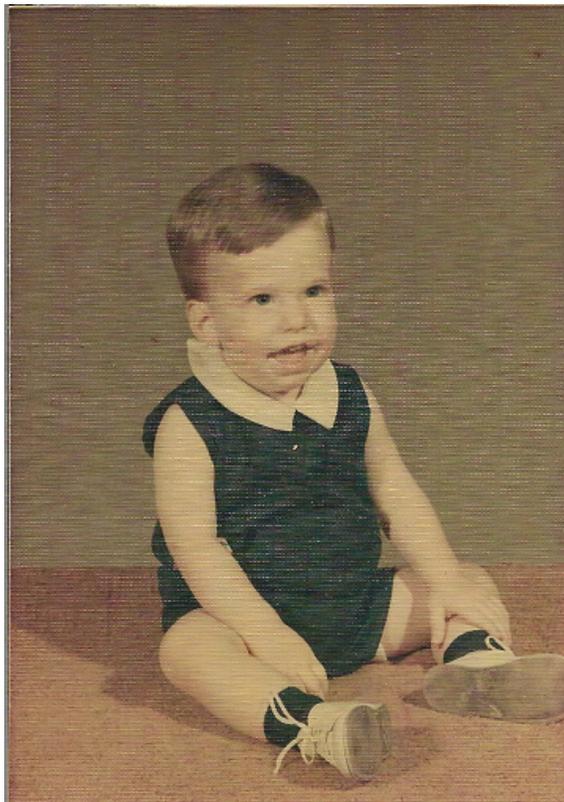
Because I was busy with other things, I did not really pay that much attention to how many jars of baby food we were using. The same thing was true of the formula he was taken. It turned out that it was too much formula and not enough solid foods. And when we began feeding him some meat, I did not notice how much of this either.

Scotting ability

He was slow in developing for whatever reason. He showed signs of weakness in being late holding up his head

(six months) and sitting up (unknown).

Lately I wonder just how much effect the lack of nutrition the first week had on his later development. The nipple we used on his bottle was not cut let alone cut properly until almost a week after his birth. We will never really know.



Personally, he is quite cute in this photo! He did have his antics.

Then again, he never did really crawl like other babies do. He sat with his feet closer together like in the photo. Then he would rock forward to put his weight more on his legs and pull his bottom up to his feet. Then he moved his feet forward and repeated this. He learned how to do this on his own quite well.

When something does not go well, people seem to wonder about someone being different. In this case, he was not developing as quickly as normal. So, the question came

up at times whether his method of getting around was another indication that he had problems. I'm not sure that this really matters.

Susan

Like the time we spent in the Air Force together, Susan was basically home alone with Kevin. There was no one to talk to. All that she had known until our marriage was to be around her relatives or neighbors in her home. She had been alone in the first apartment we had in Greenwood as well as the second one.

Once we moved closer to the downtown area, she became friends with an old lady downstairs. So, she had someone to talk to once in a while. Meanwhile, she could get out among other people once in a while. She was known to bundle Kevin up, put him in the stroller, and go for a walk.

We all were out once a week when I bowled. The only thing that has concerned me since then was how loud the noise was while we were there. How did it affect Kevin's hearing if any. What about the effects to Susan and I?

As the weather began to get colder, it also began to affect my family. Kevin seemed to be sickly, and Susan was coming down with something at times. The space heaters were just not keeping the rooms warm enough. The floors were colder than what Kevin needed them to be if he was going to be able to move around on them as he should. Besides, what kind of pollution was being put out by the gas space heaters? I do not really know how clean the gas was burning. Was there any carbon monoxide being produced?

There were a few times that we went to church in Cleveland on the third weekend which was about an hour or so north of Greenwood. They seem to have two services in a weekend: Saturday night and Sunday morning. (Someone told us about this church, but I don't remember who. I do

remember spending the night one weekend at a very nice lady's home.

More often on the third Sunday we headed south to Yazoo City which I think may have been a little bit closer than Cleveland. Besides, I knew the pastor (Elder Wilkerson) and some of the other members at this church. This is because they traveled to associations which we also attended. This church may well have had services also on the first Sunday.

As a result, we could attend church services most if not every Sunday without being at the local church. Besides, once in a while we would visit with the pastor of the Greenwood Church as well.

Christmas in Illinois

Sometime in late fall perhaps at Thanksgiving time, we decided to go to Illinois for Christmas. So, after school was out for the holidays, we headed that way on a Saturday stopping at Memphis for the night in the home of Elder Rushing's parents.

Bro. James and I went to church at Whitehaven church while others remained there. This included Susan who did not want to take Kevin out that night. While we were gone, she fell on the stairs while carrying Kevin down them. He was unhurt, but she was hurting.

As she began to lose her balance she made sure she landed on her back with Kevin on top of her. She was definitely protecting him! She told me later that Kevin wanted to do this again. But, she didn't.

During the night, Kevin decided that he was hungry and began crying, or was it wailing? I should have put my bathrobe on and gotten a bottle out of the frig, but I didn't. After a while, Janet came in with a bottle. Yup, he was definitely hungry! A diaper change didn't hurt any either.

When it was time to get up, She was very sore to say the very least, and she did not really want to get up. (We probably should have headed back to Greenwood, but I was not thinking very clearly about what was best for everyone especially not Susan.)

After breakfast, we headed north east (two cars) with James and his wife Janet to central Tennessee for church where Bro. James Allen had an appointment. It was more than 100 miles. This certainly did not feel very good to Susan.

I had attended an association in this area my Junior year in high school. This was at the invitation of Cleme and Faye Barber, two of the members of Sharon Church in St. Louis county. He had grown up in this part of Tennessee and moved to St. Louis to take a job. She came with him. His brother came with him also. Both of them worked at a paint factory.

When we got there, I met another of Cleme's brothers. (How many more brothers were there? I don't remember. But there had been three of them who had moved to St. Louis for work.) Anyway, after church and lunch, he told me how to get to Cleme's home. We thanked them, and off we went.

After being in the south for four years, I had lost track of the Barbers so seeing them again was not really expected. But I learned that he had recently retired and returned to his home stomping grounds.

Good ole southern hospitality! We had a wonderful visit. I got to catch up a little bit about their lives, and Susan got to get to know some of the people in my past.

So, on Monday, December 21, we headed north arriving in Illinois by afternoon with snow on the ground. It seems that for the past two weeks they had had periodic snow showers which kept the snow depth at 4-6 inches all of the

time. Temperatures remained below freezing as well. It was even forecasted to continue doing this, so a white Christmas four days later was assured.

Dad had bought a small house on Plum at some point to rent out with the extra money he made on his last job before retiring. They had rented it out for a while, and then came Tom and Elaine's wedding. After that the newly weds moved into this house to begin setting up housekeeping on their own.

By this time Webb had rented a house of his own on Quince which is maybe two streets over from Plum. So, at least two members of the family were rather close together physically but not socially.

It was about a half a mile between my parents' home and Tom and Elaine's. Even so, we walked there at least once through the snow to visit. It was Susan's idea. Anyway we all bundled up well and headed out. This time I made sure that I was the only one who carried Kevin.

Susan probably had some problems with both the temperature being lower than she was use to and the amount of snow on the ground. Kevin seemed to have made it rather well, and I had not been away from this weather long enough for it to cause me any problems. Besides Susan wanted to prove that she could do it.

It continued to snow every other day or so, and it was getting closer and closer to when I needed to be teaching in Greenwood. We really needed to leave! But we continued to have more snow falling. Finally, I could wait no longer.

Even as we prepared to leave more snow was falling in Missouri and heading our way. I was just hoping that we would make the trip safely. (Just another time when this ostrich was putting his head back into the sand again.)

First I slipped off the divided highway into the median on my left. I don't remember how I managed to contact AAA (I was a member), but a truck came out which got us back on the road safely. So, we continued on south after this delay.

I-55 was only partially completed which did not help that much. I suppose it could have been even more dangerous on the state highways which connected the completed portions. But it was I-55 where there were the problems that I faced.

The second time I was behind a car whose driver feared to travel fast enough to get up the hill in front us. So, this slowed us down as well as several cars behind us including some Catholic nuns in one of them. We all slipped off the road to the right. (Not a fun thing to do with a baby in the car.) After sitting there for a while, some help came which got us all back going. From there on, we had no further problems getting back to Greenwood.

There must have been some conversations that went on between people stuck there together because somehow the nuns learned that we had a baby in our car. So, when help came, they insisted that our car needed to be one of first ones to help get getting onto the road.

Sitter to help her

Soon after we got back, Susan's emotional problems were surfacing once again. She was getting lonely and needed someone to talk to. I somehow found a black maid to come in basically to talk with Susan. This worked out for a short time, but the maid complicated the situation. She had a sister who was due to deliver at any time. So, one day the sister appeared instead of the one I hired. That night she delivered, and they were expecting me to help with the hospital bill. So that ended this. I probably had more money

than they did, but I did not have enough to pay their medical bills for them.

Moved back with parents

Because I could not find another sitter, She wound up returning to her parents for a while beginning in January, 1971. While there she calmed down quite a bit. Then again she was about to face several very trying times before the year ended.

I was visiting her rather often on the weekends. Usually, I came Friday evening and left Sunday evening. And because we did not take any precautions, she became pregnant not long afterward. At the time, I knew that this was very possible based upon when she had begun her last period. So, it was not really a surprise when she missed her next one. (This was one of these things that I did not think through before it happened. I had an emotionally unstable wife, and I permitted her to become pregnant?)

Sometime this spring, Susan was sent to a psychiatrist in Jackson, MS which cost me \$50. (I think this had something to do with an illness she had at the time.) His diagnosis was that she needed to be hospitalized at a mental facility. While this might seem to be the best solution, I personally doubted that it would help any. My belief, based upon what happened in Biloxi, was that hospitalization would only send her off the deep end. She would never come out of that facility. So, I ignored his advice. I wanted her near me even if she had these problems.

Susan's father

Susan's father had a form of myotonic dystrophy that is very rare. It is genetic, and I knew about this from the time Susan and I were first getting acquainted. They had even trace this affliction back through several generations of his family. He had already gotten to the point that he was not

walking well. Also, his left arm was paralyzed from an accident, the details of it eludes me.

While Kevin was slow in development, he was talking some. While he was sitting on his grandfather's lap, he would say "andada". The two of them had some good times together this way. I don't remember how many other words he could say at this time. But this is the only three syllable word that he ever spoke in his life.

So the time they spent together was good for both of them. Susan and Mildred could get their things done while the two males could bond.

Fall on front steps



This is where he fell going up the steps on that faithful Friday. (Bro. Curtis and Sister Mildred)

The union meeting of the Bethany Association was held in April this year. Sharon Church was a member of it, and Bro. Ward attended the Friday morning and afternoon services by himself. When he got back home, he started walking up the front steps to go inside. We don't know if he

slipped or lost his balance. But he fell back onto the concrete walk hitting his head.

He had fallen some months before then in the downtown area, but no signs of problems had shown up then. This time he was taken to the small hospital in Union for observation overnight. By the next morning, he was unconscious although he was loudly speaking religious sayings. That is when the doctor advised that he be sent to the University Hospital in Jackson, MS, for treatment. (This was on Sunday morning.)

I had come to Union for the union meeting after school on Friday, so I was there for the weekend. Well, after he had been taken to Jackson, Susan had no choice but to come back to Greenwood with me and Kevin. I admit that I was wondering how she was going to handle this situation without someone being with her. But I did not have any time to find someone to be with her.

Surgery required

Carolyn was living in Jackson at the time, and Mildred used that as her home base. He was gradually getting worse, so the entire family was called in a few days after his admittance to the University Hospital.

Sister Mildred later told of her feelings. She was watching her husband slowly getting worse and worse. Then the surgeon gave her a life and death choice. Without surgery, he would die. Even with it, he could not be very sure of how much better he might get. But when she signed the permission for surgery, she felt a huge weight being lift off of her. A call went out to the daughters not already present.

When Susan was called, she had no way to get to me. So she called the police who were nice enough to take her to my school. They were shocked when she got out of their car and headed to the school office.

They were too scared to come onto the campus, and maybe they had good reason to be so. But they were the "bad guys", and my wife was known by the students as being "all right." So, she quickly went to the guidance counselor who came with her. She quickly explained that her Dad had to have surgery and it was very serious.

OK, there is a serious situation. What now? I needed someone to advise me. This is where the office came in. They took care of my classes and allowed me to go home with Susan. I did not have to be back until the situation was resolved in some way. So, we headed home to pack and then leave. We arrived at Carolyn's a few hours later.

We were at the hospital for the surgery and the results of it afterward. The waiting was far worse than when Kevin was born: I was very nervous not knowing what to expect. This operation took several hours which made the waiting even that much worse.

Finally the waiting was over. They were certain before the surgery that there was a blood clot at the back of his brain and that removing it should help him. But while they were inside his skull, they checked his entire brain. That is when they found an older blood clot in the front of his brain. (It was removed as well.) Whether this had affected him in any way was not known then nor now. He now had a clean brain.

His news was not exactly encouraging. They had removed the blood clots which were affecting his health and actions which was a plus. However, he put the chances of him recuperating from the accident and then the surgery at 20%. I did not realize at the time that this meant that he had an 80% chance of dying.

We remained in Jackson for a few days before returning to Greenwood. While there, we were waiting for Curtis to wake up from the surgery, but he never did. I'm not sure he ever did completely.

To help Curtis breath better, they had done a tracheotomy, probably during surgery. (This had to be cleared periodically using a vacuum system designed for this.) Also a tube had been inserted through his nose down into his stomach to feed him.

The food tube gradually worked back up until its lower end was at his voice box. As a result, food meant for his stomach ended up in his lungs. As soon as they discovered this, they fixed it and we were told that he would be developing pneumonia from the food in his lungs, which he did.

He was kept in Jackson for a while and then sent back to the hospital in Union when they could do no more for him. It was then a matter of a waiting game. At least Mildred could be with her husband most of the time while living at home.

I'm not sure, but I think that Susan and Kevin were back in Union again while I was finishing out the school year. (This was likely after her father was brought back to Union.) When the school year was completed, I moved our things back to Union, myself. What did I bring with me other than the washer and dryer? Who knows? But it did take a U-Haul truck to move it.

Shortly after moving, we found an unfurnished house for rent on South Main Street on the other side of town. It needed some fixing up which the owner seems to have done some of it. I told the owner that I wanted to rent it, but he told it needed to be painted before it was ready to rent. So, I volunteered Susan and I to do that.

So for several days, Susan and I got splattered with specks of paint on our clothes. At least we knew that we would soon have a place in which we could live.

The owner's business was selling propane for heaters and stoves in rural areas. He also had a store with both these items next door to this house. Anyway, the house needed a

stove, and he brought one over. The only problem was that was old and worn out. It would probably be dangerous to even use it (Sister Mildred's guess). So, he basically forced us to buy a new stove which we did. He was "nice enough" to let me pay it in installments.

What really happened was that Susan was in the house when the old stove was delivered. She made it quite plain in no uncertain terms to the person bringing it in that he had to take the stove back. She would not have that in her home. As I have mentioned, Susan can be quite adamant, and she certainly was this time!

When things were ready, we moved our furniture from West Walnut to South Main St. On the day we moved, I drove to Philadelphia, MS, (20 miles away) to get a U-Haul truck early in the morning so that it did not get too hot before we finished the move.

But being summertime, we did a lot of sweating as we made two trips from West Walnut to South Main Street. There was even more sweating as I put the things where they belonged. We would still have more unpacking to do in the coming days. Then it was time to return the truck that afternoon.

As usual, when I took the truck back, one of the men drove it to a gas pump to fill it up. Well, this is what he started to do... But the temperature had risen high enough to cause the gas to expand filling the tank back up. So, there was no room in the tank for any more gas! (I looked down the neck of the tank, and I also could see the gas up in the neck!) So, all I had to pay for was the time and mileage for the truck.

In reality, I had burned somewhere between 4 and 8 gallons of gas. It was probably closer to the smaller amount. The summertime heat had expanded the gas by that amount!

At some point, I bought a refrigerator from somewhere (Sears perhaps?). It was shipped to our house by truck. Of course, the driver was only responsible for leaving it at our address. This put me in quite a pickle since I had no way to get it inside. I was able to get on his good side, and between the two of us, the refrigerator got inside. I would later move it to where we wanted it.

Bro. Curtis was in the Union hospital for one month which was the maximum number of days that Medicare would pay for hospitalization. So, at this point he was moved to the public hospital in Meridian where he spent some time. Susan and I went with Mildred at times during his stay there. Other daughter would take her at other times.

Death at nursing home

Finally, a nursing home was found that would take him (Medicaid paid for this). Mildred wanted to stay with him to help with his care, but this was refused. The nurses were responsible for his care, and the staff did not want her creating problems for them. (This has been known to happen in similar cases.)

Mildred had been used to doing whatever Curtis needed. This is why she wanted to stay with him. Besides, they had lived together for decades. She felt like she was being treated unfairly. Such seems to be the case in many similar cases.

Later we were in Meridian to have the oil changed in my car on a Saturday not long after he was moved. I took Susan and Kevin with me so she could visit with her father. He may have been semi-conscious by this time, but I could not really tell. He basically laid there staring but not moving his eyes any when we moved as we talked to him. There was not attempt to make a sound nor move his head in any way.

It looked like he might be getting a little bit better. In fact, we got a report that a nurse had been able to feed him

some ice cream. (Maybe he was gaining consciousness?) But this did not last.

Then a couple of days later, the nursing home called telling us that he had died unexpectedly. Sister Ward took this very hard thinking that she could have prevented this from happening, so for quite some time she was constantly blaming herself.

None of us could understand why he should suddenly die like this. Who was to blame? This is one of the things people do in cases like this. We were no different.

It would not be until Susan was correctly diagnosed by a cardiologist that we would know better. The nerve bundles, which controlled the impulses to the lower chambers to the heart, blocked all signals. These chambers could no longer beat, so he died very quickly. Neither the fall nor the surgery following it had anything to do with his death. It was caused by his myotonic dystrophy. (This is my opinion.)

The funeral was held at Sharon Church in August. I remember little of it except that Dr. Alexander insisted that Mildred receive a shot to help her through the funeral process. Personally, I wondered if this was really necessary. One way or another, her husband was dead. His body would be placed in the ground and remain there even after the effects of the shot wore off. These were the facts.

So, I wonder how much different this shot was than getting drunk does. The same problems still exist later. They have to be dealt with at some point, or they will fester until they are. Life has to go on whether we like it or not.

During this summer, Mildred did not have time to keep up with her housecleaning. Things in the refrigerator spoiled, etc. Her daughter, Joan, who owned the house decided that her mother no longer needed to live there alone. So, Mildred came to live with us.

An accident had caused the paralysis of Bro. Curtis' left arm some time in the past. In time, he was no longer able to work so he wound up on welfare because of it. Around 1960, Tom and Joan bought a house at 306 West Walnut so that Joan's parent would have a place to live.

Bro. Curtis turned 60 in April, 1970, as did Sister Mildred. Well, the minimum age at which a widow can draw social security on her husband was 60 which meant she qualified. As a result, as soon as the paperwork was completed, she began drawing a check. (She was also getting commodities as well.)

At the same time Joan was having some problems of her own. Her husband, Tom, had just been sent back to Vietnam. She also had a different feeling about this tour of duty. She feared that she would not see him alive again.

By this time Susan was pregnant and showing. (With all of the things going on, this can be forgotten.) She was due the end of the year. So there were several things going on this summer.

During the summer I was also taking a college class at Hattiesburg and perhaps one at Meridian Junior College as well. (I think this one was on visual aids.) So, I was driving regularly to Hattiesburg (100 miles one way) and once weekly to Meridian (45 miles one way). And as usual, I continued to get good grades.

Second teaching job Aug 1970 - May 1974

When I returned to Union, I did not really know how I was going to find a job. But one of the people who attended Sharon Church was the Scott County Superintendent of Schools. He was having a hard time finding teachers to work

in the formerly colored schools. It was something that I had done, so that is how I got this teaching job.

North Scott School school was first through ninth grades. First through fourth grades were individual classes, and the others moved from class to class during the day. (middle school setup?)

The principle was Mr. Slaughter for whom I developed a great respect. He had lost an arm at some point, but he was one of the wisest men I had met in a very long time. As a result, his council was well received by me. The only problem was that I still did not really know what I should be doing. How do you teach students that have very limited educational abilities?

I taught science the first year and did not really do very well (again). The principle then tried me as the fourth grade teacher for the second year. This did not go as well as it should either. This is because I did not know how to use my teachers aide.

Kevin

Ouch, my finger!

Kevin was beginning to teethe, and Mildred helped us through this situation. Of course, all of us provided him with things to chew on from time to time. But she went farther based upon past experiences. She would open his mouth and put her finger into it. Then she would gently push down on the gums to help his teeth come through. She also taught us to do the same thing.

This time, it was my turn to do this, and I started doing what I had been taught. That is when Kevin thought he would help himself: he chomped down on my right forefinger hard! For some reason, this really hurt, and I did not understand why. Well, I pulled my right forefinger back out of his mouth and found out. I had not one but four teeth

marks (actual indentations!) on this finger. Then I looked into his mouth. There were the tips of four teeth that had just come through his gums! Two were on the top, and two on the bottom.

I suppose many parents have their own teething stories. My mother certainly had one about Tom's. They certainly are things to cherish and to tell and retell.

Learning to walk

He was slower than normal to develop, and we did not understand why. To start with, he was a couple months slower to raise his head, turn over, and crawl. So, Dr. Alexander was not all that worried. He did indicate that he might not develop as fast as normal. (We did not stop to think about the implications as far as his mental capacities were concerned.)

Like most parents and grandmothers, we three tried to get him to walk by himself. Seemingly, we got nowhere with anything we tried.

There was one thing that was very perplexing. He had a folding walker so we could take it wherever we went. When we placed him in it, he would go wherever he wanted without any problems. What stopped him from doing so without it?

It was not because he could not balance himself. Many was the time when we watched him scoot to where the walker was. Then he would reach up to take hold of the walker and pull himself up. Then he would push it to where he wanted to go! Such was the case when the walker was out in the middle of the floor with nothing even near it.

Remember that the walker had four wheels on it. So, for him to pull up on it, he had to keep the walker steady otherwise it would have rolled away from him. We saw this

all of the time, and this only made the whole situation more maddening.

It was during a fall weekday that Mildred, Susan, and Kevin went up to Rachel's home for a visit. Kevin was wearing a pair of soft sole shoes. (That is what we thought he should be wearing.)

While there she got out a pair of her older son's baby shoes and put them on Kevin. Very shortly, Kevin was walking on his own. He had shoes of his own, so what was the problem? His had soft soles, but the shoes he put on this day were hard sole. So, his feet had a more sure foundation upon which to steady himself. Finally! This problem is solved. Well, it was solved when he was wearing hard sole shoes. No more soft sole shoes for him!

I think that he continued to use the walker some and walk on his own at other times. Even so, we found out that walkers can be a health hazard because of the concrete back steps. The top of the concrete was about an inch from the house. This did not cause a problem for the adults, but Kevin was a different story.

Fall on back steps

We really did pay attention to this until he was walking with his walker at the back door. When its front wheels fell through the crack, he fell forward hitting the concrete. His bottom teeth almost cut through his bottom lip. It drooped for the rest of his life.

We survived, but after that we made sure the back door was closed unless we were going through it. It was a mistake that we greatly regretted.

The oven door

Also during this fall, Mildred decided that Kevin needed to learn to stay away from the oven door when it was hot. Maybe she had some experience with her own children

getting burned after they began walking. Back then she was using a wood stove which was much hotter. In fact, when there was a fire in it, the entire stove was very, very hot.

Our oven had a glass in the door and a light bulb inside it. So when the oven was on, she would turn the light on, bring his hand close enough to the glass to feel the heat, and told him, "Ow that's hot!" After a while he learned to say, "Ow dat's dot!" when he saw the light on. In his walking through the house, he would go by the stove. But he always made sure that he did not get near it if the light was on. But when the light was off, he got as close as he wanted. These were lessons that he remembered during the early spring of the following year.

Speaking ability

Just how much ability did Kevin have at this point in time? I do not really know, and probably never will. But I was in our bedroom on day probably in the fall when I heard a voice that seemingly could only come from him. (No one else was in the area.) It was a complete sentence! I think it might have actually been a question. Makes me wonder once in a while. The only problem was that this never happened again.

Death of Rhonda Kim Nov, 20 1970

Susan was having her periodic doctor visits the first of November for this pregnancy. The doctor noticed that her iron count was low. So, he prescribed iron pills rather than iron shots. But this seemed to be the only real problem.

Periodically, Carolyn had been having problems with her husband, Percy. Many a time he would bring her to her relatives, leave her there, and drive off. Sometime later, he would come back to get her. This got to be a pain in the neck for the rest of the family including the in-laws.

We had already gone to bed on Nov 19th. Outside there was a heavy cold rain falling. Our space heaters were going, and we were snuggled under several layers of covers. Suddenly there was a hard knock on the back door. It took a little while to get out of bed, put on a bathrobe and slippers before I could answer the door.

By the time I got there, no one was there. Then there was a persistent knock at the front door. So, to the front door we went. It was Carolyn! She was very wet and cold. As soon as we open the door, I heard a car pull away.

Why did she knock at the back door and then run around to the front door? Well, Percy had let her out at the back door. With the hard rain, she was getting drenched because there was nothing to shelter her at the back of the house, but we had a roof over the front porch.

I'm not sure what was done to help her dry off a bit. But we all talked for a while before we all went to bed again. She spent the rest of the night in her mother's bed.

Then Susan went into premature labor on Monday morning. So, I took her to Laird's Hospital to see Dr. Alexander. He decided that it was time for Susan to deliver and admitted her. Her room was across the hall from the nursery.

This was six weeks before her due date. That meant that this baby would be less mature than Kevin. So many years later I am beginning to question the doctor's wisdom. Yet given what happened that day, it might not have really mattered at all.

Once we got her things in this room, she and I went to the labor room. She was in pain, and I felt completely helpless. It would still be some time before someone developed breathing habits to help with labor pains. (I don't remember anything like this being taught in the Baby and

Mother Care classes at the base hospital.) But there was something else that seems strange now. During the entire time we were in the labor room, she was wearing street clothes!

Some time later, they moved her to the delivery room. Likely, they put a gown on her when they got there. Then it was back to waiting for me. It was not all that long as in an hour or so before the doctor came out to tell me that he could not get the baby to breathe once it came out. He was sorry that she had died.

At this point, I was not thinking very clearly. So, when they moved her from the delivery room, it was not where they had earlier assigned her. I immediately wondered why they did this. It took a while before I realized that she did not need to be across the hall from the nursery. She had just lost a baby, so seeing other babies would be very hard on her to say the very least.

Like Kevin, Rhonda had been a breech birth. As a nurse had told me when Kevin was born, seldom do breech births live through the delivery process. Besides She was nearly two months early. Both of these things were against her.

At the time I felt that all of the commotion the night before was the cause, but I might have been wrong. Susan might not have been taken good care of herself, or the problems she had had when Kevin was born might have been the cause (the ones that she had conveniently forgotten to tell me).

Later we would learn that Susan had a "divided" uterus (bicornuate) that caused Rhonda to be breach. As Rhonda grew larger she would fill in one side of the uterus. She would be head up. As late November approached she was no longer able to turn from head up to the head down position.

My Mom had lost Mark during her seventh month. This was about the same point as Susan lost Rhonda. The cause was the same: neither one actually breathed on his own. Both mothers were having medical problems at the time.

Mom described hers as a spontaneous abortion. The body knew that something was wrong with the baby, so it expelled it. This may seem like it was a little harsh, but gave her some solace. It might have been the same situation with Rhonda.

Monday and Tuesday, I spent making the arrangements for Rhonda's funeral. It would be Wednesday morning, a very cold day to say the least.



Now I am wondering about a lot of people's ability to think clearly. Rather than have a grave side service in the cold, why not have a service inside where there would be some heat? This was someone else's idea, and I just went along with whatever was suggested.

So everyone who came on Wednesday stood outside in normal November temperatures. I don't know how many pictures were taken, but this is one of them. I also remember that the funeral director was not satisfied with how Rhonda was laying. So, he picked her up and moved her until he was satisfied. One of my sisters-in-law made a negative remark about his doing this, and I agreed with her. He should have left her like she was. (It looked like he was handling her like a baby doll which I thought was disrespectful.

The next day was Thanksgiving Day, so this was one time this holiday was not filled with much thanks. Besides I was developing a nasty case of the flu. Kevin was having some medical problems as well.

Given the circumstances, Susan was not released until Friday morning. By this time, both Kevin and I needed to see Dr. Alexander for our problems. It was then that he made the comment that of the three of us, Susan was in the best condition. (Well, her iron pills had worked their magic. Her iron count was normal even after delivering a baby.

A couple of months earlier, I had asked Sharon Church to consider having a fifth Sunday service in November. This would have been the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Several of the deacons were against it because of the weather. Often it is very cold around that time.

Well they were right. The only thing was that the cold did not occur on the weekend after Thanksgiving, it occurred the three days before it, during the grave side service.

This weekend was very sad and lonely for all of us. Sunday? It was bright and sunny. In fact, it was rather warm for November.

We did have a visitor Sunday afternoon. Bro. Lonnie came by on his way home from a fifth Sunday meeting

somewhere. His presence was certainly a boost to our moral.

Kidney disease

The following week, I went back to teaching. I really don't know how well I could have done this given the circumstances. But even so, we were having some other problems as well. Kevin was not getting any better.

Kevin always seemed to have medical problems. Then again he was not getting the proper nutrition which also leads to more than the normal medical problems. Then again, I left the feeding of Kevin to Susan. I thought she knew what she was doing. Besides her Mom was with us. Surely, she could help with this regard. (I forgot how stubborn Susan could be.)

Dec 1970

So, on December 1, Kevin was taken to see Dr. Alexander. He did not like what he saw, so he sent Susan and Mildred to Meridian to see a pediatrician, Dr. Riley. (I was teaching this day 30 miles away.)

He diagnosed nephrotic syndrome. He also gave Susan and her Mom some instructions as to what they needed to do.

So when I got home from teaching, I got hit with all of this. It was a bit more than I could really grasp. How is all of this possible. I think I was sinking into denial about everything. All of this could not be happening to us!

While at the pediatrician's office, a follow-up office had been made for either Saturday, Dec 9 or 16, my birthday. This time I got to hear his lecture on how we needed to treat Kevin's medical problem. It also included what was know about it. Before we left, he handed me several sheets of information of the things we were suppose to do to help Kevin get well.

When this disease flares up, the kidneys excrete large quantities of protein in the urine. This causes the body to retain fluids and urine production decreases as well. I don't remember what medication he was given if any for his kidneys, none that I remember.

This disease was more common among the poorest children because of a lack of good nutrition. In other words, he was not getting enough solid foods nor the right kinds.

Speaking of denial. When I first began writing about my life, I was certain that we had not been given any real information about the disease and how to treat it. It was not until I started thinking about this part of my life that I realized that I was wrong! I had gotten his lecture once (well more than once), and Susan had gotten it two times (well more than this too).

I read all of the sheets he gave us, but how much of this did I actually do? (I can not really say how much of this Susan read.) Specifically, I was to get a bottle of liquid baby vitamins and give Kevin a dose daily. How long were we suppose to do this? I do not remember that the sheet said.

When in my undergraduate college, I had gone to the doctor feeling rather sick. He told me that I needed more vitamins. The food I was getting in my dormitory cafeteria did not have enough nutrition in it. So, I got a bottle and took all of the pills. It did not occur to me that I needed to continue taking the vitamins to make sure I got enough nutrition. So, I never bought the second bottle.

Anyway, I went to both local drug stores seeking liquid baby vitamins. One did not have any, and the other had a bottle that was out of date. At that point, he asked me if I wanted him to order a bottle. Not thinking clearly, I said no. (Sounds like I really cared about Kevin's well being doesn't it?)

But Susan found it easier to stick a bottle of formula into his mouth than to take the time to feed him the solid foods he needed. I was as ignorant as Susan. Neither Susan nor I seek the information that we needed. We had these sheets of information, and we simply did not follow them.

I really do not remember what the instructions were. I may not have paid that much attention to them then. Susan didn't either.

To make matters worse, Dr. Alexander (our doctor in Union) did not do any follow up either. There is little evidence that he did any research into this disease. Where would he get this information? Now I think he should have asked Dr. Riley for the information he needed.

Apparently, he did not learn about the need to check Kevin's urine for protein on a regular basis. So, it turned out that Kevin's life would hang in the balance because of what I, Susan, and Dr. Alexander did not do that should have been done. As the saying goes, "Ignorance is bliss." This is usually followed by disastrous results. It was!

Complications from childbirth

By the end of December, Susan was having some problems of her own when she began her period. So, to the doctor she went. Dr. Alexander determined that she needed to have a DNC because all of the afterbirth from Rhonda's after birth might not have come out during delivery. So this procedure was scheduled and performed. He even made the comment that he had packed her well afterward. (He may have removed the packing from her uterus at some later point, but I do not remember when (another office visit perhaps?). This seemed to take care of the problem though.

More kidney problems

By the second weekend of February, Kevin was not feeling very well, but nothing seemed to amount to much.

We had attended church services at Sharon Church on Sunday night. His stomach seemed to be bothering him a little bit so we gave him some baking soda to calm it. Then we put Kevin between us in bed just in case. Then we all went to sleep.

Sometime after 2 AM Monday, I felt him kicking me on a regular basis. This was rather bothersome, so I got up and turned the light on. His right arm and leg were jerking rhythmically, but he clearly was not conscious. (We would learn later that these were seizures.) Something was wrong! So, we got up and dressed. Mildred was also awakened and dressed. Off to the hospital we went. Dr. Alexander was on call, so he appeared shortly and tried to get them to stop without any results. After a couple of hours, he decided that we need to take Kevin to Riley's hospital in Meridian. He could do no more.

By the time we got there 45 minutes later, the seizure had almost stopped. Kevin at this point in time was very near death. It took several hours to stabilize him before he was taken to the intensive care unit. He was having a very bad attack of his kidney disease, and was badly bloated having at least two gallons of excess fluids in his body. (His weight had gone from 24 to 40 lbs over the past week or so.) Part of the initial problem was the baking soda as this resulted in his electrolytes getting out of balance. Specifically, the sodium in his blood was too high, and the potassium was too low. This can cause serious problems with the heart as well as the seizures he was having.

We were allowed to see Kevin periodically during the day. We were just beginning to understand a little bit of Kevin's situation, and that made this day very stressful to say the very least.

Brother Lonnie had come up from Hattiesburg to be with us during this day. It was so nice of him. At least we had

someone to comfort us a little. Yet I wonder just how hard this was on him. He had know Kevin all of his life.

Tuesday morning early, the news we got was very bad. He had another seizure on his right side during the early morning. (The previous seizure had been on his left side.) This time his temperature went up to 106 before they could get it back down. His kidneys had shut down, and there was nothing they could do about it. He would die unless the kidneys began working on their own within the next 24 hours.

Now this had become very scary! How can parents think very straight when they have just been told that their child could die in the next 24 hours? In fact, this was the second time we had to face the fact that he was near death within 24 hours.

In addition the excess fluid had caused some small blood vessels to break in his large intestine, so he was bleeding into it making his BM pure black. They had to keep an IV running in order to give him the medications he needed. So his swelling continued to increase. His life depended upon it. However, they gave him red blood cells and vitamin K to try to stop the bleeding and keep his red cell count from dropping too much.

Bro. Lonnie was back on this day as well. Actually he had anticipated this second seizure Monday evening. Somewhere he had heard or learned that a seizure on one side of the brain is usually followed by one on the other side. So, he was expecting our call on the Tuesday morning.

It was now Wednesday morning and the only change was that Kevin was sliding closer to death. At least that is the way things looked. But this was not how things were in his body.

Sometime during the night, his kidneys began producing urine again and his bladder began to fill up. Then sometime

before mid morning, his bladder emptied itself. Oh did it! He thoroughly wet down the baby sheet on his bed. I'm saying that when they removed the sheet, the urine was dripping off of it!

As soon as a nurse noticed the very wet bed, someone was sent out to tell us. To say we were relieved is putting it very mildly. (Relief was obvious in everyone working with him in Intensive Care. He might just live yet.)

As time progressed this day, his kidneys continued to work better and better. Urine output gradually increased. So with time this output almost seemed a stream! He was in a baby crib with a sheet on it. Each time he urinated, it would completely soak the sheet! Remember that he was too small to have a catheter. They tried to rig up a substitute for a catheter, but it did not work very well.

The waiting room outside of Intensive Care had several stuffed chairs that would fold out almost flat. This was so we could sleep on them at night and sit up in them during the day. This we all did throughout the first week. What was really nice was that some of our church people came to spend time with us offering us moral support. We really needed this!

By sometime Friday he had excreted the two gallons of excessive fluid and was back to his normal weight. (He sure did look much smaller! Well he should be having gone from 40 back to 25 lbs.) He was put in a room over the weekend.

As a result of the liquid loss, the bleeding stopped in his intestines. So, the red blood could moved back to normal as well.

Once in a room, Kevin started getting meals. I think they were a couple of baby food jars at each meal. Now remember that Susan had been giving him formula and also baby cereal mixed with formula. She was not use to feeding

this amount of food to him. Another problem had just appeared.

When Dr. Riley learned how Susan wanted to feed Kevin, he exploded! He and a colleague had worked long and hard to bring Kevin back from the brink of death. Now she seemingly did not want to cooperate in feeding him the things that he needed. It is a wonder that he did not report us for abusing our son. He could have.

He made very clear that at 22 months, Kevin did not need a bottle any more. **He needed solid food, period!** Needless to say, Kevin was fed solid food from that point on. Likely he was fed liquids by mouth as well. The bottles? They were likely packed away somewhere.

Kevin was now well enough that I could go back to teaching again. So Sunday evening I headed back to Union. Susan and her Mom stayed with Kevin throughout the school week.

During the second week, Susan began feeding him the right things and in the right amounts. By doing so, she got back on the doctor's good side. Well sort of. I can't imagine his cooling down for a while anyway.

At the end of the second week in the hospital, Kevin was sent home. Much more explicit instructions were given this time. Urine test were to be done on a daily basis. This led us to keep a bottle of Combistix all the time which measured protein levels along with two other tests (glucose and ketones which are also related to diabetes).

He also gave us a prescription for prednisone. Kevin was to get one half milligram per pound of body weight. At 25 lbs., this was 12.5 mg daily. In reality, we were to given him alternate 10 mg and 15 mg dosages. (This medication came in 5 mg tablets.) So, how do we get 5 mg tablets down his throat? We were told to crush the appropriate number of

tablets and mix the powder with baby fruit. This turned out not to be a big problem.

The first time we saw Dr. Alexander with Kevin after he was back home, the doctor gave us a bottle of Combistix strips from the stock of Union hospital. Then he also gave me a prescription for it. There were 100 strips in a bottle, so I had to buy another jar every three months for several years.

What could we expect the future to be like for Kevin? This was not exactly what we were worried about given how sick he had been. We were happy that he was still alive! Yet we needed to know.

The doctors told us anyway. We could see that he was limited in what he could do as in he was still laying around all of the time. They said that it was going to be some time before he began to regain doing the things he had done before this illness. Then they got down to specifics and they did not sugar coat the situation. It could be a very long time before he was able to walk again as in months or longer. He might **never** walk.

But this turned out not to be the case exactly. The first thing I noticed was that he was becoming more active as the days past of his first week home. He was beginning to do his method of crawling more and more too.

Since we still had the folding walker out, he again got back to scooting to it, pulling up, and pushing the walker wherever he wanted. Not to long after that, I saw him scoot to our coffee table and pull up on it. Off he went walking again! That is when he may have taken his first steps without the walker. From this time on, he was doing both depending upon whatever he wanted to do.

Then one of his antics proved that he had not forgotten everything that he had learned. This time he was scooting from the kitchen to the living room. As he did so, he went by

a space heater. (Now it was a warm day.) Well, he peeked around to the front of the heater. Clearly he saw that it was not lit. So immediately he stuck his fingers into the grates and began playing in them!

Obviously the lesson about the hot oven door had stuck. He did not see the blue flame, so he knew that the heater was **not** hot. At this point we stop worrying about him getting burned from a hot space heater. Grandmother's lesson about the hot oven door would save him from getting burned by a space heater.

With in a month or two after him getting out of the hospital, strange long distance call charges started appearing on our phone bill. They were to people in a wide variety of places in the United States! Susan and I knew that we had not done this.

Well the previous Christmas, we had gotten him a play (push button) phone. It was something that he liked to play with. He would sit on the floor in front of it pushing the number buttons for long periods of time. There was one difference in how *he* played with it. The first thing he did was to remove the receiver off of the phone... Only then would he start pushing the buttons.

Then one day, I caught him in the act! We had a push button phone hanging on the wall of the kitchen with a step stool underneath it. He had used it to climb up where he could reach the phone. Then just as he had done with his play phone, he had removed the receiver and began to punch buttons! How long he had been doing this, I have no idea. But somehow he had managed to successfully dial a long distance number shortly before I first saw him. Someone had picked up on the other end, and I heard "Hello, Hello," came from the receiver. At this point his eyes got big and his mouth opened. Then very quickly he hung the receiver up rather hard and very quickly. Another one of

his antics, and it certainly amused me! (At least I now knew why there had been the long distance calls listed on our phone bill.

You might think that we should immediately move the step chair away from the phone. We might have...

My Eye!

This also happened during this same spring. We were going somewhere, so I was strapping Kevin into his car seat when he reached his hand toward my head. In the process, he cut the inside lining of my right eye lid with his finger nail. Boy, did it hurt, so I went to the doctor to have it checked out. An examination found what I just described. They put a patch over my eye and told me how long I had to leave it on (several days). So, for a while I was driving to work 30 some miles one way using only one eye.

After the prescribed time, I stopped wearing the patch. But I was still having problems with this eye. Well, I was in the doctor's office for another reason in June and saw one of the doctor's walking by (J. R. Laird). I asked him what might be causing the problem I was now having. He told me that I might need glasses.

What did being poked in the eye have to do with my needing to wear glasses again? I really did not think so. OK, I have questioned many situations in this same way. But Dr. Laird was considered to be an excellent diagnostician by Sister Mildred. Then again she had had enough experiences with him to know his abilities.

So based upon her recommendation, I made an appointment with the local optometrist. Sure enough I needed glasses. While there we discussed some of my past experience with wearing glasses almost 20 years earlier. He is the one that told me the chlorine in the pool water was responsible for me not needing glasses for a while.

One of the test he did was to light a match and immediately turn the room lights off. What he wanted to know was how quick my eyes could adjust to changes in light levels. What surprised me was that all I needed to do was to quickly blink my eyes once. Within this very short period of time I was able to see the flame clearly. (My eyes do not react that quickly now!)

He also mentioned that reading for long periods of time can lead to eye strain if glasses are needed. The symptom for this is to suddenly fall asleep while reading. Well, with all the reading I was doing both teaching and going to college, I was having this problem as well. So, I really did need glasses this time. OK, all of this proved the doctor to be absolutely right.

Moving again

I had been rehired for another year which was nice. But driving 30 miles a day one way was getting old, and I could have used some of money spent on gas for other things. So, I looked for and somehow found a place in Lake, MS, for rent. At some point Mildred is going to get a trailer to live in. (I don't remember exactly when she did this. But I'm fairly certain that the house we were going to renting only had one bedroom.

For some reason, I decided not to move myself. (Bad move!) So, I talked to a moving company in Philadelphia owed by a Negro. I told him what I had in the way of furniture and clothing, and we agreed upon a price (somewhere close to \$60). So far, so good.

But come moving day, he showed up with only half of the things that he needed to move us. As a result, it took twice as long as it should have. Gullible me, I paid him twice as much. Four or five months later, we moved again. This time

I got a well known mover to move us. It went just as it should.

We moved into what had once been the AT&T building. The yard was 100' by 100' sown in carpet grass. Besides, within the last couple of years, the owner had scattered 100 lbs of fertilizer on it. The grass continued to grow very fast the entire summer.

And besides, there were a couple of mimosa trees in the yard. Well these are known to weep sap. So, the grass underneath them would grow at least a foot every week! It is not fun mowing under them at all. 8" grass over the rest of the yard was not all that easy either.

The train tracks ran along the back of our lot, so we had some noise from trains passing by once in a while. But it did not take very much time before we ignored those sounds during the night. As the expression goes, "The trains stopped running during the night."

Carolyn was having another problem with Percy, her husband. He had left her somewhere in Union again and ran off. So far so good for us, as we were not there.

But during the day, Rachel, Jo Ann, Carolyn, and their mother came down from Union for a visit. And this when these two sisters and Mildred decided to "have court" about Carolyn's situation. They were verbally attacking her because they did not understand why Carolyn would not finally leave her husband. Their anger was in their voices. This left Carolyn having to defend herself with no one wanting to understand her position. (This was really the kettle calling the pot black. Carolyn's sisters had as many personal problems as she did.)

After a while I got tired of the arguing, so I told them to stop it. I did not want to hear any more of their fussing. Actually, I finally told them to get out of the house. So, they

went outside and continued. It was not too long before I wished that I had told them to go back to Union, but I didn't.

What else did I do this summer other than mow the grass every week? Well, Scott County did not pay teachers 12 months a year, so I needed some income. So, in the early part of the summer, I went to the University of Southern Mississippi to begin summer school. Well, I also needed some college courses each summer so I could continue to have a teaching certificate. But this time I was commuting from Lake to Hattiesburg a couple of times a week. It was at least 20 miles one way shorter. This adds up over a summer quarter!

While we lived in Union, we would shop at the Sunflower Supermarket. So, we needed to find a store closer to our home. So, we went to Forest, MS, about 10 miles west of us. There we found a A&P store. The prices seemed reasonable so we continued to shop there through the summer.

While living there, we had a visit by a representative of the largest pest control companies in the US. He claimed that the house was infested with termites, and expensive measures had to be taken to get rid of them. (He had a board with all kinds of termite tunnels to prove it.)

I mentioned this to my landlord, and he doubted this completely. I came around to believing I had been told a lie. One of the reasons was that the representative had said that holes had to be drilled into the brick. But the building was built with these holes between the bricks for just the purpose of treating for termites. Besides, Bell Telephone would not have a building that was not protected for termites. Needless to say, I have never had any dealing with this company since that time.

Also some time during this summer we made a trip to Illinois, and Mildred came with us. She had never been this

far north before. In fact, I doubt if she had been out of the state of Mississippi!

The "highlight" of this trip occurred on the trip up there. I'm not sure how an opened partially used gallon of milk was left in the back of the car where it was warm if not down right hot. So, it curdled on the way. While I was bring in everything else, I brought in the jug of milk. That is when I mentioned about throwing the milk out.

This is when Mom took it from me and told me what could be done with it. (She lived through the depression, so she did not let anything go to waste if there was a way to use it.) So, she got out her colander and some cheese cloth. The cloth was put into the colander, and then the milk was poured into it. This captured the milk solids in the cheese cloth while draining the liquids. (I think she also rinsed the milk solids as well, but I can not be sure.) Anyway, we had some cottage cheese while we were there from the "spoiled" milk we had brought.

Tom Felton's Death Aug 1971

In early August, Joan got word that Tom was missing in action. Then we got word that he had been killed. I heard the latter on the radio as I was either driving to or from Hattiesburg. This really bothered me!

We learned how the government can lie when it serves its purpose. He was listed as a non-combat fatality. Yet, he was killed in a helicopter crash while being fired upon by the enemy! This much information was given to Joan by the people who served under Tom in Vietnam.

The government under President Nixon did not want the American people to know how many people were being killed in battle so they listed the first 100 or so deaths as combat fatalities and the rest as non-combat. (There is a possibility that his administration was only doing what the

Johnson administration had done before. (I have already pointed out one time when President Johnson had lied to the troops deliberately.)

Joan was also developing more serious emotional problems after his death. And like Susan she did not seek the help she should have gotten. Both were sure that they knew what they were doing. But, actions speak so much louder than words. With two young daughters and younger son, she had her hands full with no husband to guide her.

Tom's funeral was Saturday afternoon, August 22, 1971, at Hazel Church, across the road from Sharon Church Near Lake.



This was taken in September, 1971, seven months after his hospitalization. By this time, we had moved from Union,

and Sister Ward was living in a mobile home where this was taken. Something had clearly caught Kevin's attention.

(In the background was our VW squareback with A/C. This certainly helped in the summer, but over time the A/C wore out the engine and caused a major financial problem.)

Kevin would have several moderate to severe episodes of nephrosis for the next 6 years. Usually they would begin with a cold or flu. So, he took a lot of antibiotics (most often Keflex). He was also taking 0.5 mg of prednisone per pound of body weight as a maintenance level. When there was a flare up, we would double the dosage until the urine protein level would drop back down to 0. This did cause damage to his kidneys, but we never knew how much.

The taste of this medicine was extremely bitter. I have heard Dad mention how bitter quinine was which he had to take for malaria as a child. But I wonder if it was as bitter as prednisone. When we first gave it to Kevin we had to crush it up and mix it with baby fruit. For some stupid reason I touched my tongue to a some apple sauce on the spoon after giving it to Kevin with the medicine. I did not make that mistake again! (And all I got was a very small speck of the prednisone.)

After he got where he could swallow pills, we gave him the pills to swallow. And when he had gotten up to 70 pounds, this meant giving him seven 5 mg tablets at one time for maintenance or 14 tablets for a flare-up. We would put his pills in our hand, and he would actually pick them up, put them in his mouth and swallow them!

Bethany Association

This occurs every fall from Friday morning until Sunday noon over the second weekend of October. This year it was Sharon Church's turn to host it. So, after school was out on Friday, we attended the rest of it.

During our correspondence with my parents, I mentioned this meeting to them. So, they decided to come down to both see us and also attend the association. They also brought a neighbor with them, Sister Wise. My mother called her "Liza Jane".

Sometime earlier, my Mom had gotten to know her and asked her to attend our church. She did, liked what she heard, and joined it. So now, she was getting her first taste of an association meeting southern style.

As you would expect, my parents spent some time visiting with us and brought Sister Wise along. And this when she seems to have taken me aside to tell me something. It was her opinion that I had two children on my hands: Susan and Kevin. Perhaps Mom heard her say this and agreed. I don't know.

But what was I suppose to do about it? Was there a way to make the situation better? Good questions, but no good answers that I knew of. I had no idea of all of the things that I needed to do nor how to do them.

Fourth Grade

Mr. Slaughter decided toward the end of the previous school year that I was doing a poor job of teaching science to the fifth through ninth grades. So, he told me that I would be teaching fourth grade this year. OK.

So late in August, I began teaching much younger students. They even gave me a teacher's aide. What am I suppose to do with this? Once again, I did not talk with any of the elementary teachers at North Scott to find out how to use my aide. So, for the entire year, I gave very few things to do, and she became very dissatisfied with me. She did not return for another year, and I do not blame her.

Meanwhile, I was going by a grocery store on my way to North Scott. I had noticed that they advertised lower gas

prices, but I was satisfied with A&P. Well, I was until Mr. Slaughter talked to me. He explained the pricing structure of the grocery store out in the country. In other words, they figured out a way to charge less than what others did. From that point on, we began going to where the cheaper prices were.

Sometimes I would get some things on my way home, but most often we would drive to this store on the weekend. (This was Susan could get out some.) So, on a Saturday morning, we headed to the store to get our weekly groceries. Along the way, either sheriff's deputies or state police were checking driver's licenses. So I rolled down my window showing mine. Then I said that we were going to coming back through that area later and drove on.

Well, in about an hour or so, we came driving back through there. The gentleman recognized me and waved me on through me. This was kind of nice!

Mr. Slaughter talked to me about another financial topic. The Farmer's Home Administration had begun building several houses on Wicker Street in Forest. He told me that I could qualify for a loan with payments based upon my income. This would be less than what I was paying for rent. Besides it would cut my driving distance to school in half. Sounds like savings all around!

So, we visited Wicker Street to see for ourselves. The person in charge of building these houses was present, so we let him walk us through one of them.

(This was a program run by the USDA. It was designed to provide housing for lower income people living in rural areas. This is why this was part of the USDA instead of FHA.)

We liked what we were told and decided to do something about it. Then we filled out the paperwork and began the process of being a homeowner. Since the house was only partially built, we needed to pick out the details for it once

we were approved. We got a built-in oven, white appliances, and *pumpkin* colored counters.

Susan was very much adamant about this color. Even her mother was against it. But after everything was built and her mother saw the kitchen, she changed her mind. The pumpkin color offset the white of the appliances. She was actually pleased with her daughter's choice!

Then we moved from Lake to Forrest. At least I did something right when we prepared to move from Lake to Forrest though. This time I called a national mover. I was informed that someone had to visit my home to see what needed to be moved. So, we made an appointment.

The first thing he asked me was if I was serious about them moving me or was I just wanting a cost estimate to have the required number of estimates for the company I worked for. My reply was that I was serious. Then he got serious as well.

After viewing all of the furniture, he suggested that I could do part of the packing myself. Specifically, he would provide me with all of the boxes for hanging clothes which I could use to pack them. This would save them time and me money. There may have been other boxes that he provided too. And yes, he gave me an estimate before he left.

The house was ready to move into in November. We contacted the movers, and they moved us. We were now living in our very own home for which we owed a mortgage.



Wash your hair!

From around the time that Susan became a teenager, she had stopped keeping her hair clean. (This was reported by her Mom and sisters.) And this had continued into the first four years of our marriage.

What she had done was to just wet her hair, and that was all. Her Mom and at times one of her sisters would badger her until she let them wash her hair properly. So, it was clean for a while. And then this process had to be done all over again.

Why I had not noticed this during this time? I do not remember. Perhaps, I just got use to it. (I do remember Susan wanting to go to a beauty salon while I was still in service.) But this was about to change. I had finally got discussed with it.

It was on a Saturday morning that we had left our home in Forest and gone to Mildred's mobile home in Union. It had obviously been a while since Susan's hair had been washed, and her Mom noticed it. So, the badgering began. After a while, Susan allowed her hair to be washed. But instead of putting it in curlers and drying it, they had towel dried it.

It was an hour or so later when Joan came in to visit. She took one look at Susan's hair and was absolutely positive that it was dirty. So, the badgering began all over again. It

stopped after her Mom said that it had already been washed.

I did not say anything, but I was seething inside. But when I got home, I finally spoke up. I told Susan that the next time I heard anyone of her family say anything about Susan's hair, I was going to pack our car with everything we had brought. Then we were leaving. I was not going to listen to them say these things again! I said that I would tell them, but Susan asked me to let her tell them. OK, I will let her do this.

They obviously thought that I would actually do it, and I probably would have done so. So I heard nothing more about this "problem" from her immediate family.

Sometime later, our aunt brought the subject up, and we discussed the situation. She was concerned about Susan having dirty hair all of the time. She said it in a very sweet way, and I was happy to explain what I thought. I was certain that after a while she would get tired of scratching her head because of all of the dirt etc. in her hair. When this happened, she would begin washing it on a regular basis just to avoid having to scratch all of the time. We left it at that.

It took a while, but she began doing what I predicted. She continued doing this until she could physically no longer wash her hair by herself. That is when she asked me to help her which I was happy to do. So, problem solved for the rest of her life. From my point of view, she was the one who wanted her hair washed; it was always her decision.

Kevin

The prednisone interferes with the body's immune system. This meant that he had more than the normal amount of colds and flu. Each time this happened, his kidney's was flare up. So we were back to giving him an antibiotic (Keflex) and double the amount of prednisone.

This was the usual situation several times during any given year.

Prednisone has another side effect. It made Kevin very hyperactive especially when he had to take the double dose of it. Our TV was at the opposite end of the living room from the door to the kitchen. One time, I saw him running from the TV to the opposite end and then back again. He continued to do this repeatedly. He could not stop himself! How often did he do this? More than I would like to remember.

Getting him to lay down at night to sleep could be a nightmare! For a while I did not know what to do. He just could not get calmed down enough to fall asleep. But I finally tried something that worked. I would sit him in my lap and hold his legs between mine. At the same time, I held on to his arms so that he could not trash them about. He would scream very loud, but after a while he was able to relax. Then I could put him to bed, and he would sleep through the night.

But all things were not this bad. We had developed a habit in the evenings: we would eat, watch the news (6-6:30) and Wheel of Fortune on TV (6:30 - 7). This was during the time when *The Waltons* were on at 7 PM on Thursday. We did not notice at first, but he got to the place where he would go to the TV on Thursday at 7 and whine. When we changed to channel from where Wheel of Fortune had been to the CBS network, he would get very quiet and remained so during the entire program! How he could tell both the day of the week and time of day? He did. (He never did this for another TV program.)

Hawaii 50 was another program with different results. When this program began, he would run to the TV all excited. He would know when the airplanes should appear and would yell, "Air!" (repeatedly). Later just before the

screen would be showing a car chase, he would repeatedly yell, "Car!" There may have also been other similar events during the beginning as well. He never forgot the theme of this show. **Never!**

We want another child

It was during the fall of 1971 that Susan wanted to have another child again. Likely she had been thinking about this for some time. Before we did this, we asked Dr. Alexander if this was a good idea. He had performed a DNC in January of 1971 on her after she lost Rhonda . So, I thought he ought to know her condition. He said, "Go ahead." So we did.

Well, we thought we had the medical end covered, So this was a beginning. But this was not the only thing that should have concerned us. Honestly we did think very carefully about what our future would be like with two children. Susan wanted to have two children, and I did not see why she should not have them. I definite did not consider the financial end of things at all!

What does it take to raise two children? School teachers did not make very much money in Mississippi especially in a rural area. How were we going to pay for the things that they needed until they became adults? What other things did we need to consider that I have not mentioned here? To put it bluntly, I did not ever stop to consider any of these things. I just thought that somehow everything would work out.

So, while I did not have the slightest idea of how to create a plan for our lives and what I needed to do to accomplish it, I did know enough about Susan's biology to conceive Karen the first time we tried. I would not recommend doing something like this. Anyway, Karen Leah was conceived in November, 1971.

In December Susan missed her period and shortly thereafter had to be treated for a kidney problem. By this

time we had decided to use a doctor in Newton. When she saw him because of her kidneys, I told him as we got ready to leave, "She's pregnant, and she is going to have a girl."

Doctor Todd, who had delivered Kevin, was at the Union Hospital while we were there for an appointment. Susan told him that she was expecting. That is when he replied that he had told her when Kevin was born that she should not have another baby. There had been some damage to her uterus in delivery. Strange thing: he never told me this; neither did Susan. (It may have had something to do with her wanting to get pregnant again: she was going to have another child just to spite the doctor.)

So who was our doctor? Why did we see Dr. Alexander in Union this day? It might have had something to do with Kevin, but I am not sure. But by the time Karen was born, We were going to Newton for any medical problems that we had.

Amway

It was around the same time that we were moving from Lake to Forest that we were visiting Susan's Mom on a Saturday. Several people who were Amway distributors were canvassing Union looking to developing more distributors. The one I talked to was Mary Ellen.

While in college in the early 1960's, I had begun listening to Paul Harvey's News. One of the company advertizing on his programs was Amway. So, I was curious about this company. Anyway, Susan and I became distributors. To put it bluntly, we did not do very much selling. Mostly we bought several of our own products. Did we save any money? I really could not say. I do know that I was well satisfied with several of the products.

One of the things that Amway uses for recruiting people was their emphasis on a person's dreams, what they wanted out of life. In the presentation they would take the time to

then "draw the circles" to show the people how to make the money necessary to make their dreams come true.

Well, I really did not know how to dream. OK, I had an idea of what I wanted, but it was very general in nature. For example, we wanted two children. But what went into raising two children? Yes, we are back to what I mentioned earlier: the plans Susan and I needed to define our lives. There were so many things missing in our thinking.

When I first began writing about my life, I found fault with many of the things that my parents that I thought they could have done better. Now it occurs to me that they were lacking in a dream of their own for their family. Such seems to be the case for many other families as well.

The time would soon come when I no longer could say that I did not know how. Well, at least I had three books that were suppose to help me learn how to dream.

To help distributors to learn how to dream better as well as change some other parts of their behavior, Amway had a program that contained three paperback books. *The Magic of Thinking Big*, *How to Win Friends and Influence Enemies*, and *How I Raised Myself From Failure to Success in Selling*

Total cost for these were under \$10, so I bought them. Good start! I also read them. (I am not sure that I really studied them though.) Then I took the tests that applied to the books. My Direct told me at some point that I had gotten one of the highest scores on these tests.

What did this prove? Unfortunately, it proved that I could read a book and say what is contained in it. But how well did I apply the principles contained in it? Very poorly is the obvious answer.

This brings me back to my senior year in high school when I was told to write my own obituary, what I would accomplish in my life. To do this takes the ability to dream,

to use my imagination to picture what is possible. What is it that I can accomplish?

I did not realize it at the time, but I would realize what is possible the following year. Even so, I did not recognize it even then. It did take other people to accomplish it with me.

As I write this, I suddenly realized that I had used the word *dream* without really realizing what this word meant. Synonyms for it were wants, desires, etc. But in the book I read, it meant using my imagination to visualize what I wanted actually happening. After all, I usually have one or more dream during every given night. In them, I am doing things. I know because I can see myself doing them.

I could not bring myself to do this. My belief about myself was that none of these things would ever happen. So, I could not see myself accomplishing what I wanted. No confidence in oneself; no real dreaming.

And yet, there is more to success than dreaming. Planning has to be done. They also have to be followed. Think of planning as making goals. New Year's resolutions are goals, but they don't usually result in any permanent changes for all but a very few.

In *The Magic of Thinking Big*, there is a chapter on making goals. It contained a 30 day improvement guide. before that was a 10 year planning guide. Honestly, I did not learn how to use either one of these. In fact, it would be 1979 before I had a dream of what was possible. It was not until December 25, 1988 before I began creating and following a daily schedule.

Yet, there was still a missing piece that I did not consider important, and it is very much so. I was married. Susan and I were suppose to do things together... But we did not. She did not read any of these books. Did I even ask her to do this? So, we did not discuss what these books taught. Nor,

could we apply the lessons the author intended us to learn. So, instead, *we did it our way* and failed.

Susan's pregnancy problems

There was one thing that we did right during this pregnancy: I made sure that Susan walked quite a bit as we had in Biloxi during the early stages of her carrying Kevin.

On the other hand, Susan was having more problems this time than before. She began swelling and was diagnosed with preeclampsia. Like Kevin, her kidneys were excreting protein. I was told by a OB/GYN specialist to take her to Jackson, MS, to the University Hospital. I did not understand how serious her condition was. (This condition had been mentioned during the mother and baby classes at Keesler AFB in 1968.)

Besides, there was something about this hospital that I did not like. (perhaps seemly impersonal or was it because I saw a nurse kill a patient accidentally). The patient was in a special apparatus in which he could be turned. Care had to be taken that the arms did not move while turning the him. Enough care was not taken, and he died not too long after his arms moved while being turned.

On the way back from seeing the specialist, I stopped at our our doctor office who told us that he could do something to reduce the swelling she was having. So, we checked her into the hospital in Newton (where Kevin was born). For a week, she was given a dextrose IV. Sure enough she lost the excess fluid, but sometime over the next few weeks, Karen died within Susan.

Karen's birth and complications

Then over the next few weeks thereafter she began to rot in Susan's body. The end of April, Susan went into labor and delivered a decaying baby. This required an emergency DNC. That is when I asked him to tie her tubes. I did not

want to take a chance that Susan would ever become pregnant again.

With this surgery, she was in the hospital for a couple of weeks. The doctor was rather thorough when he did it. Later he explained what he did: both tied the tubes and burned both end of the tubes shut.

He also removed her appendix as well, and got a surprise when he did so. First of all, he was having a hard time finding it. Then when he did, he noticed that it was enlarged. His diagnosis: chronic appendicitis. So, maybe this might have helped her health somewhat with its removal.

During this time she got several pints of blood. From the time she lost Karen to when she left the hospital after the operation, seems like she had had at least 10 pints of whole blood or perhaps more. Before the summer was out, she would have received more than 27 pints!

A couple of weeks after she got out, she began bleeding from the vagina at night. She was taken by ambulance back to the hospital. As soon as I could get some things for Kevin I followed them. About 8 AM, I appeared at my mother-in-law's with Kevin asking her to take care of him for a while. Then I explained what had happened the previous night. She was so nice to do so. Then again she was concerned with her daughter's well being.

Susan was given several blood transfusions over the next three days. Other problems developed as well. She was having problems breathing. A chest x-ray was taken which revealed spots on her lungs and an enlarged heart. The doctor described her heart as being the size of a basketball. So, Susan was sent to Anderson Hospital in Meridian, MS, on Friday, June 2, 1972. I followed as soon as I could inform Mildred of her daughter's condition.

Susan in critical condition

When I got to Anderson Hospital, I expected for her to be in intensive care, but she was in a room instead. Somehow, there was a lack of communications about the seriousness of Susan's condition between the doctor in Newton and Dr. Covington in Meridian. Some test were finally run late in the afternoon, and finally at 9 PM she was taken to the ICU. This was rather frustrating to me. There was a very small room outside ICU with a couple of couches, and I sent the night there on one of them as I would every night for the next week. (The nurses provided me with a pillow and blanket, and I would sleep on the couch.)

On Fridays, the hospital had a policy of moving as many of the patients out of ICU into rooms as possible. This Friday they were able to move everyone, so Susan was their only patient for now. She remained the only patient until the following Wednesday. (ICU shared a room with the recovery area for surgical patients.)

During her first night in ICU I was asked to find out what kind of food she would eat. Well, she was not well enough to think very well for herself. Her reply was fried chicken and bake beans. (I was too emotional to think clearly myself.) At some point, she also mentioned Tang.

Chicken and baked beans were out of the question, but Tang was not. So, I was sent out to buy some which I did immediately. She got this whenever she wanted it mixed with tap water but no ice. (I suppose it might have helped some way because of the vitamin A and C, but I don't know how.)

Dr. Covington, who specialized in lung cases, was rather certain that the spots on the x-rays were blood clots in her left lung. The only problem was that Susan was too weak to run the test required to verify it. So, they did what they could to build her up enough so they could run the test. Either Tuesday or Wednesday a test revealed that he had be

right. Then they began therapy to dissolve them. What they did not know at this time was that these clots were infected or would become so which would cause much more serious problems later.

Because of Susan's condition, I was permitted many more visits with her than is usual in an ICU. This is usually short visits every two hours. Even so, it was not I that initiated most of the visits; Susan did.

Whenever Susan wanted to see me, a nurse would come to the waiting room to get me. One time I was not there because I was in the cafeteria eating. Sometimes I would be sitting out there. Other times the nurse would wake me. It seemed like I did not get much sleep for several nights.

She was hooked up to a heart monitor for good reason: she had a lot of things wrong with her. Her heart was racing at more than 3 beats for minute (heart failure); there were the suspected blood clots in her left lung; and her heart appeared to be greatly enlarged. Any one of these could kill her.

One of the things that I noticed as I first entered the ICU was a meter that was measuring something. I fairly quickly realized that it was Susan's pulse. So after this, I would look at it carefully each time I came through this door. At least one nurse looked at me a little strangely when she saw me do this.

Why would I be fascinated with this? I suppose anything new does that to me. Maybe it was both comforting and yet disturbing giving that it was measuring something about Susan's vitals.

In the beginning, I was reading 180 and above (beats per minute). One time was disturbing when it started in the 180's and rather quickly went a little over 200! I did not like what that might mean.

Along with the blood clots, Susan was having increased problems breathing. This began Friday evening, but it was much worse by noon Saturday. The doctor was hearing gurgling sounds as well.

I had just got back from the cafeteria when he came out of the ICU. he did not like what he was seeing and hearing! As a result, he got very seriously with me: **Call the family in, she won't last until morning.** Mildred and at least one of her daughters were coming late that afternoon, so I did not tell them until they got there.

Meanwhile, I was left alone knowing that I was about to lose my wife. Elder Winford Hollingsworth came by a couple of hours later on his way to Amory, MS, for an appointment that weekend, so I told him about it. It would have been nice if he could have remained with me, but the appointment was more important than my needing some company. That was perhaps the most miserable afternoon in my life! More prayers and pleadings came out of my mind than any time that I can ever remember.

After the family arrived late Saturday afternoon, we talked for while on the couches. Then Mildred walked down the hall where she met the doctor coming out of ICU (a different door than the front one). He had been the doctor that had treated Bro. Ward earlier, so she knew him.

Being curious, she asked him about Susan. He gave her some good news. He had decided to tap her left lung to draw the fluid off. This permitted her to breath much easier. She still have serious problems, but this eliminated this one for a while. She was still extremely critical.

With the fluid filling her chest as much as it was, her lungs could not expand very much at all. She was basically drowning in this fluid. If the doctor had not tapped her chest, she would have.

An x-ray was taken after the fluid was drained showing her heart being much smaller than the earlier x-ray. The fluid build up had hidden the heart. So her heart was much smaller than first thought. But had it been damaged in some way? All the problems she was having had to be hard on her heart. The only way to tell was to get an earlier x-ray to make a comparison.

So Sunday morning, I was sent to Union to get any chest x-ray that they had of Susan for comparison. I was able to get one, and it was recent enough for this. There was no significant difference in size, so this eliminated an enlarged heart. Within 24 hours there were two less problems to worry about, but there was still all of the other things.

From the time she had been moved to ICU, they began giving her something to slow her heart down. They had to be careful to not give her too much at any given time, or her heart would have stopped. Over the period of the first week, her heart rate went from 180+ per minute to 120. So progress was being made in this area. Again, she was still critical.

As in most summers, I took a couple of college classes so I would get some income from the GI Bill. (Teachers were not paid during the summer months). One of the classes was held in Meridian and the other about 10 miles west of our home in Forest.

The psychology class in Meridian included nurses. On the first night of the class I asked the teacher if I could leave early if there was no teaching was to be done that night. I mentioned about my wife being in intensive care. That is when a nurse from another hospital mentioned that she had heard of my wife's case and wished me well. Ah, the nurse grapevine!

This class was in the evening during the first part of the week. Then other class was during the day toward the end

of the week.

It was Tuesday before they could inject dye in Susan's vein to determine if the spots on her left lung was blood clots. When the results came back, they were. As soon as this happened, they began giving her a blood thinner. At last she was finally treated for this.

As they began to dissolve, some of them broke loose and traveled through her heart and throughout her body. Now I know that this could have caused a heart attack or stroke. Fortunately they did not. Another problem was being treated. It would also lead to a much more serious problem.

It was midweek before anyone else was admitted to ICU. So, my allowed visits decreased in number. Well, Susan still was given priority. If she wanted to see me, she got to do so.

Moved to a room

Friday came, it was time to move patients out of ICU if at all possible. The doctor decided that she could be moved, so upstairs she went.

But why was she put into a room at the end of a hall? It was a long way from the nurse's station in the middle of the floor. If she needs help, is someone going to be able to get to her on time?

OK, I was only thinking about one thing. There were also reasons for her being where they put her. While she was some distance from the nurse's station, she was also as far away from other patients as well. She would not be bothered by others visiting patients or the germs they would be bringing with them. Her health was very fragile and did not need anything making it worse.

For the most of the first 5 weeks, her condition had gone from critical to serious. Or, as I like to put it: the only patients in Anderson Hospital that summer that were in worse condition than she was, died there.

My concern was Susan's welfare during this summer, but my family included more than just her and me. There was a two year old son named, Kevin. He also had some special needs because of his kidney disease.

For the most part, Mildred kept him. This had to be hard on her since she was 61 and had arthritis. He had bouts of diarrhea, and one of the side effects of the prednisone was a huge appetite. Giving him his medication was not easy either. And all of this was on top of her daughter literally fighting for her life while she was helpless to do anything about it. I don't have any idea how I could have coped with the situation without Mildred! (Yes, stupid me: I did not ever tell her how much she helped me.)

There was one time that she fed Kevin breakfast. An hour or so later, Rachel took them to her home where her sons were eating their breakfast. Kevin indicated that he wanted something to eat, and so Rachel fixed him some food which he ate. From the amount he ate, Rachel thought that he had not eaten anything this morning. So, she asked her mother if she had fed him. She told her daughter all that she had given him.

That is when Mildred realized that Kevin ate quite a bit of food. When we visited her in her mobile home in the past, we would feed him first and then drive the 30 miles to her home. She was usually eating her breakfast when we arrived. Well, Kevin wanted to eat again. So, many a time she had asked us if we had fed him. So, when Rachel asked her the same question that she had asked us earlier in the year, she realized why Kevin seemed to always be eating.

There were a few times during the summer that I took over the care of Kevin for a while, perhaps a day or so. This way Mildred could get some rest. But because I was so concerned with Susan, this was rather seldom.

I do not know what I would have done without Mildred. She kept Kevin most of this summer. With all of her medical problems, this was really hard on her. One particular time Kevin developed diarrhea that lasted for a while. So she was seemingly washing cloth diapers all of the time. It was my wife that was so sick, but it was her youngest daughter. That part was a difficult as what I was facing.

She did get some comfort from a dream that she had although it was frightening enough to begin with. In it she saw someone in the water bobbing up and down.

Two summers before her husband was in the hospital and then nursing home before he died in August. The last year, her son-in-law, Tom Felton, had been killed in Vietnam early in August. At first she thought the dream meant that Susan would die before the summer was over.

Later, she would change her mind. The bobbing indicated that she would be in trouble for a while, but she would recover.

So, how did I survive this summer? What about the everyday needs that I had? Susan had an aunt and uncle that lived about 3 blocks from the hospital. I think I did my laundry there. As far as meals were concerned, I ate in the hospital cafeteria. I may have eaten at her aunt and uncle a few times at most. Sleep arrangements? While Susan was in ICU, I sleep on a couch in the ICU waiting room; when she was moved to a room, the hospital provided a cot, pillow, sheets, and crocheted blanket.

During the last 3 weeks, I caught a cold. I was feeling lousy when Dr. Covington checked Susan. After something I had said (or was it what Susan said?), he checked me out as well. My forehead felt warm to his touch, so I got my temperature checked. (98.6) This surprised him. He ordered some medication for me from a local pharmacy, and it was delivered a little later.

Mom and Dad periodically called to find out what was happening, and I would write explaining the situation. Usually, I would end the letters with, "Susan is getting better." Considering that she had literally been at death's door, she was progressing slowly but surely. But she had so much farther to go. Anyway, Elaine once wrote wondering when Susan was coming home. (Susan had yet to be set up in a chair.) I obvious had not emphasized enough of how critically ill she had been in the beginning.

Put in isolation

The next sign of a serious problem came when Susan suddenly began running a fever resulting in her being isolated. I could go in and out, but the nurses, aides, and doctors had to wear masks and gowns. They had to use disinfectants each time they were in the room. Anything that touched Susan had to be disinfected.

Apparently, someone had also noticed some gurgling in her breathing as well. So, her left lung was tapped again. This time they used a vacuum pump to maintain the drainage. It was at this point that the fluid tested positive for an infection. They had found the source of the infection. If anything, this made the situation much more critical for a while. The term used for this condition is **septic**.

While the doctor did not tell me at the time, Susan's life again hung in the balance. They had to get large quantities of antibiotics in her. At the same time they did not know if the required levels would harm her in any way. If they did do this, she might die. If they did not, she would surely die. So they did.

She already had an IV running with a place to insert a needle to add medication to the IV. So, four times a day she would get 0.5 oz of one antibiotic and 1.5 oz of another. This translates to a quarter cup of one and three quarter cup of the other each day.

I really wished that the doctor would have been more transparent in what he was doing. If nothing else, it would have been a learning experience for me. (The heart rate monitor in ICU had already been this.) I really need to do this now!

After several days, Susan's skin began turning orange. This bothered me, so I mentioned this to the doctor. He seemed to dismiss it at first. My guess now is that he already knew this. She still needed more antibiotics if she was going to live.

In a couple of days, he decided that it was safe to lower the amounts of antibiotics. I finally got an explanation of the situation including the name of her recent condition: toxic hepatitis. The huge amount of antibiotics had inflamed her liver. In a short while, the orange skin went away. Things were beginning to look up.

Five weeks after entering the hospital, the aides got Susan out of bed and in a chair for the first time. This was extremely taxing on her, and she sweat a great deal while just sitting up. They put her back in bed after a mere 5 minutes. But she gradually got stronger. In less than two weeks she was also walking with no problems. But before walking, they took the tube out of her chest.

I hate this drink!

Things improved more quickly now that most of the problems had been addressed. But then came the problems that Susan can cause. Dr. Covington insisted that she take a protein drink. At first they gave her a variety of them throughout the day. She began to balk at this. But somehow a compromise was reached. If she had to, there was one or perhaps two shakes that she would drink (with her holding her nose closed of course: she did not like the smell of any of them). She did not really like the taste of any of them.

As she neared the end of the 8th week at Anderson's, she was wanting to go home. Finally, Dr. Covington told her that if her temperature remained below 100 degrees for 24 hours, she could go home the next day. Her immediate response was: if it is exactly 100? His reply: **NO!** (I think the doctor had learned just how stubborn Susan could be. He was determined to be more stubborn than she.) It really did not matter because she did not run a fever that day at all.

So, off we went. Behind us we left a stack of medical records that seemed to be 6" thick! It may well have been a few inches thicker or thinner. I saw it later, and I was shocked at the size of it. Time wise this was the second week of August, and school would be starting in two weeks...

Bible Study

When we first married, Susan suggested that we begin reading the Bible together. But I never had began doing this even though I had confessed to having a calling to the ministry. Seems that I was following in my parent's footsteps: the very same actions that I had thought was so wrong. It could have been so very easy to have listened to my wife and read the Bible together. This way my son would get to hear the word of God on a regular basis, something I did not have the privilege of doing.

While at Forest, I began to read my Bible periodically. There were several times that Susan would come into my study while I was doing this. She would take the Bible out of my hand and sit on my lap. Seems like she was wanting some attention from me. Well she got it, and and I had to find another time to do my reading. I also needed to also give my wife the attention that she needed.

There was another thing that I did just like my father. We would periodically visit with Bro. Hollingsworth and discuss Biblical topics. This was something which was quite

enjoyable. However, never did I learn what I was doing wrong as far as learning how to convince others of my calling to the ministry.

My Calculator

I had a Standard Oil Credit Card for gas purchases. When I got my monthly bill there was often an offer on various items that I could buy. This time, it was for one of the first electronic calculators with a price tag of \$109 (approximately). Since I like gadgets, I ordered one. It did not do very much just like the Texas Instruments TI-99/4A computer that I would get later in Baton Rouge. It would add, subtract, multiply, divide, work with percentages, and had positive and negative memories.

I used our third bedroom for my study. There I would grade student papers. Then I would use the calculator to calculate their total score. Every once in a while, Kevin would watch me do this.

Then one afternoon I happened to walk by the study door. There sitting on my chair, he was looking at a paper, push some buttons on the calculator, turn the paper over, and do the same things for the next paper. I went to get Susan to let her see what he was doing. We both enjoyed watching him do this.

Fourth Grade: The Good Year

Two weeks after I brought Susan home from Anderson's Hospital, another school year had begun. Mr. Slaughter was at it again working to make me a better teacher. Well, he wanted the students to have a better education as well.

So he convinced Miss Hughes, who had been teaching a class to become a teacher's aide to help me do what he thought I could do. She agreed.

He also had a conference with me emphasizing the need for me to give her things to do based upon her ability. After all she had already had teaching experience. I may be "in charge", but in reality we were to work together as a two teacher team. So at times, she could be working with one group of students while I worked with another.

Once school started, we needed to group the students by reading ability. We wound up with three groups: basically non readers, readers who were at least a year behind, and readers on grade level. As a result, each group was given a reader based upon the group to which they belonged.

At this time, more emphasis was being placed upon reading from the Federal level. Some teachers received additional training over the summer using government money. One of these programs were for training teachers for mentally retarded students while another trained teachers for remedial reading.

As a result, students with low IQ scores were placed into a special class. Students with low reading abilities were given a 30 minutes a day working with our remedial reading teacher. This made it possible for Miss Hughes to teach one of the remaining reading groups while I taught the other. Somehow during the day Miss Hughes or I also spent some time with this low group teaching them reading.

Mrs. Horton held this position at North Scott. I got with her to find out how we could coordinate our efforts. She suggested that they begin with a first grade primer (the first reading book in first grade), so we did. As the year progressed, they moved to the second first grade reader. Then they moved up to the first reader for second grade. And finally, they moved to the second reader for second grade. They actually finished this book just before school ended in May!

They would be going to the fifth grade the following fall. Their reading ability was now beginning third grade. Unfortunately, they no longer had access to the readers for third grade. Nor did they have additional reading instructions.

My senior year English class in high school had begun with a spelling test everyday. This really bugged me because I really did not have an good use for the words she gave us each day. There had to be a better way.

With a greater emphasis on reading, this included the various parts involved with reading. One of the most important ones was vocabulary. Let me see... Vocabulary? Doesn't this have something to do with spelling? Doesn't the person who knows more words also is able to read better? (I think so!)

OK, we have vocabulary words in reading and in spelling. If knowing more words also help students to read their other textbooks, these words are also part of the vocabulary needed by the students. Does it sound like a light bulb had just gone off in my head?

It took a week or so for me to grasp this point. So, I gave a spelling test from the spelling book for the first couple of weeks. But then I put away this book for the rest of the year. Instead I created three spelling lists for each week based upon the reading abilities of the students. Half came from their textbooks, and half came from the readers they were using.

I thought that this way they would see and spell words that they needed for their textbooks. How well did this experiment work? Quite well! They had been given a achievement test early in the fall and again late in the spring. The average gain in spelling ability was 1.5 years. (I rest my case.)

And then there was a teaching technique that I tried this year. One suggestion was to make a game out of learning. In this case, the student were learning how to find words in a dictionary. So each one was given a dictionary. Then I would give them a word and let them see who could find the word first. When a student did this, they had to then say what page it was on, which side of the page and where it was from top to bottom. The students were eating this up! We did this for a while, and I was amazed as how quick they could find each of the words.

The successes I had in teaching this year were no accidents especially in spelling. The things that I had read in *The Magic of Thinking Big* began to manifest themselves in my thinking. Unknowingly, I was applying the basics of this book. I wanted to make it better. I developed a dream about this, developing a plan. Then I applied it. (The results speak for themselves.) Look over what I wrote one more time. Find each of these parts as well.

OK, I applied the lessons of the book to this situation. But how often would I do this with the next situation I faced? Would it be often? Would it be very seldom? It remains to be seen.

Car Problem

Having a car with A/C was nice, but it was beginning to affect the motor by putting too much strain on it. But what should I expect? It was a VW with a 40 HP motor. That small of an engine will run well up to highway speeds with out too much effort, but doing it with the A/C running was another thing.

As a result, sometime this spring, the motor refused to run fast enough for the car to go. In fact, I could not get up the very small incline in the street I lived on. I wound up have to have the car towed to the Carmichael VW Dealership in Meridian, MS, 40 miles away.

The mechanics looked at the problem, but were not able to figure out how to get it to run like it should. (I had gotten to know Gil, the owner, fairly well.) Quite obviously, I needed another car, and I needed some help being able to do that. What I really needed for him to agree to such a sale. (Financially, I was not a good risk for such a deal.

He was out of town on business and might be coming back in before the end of the business day. So, I waited around until around 6 PM. Finally his secretary whom I also knew well, decided to take matters into her own hands. She temporarily approved a sale to me of a new VW Super Beetle. She was certain enough that Gil would have done the same thing that she did this. As it turns out, he did not make it back. I went home with the new car. (Oh yes, the car loan was paid off in full with no problems.)

It was nice to have a newer car. But it had a problem of its own later. The speedometer cable went bad, and I had to have that replaced. Of course, this meant another trip to Meridian to do this. It certainly is nerve racking to hear the high whine it causes while traveling down the highway! Watching the speedometer needle swing back and forth is not very comforting either. Big problem? What would I tell a state trooper if I am speeding? I don't know how fast I am really going. This did not really happen, so it really did not matter.

Disaster Preparedness

This was another program that was developed for the school system. I was chosen to be the teacher to teach this subject. They had given us movies and some other materials to do this. Beside my regular duties, I had to do this for all nine grades.

Topics included were tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes. How much of this the students remembered for very long? I doubt it was for very long. I also wonder how

much of this got home to the parents and made an impact there. The part about hurricanes might have been different. The movie for this part was named, *A Lady Called Camille*. After all that was only three years earlier. Not only that, but Camille had come through that part of Mississippi.

During the spring, Coach Eiland came down with encephalitis and spent several weeks in the hospital. The teachers and students all were concerned for his life because this is always life threatening. By sometime in the fall of 1973, he was able to resume teaching.

Summer School

It was a year after Susan had spent much of the summer in the hospital. For some reason, this was in the back of my mind. Yet, it was something that concerned me.

As June arrived, it was time to think about getting ready to attend the University of Southern Mississippi once again. (I needed the GI Bill money to get through the summer.) Usually, I had commuted to Hattiesburg, but I decided to do things differently. I would spend the summer on campus for a change.

I contacted student housing looking for an apartment. It turned out that the university had family housing units on the western edge of the campus. Also, since some students did not want to attend the college during the summer, they were allowed to sub-lease their apartment for the summer quarter.

So, I got a name and apartment number that would be available, and I took it. Of course, I had to furnish our beds and kitchen things. How did I do this in a super Beatle? I don't know but I did.

Well, I really could not move our beds, so other arrangements had to be made. Time to use my imagination once again. I knew that I could buy some cots, what about

something like a mattresses? Well, I also knew that a foam pad could be used for padding. (Light bulb went off!) I really enjoyed sleeping very close to Susan all of the time. So, the idea of us sleeping on two single cots for about 8 weeks was revolting. Was there a way to tie the two cots together? (Another light bulb went off.)

So off to Sears we went. I found the foldable cots and got 3 of them. (These were canvas stretched over an aluminum frame. I also found something I could use to tie them together. Then I looked at the foam pads (2" thick) they had. The ones that caught my eye were flat on one side, and looked like the bottom of a egg carton. So, I got 3 of them. One of them was about double the width of a cot.

First I fixed Kevin's cot. I then cut his foam pad in half from top to bottom. Then I placed one on top of the other with the flat sides on the outside. Next it was time to fix our "double bed." The canvas had an opening at each corner of the cot. So, I used this to fastened the top and bottom of the cots together. Then I placed one foam pad on the united cots with the flat side down and the second foam pad on the first one. The flat side was on top this time. Then it was time to put the sheets on the beds.

So, at least Susan and I could be closer than we would with separate cots. But what about the aluminum frame that was running down the middle? That might not be very comfortable at all! Then I got the shock of my life! Between the two foam pads, there was enough padding to sleep quite comfortable even if laying on top of the aluminum frames. In fact, it was almost like sleeping on air. It was not too soft nor too hard.

Gee! This was the second time in one year that I wanted something to happen, used my imagination to figure out how to do it, and put this plan into action. It worked! I can do this! (Yes, but I did not use this as another example of

how to do things. It did not bolster my confidence in myself, nor did I apply what I had learned as far as how to succeed is concerned.)

Kevin

Since I was studying psychology, I asked about my son and what might be done for him. Seems like someone at the church we attended was receiving services for their child through the psychology department. (Asking does not hurt, does it?)

While they had nothing that was similar to what the other child needed, the psychology department were starting a preschool program for retarded children. They gave me the information I needed to begin the process for enrolling him.

This must have begun with a psychological test which indicated that he had a very low IQ, he qualified. Then came the paper work. Finally, we began taking him to and from the school for the rest of the summer. We would drop him off after 8 AM and had to pick him up before 4 PM.

The school also wanted more information about Kevin given that he had had seizures two years earlier. So they sent us to a neurologist in Jackson, MS. (Why there was not a qualified specialist closer to Hattiesburg? I have no idea. It might have to do with Kevin's age and mental ability.)

So on the appointed day, we drove up to Jackson to have an EEG test run. They placed sensors on his skull to read the electrical activity of his brain. Actually, I think the sensors were embedded in a skull cap, but I can be sure. Anyway they were able to get good results, as in clear readings for the length of time required.

Within a week we got a letter with the results. We likely let the school see them, or they might have been sent a copy by the specialist. The only problem: what did all of

these words mean? Specifically, what did *gross encephalopathy* mean?

So, the next weekend we were in Union visiting Susan's mother, we went to see Dr. Alexander. He read the results, but he had not idea what the term meant either. So, we were no closer to knowing what the diagnosis meant.

Now I wonder, why didn't I ask one of my psychology professors? Well, they might not have known either. Then again they might have.

But there was another source I had but did not think about in the beginning: the college library! The university had a nursing school which would require a lot of medical knowledge. Besides, in one of my psychology classes, a book was mentioned which was a medical dictionary. The library had one in the reference section. So, I spent some time in the library looking for the term.

Sure enough, I found it. Of course it was very specific. In layman's terms, all of the readings the sensors had taken were abnormal. In addition, there was deterioration in all areas of the brain. In other words, Kevin was not going to get better as far as his abilities were concern. He would remain trainable mentally retarded.

This research may well have led me to read up on Kevin's medical condition. I found quite a bit of literature on nephrosis in various medical publications. (Again I was fortunate in the library having many of them going back several decades. So, I was able to learn quite a bit.

The library also had a very important, thick reference book. I think the name was *The Physician's Desktop Reference*. It contained the names of a very large number of diseases and what should be done. Some of them were quite short.

Such was the case with Kevin's disease: a couple of sentences. *Give the patient one half a milligram of prednisone per pound of body weight daily when the disease was not active. Give one milligram of prednisone when it was active.* (This is approximately what I had read 40+ years ago.)

Kevin was still having periodic flare ups. So, we needed a doctor in Hattiesburg during this summer. Somehow we got a pediatrician who was acquainted with Kevin's problem. This part was good. He was also opinionated in ways I did not appreciate. He was the doctor, so what he said had to go. If he is right, that is alright. But if he was wrong? That is another matter. (There were times when I and Susan needed to have someone tell it like it is.)

When it came to testing Kevin's urine daily and giving the proper amount of medication, there was no problem. We kept him up to date on this. But the first side problem was Kevin's foreskin. He had not be circumcised at birth. Neither did anyone tell us how to take care of it. (We were suppose to do something with it???)

There were to things that he noticed quickly. It was dirty underneath the foreskin. There were also adhesions between it and the end of the penis. He broke the adhesions which made Kevin cry and clean underneath it. Then we were told to keep that area clean.

Well, I did not like him doing either one of these things! Was he right? Probably, he was, but that still did not do anything about my resentment. He may have been Kevin's doctor, but that did not mean that I had to like him.

August had come and final exams were over. We moved out of the apartment and went back to Forest to prepare for another school year.

Math Teacher

During the previous spring, I had convinced Mr. Slaughter to let me teach math to the fifth through ninth grades for the coming year. I had done so well the previous year; maybe I would be able to do as well with older students. (Wishful thinking perhaps?)

In reality, this did not work out at all. The student discovered how to wrestle control of the class from me. Little learning was being done, and the classes were far too noisy! During the year, things continued to go down hill. Mr. Slaughter tried to help me to no avail.

Finally, he replaced me with someone else and sent me to work as a teacher's aide in first grade. Basically, I was finished as far as teaching was concerned. Even so, I did the best I could under the circumstances.

During that last year, we had several discussions about my future in teaching. He believed that I needed an advanced degree so I could teach higher level classes, and that is what he recommended to me. So, I began making plans to attend Southern Mississippi full time to earn a master's degree. When school ended that spring, I began to prepare our move to Hattiesburg.

Master's Degree

The first thing we needed was housing. Someone graduating this spring was moving out of apartment B101 in student housing, which was assigned to us. So, I knew that we would be on the ground floor.

I had been very close to having a BS in psychology, but I needed to be in the graduate program. So, I made that change. I would begin working on a MS in Education with emphasis in mathematics. Well, I successfully made the switch. Everything was down on paper. However, there would be some requirements other than my course work and grades that I had to meet.

As the summer quarter approached, we needed to get settled in our apartment. This time we moved more things with us. Likely we rented a U-Haul truck since we were moving our bedroom and living room furniture. Besides I had a bike that I wanted to use to get from our apartment to the campus area.

And then I contacted the school that Kevin had attended the previous summer. I was certain that they would accept him. I was told rather quickly that such was not the case. They could only handle a certain number of clients. However, they did have some openings, so he would be able to attend. He would remain going to it until we left Hattiesburg in August 1975. (So, this was another area taken care of!)

As the quarter began, I enrolled in four classes and was enjoying learning once again. I thought that everything was going quite well. Then I ran into a problem. Well, my faculty advisor said there was a potential one with serious consequences. If I wanted to get a master's degree, I had to first qualify for it.

Wouldn't you know it? I had another test to take: the Graduate Record Exam. So, I paid some of my scarce funds so I could take this test later in the summer. I was rather worried about this to say the least. Even after I took the exam, I was still concerned.

I really should not have been. At the time, it did not occur to me the similarity of the names of the GRE and DORE (Defense Officer Record Exam). The latter is what I had had to take within 3 or 4 months after I entered service 9 years earlier. So, I worried unnecessarily for a while.

The test results came back, and I was elated! My scores were a couple of hundred points above the minimum score my master's degree required. Strangely enough, the total score of the GRE was only 10 points higher than for the

DORE. It was then that I realized that the two tests were measuring approximately the same things.

One of the courses I took this summer was history of education (or something like that). The course was very enjoyable, and I learned a lot. I found myself participating in class a lot. I also earned an A!

The other three courses? These grades were not quite as good. One was an A and the other two were B's. My grade point average was 3.5 on a 4 point scale; this was exactly the minimum average required for my future degree. I was not exactly making a name for myself grade wise. Or was I.

Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society

Obviously, my professor the history of education class was impressed with my performance. So, he nominated me for this society without saying anything about it.

Then one day when I checked my mail, there was a letter from this organization. I had been nominated as a potential member of it. This was a big surprise to me. It was also a great honor. The only problem that I had was that I did not have the money that it would require to join it. Nor could I envision myself being good enough to be a part of what I considered to be an elite organization!

After receiving this invitation, I talked with my professor about why he had nominated me. His simple reply was that I deserved it; he saw the potential that I had.

This was a similar conversation to one I had had with my Algebraic Topology my last semester at the U of I nearly a decade earlier. She was the one who suggested that I pursue a graduate degree. She also saw sufficient potential in me to accomplish it.

Once again my abilities were seen by others. One might wonder why I did not see them. Then again, doubts can hide the truth for anyone who has them. Later I would look

through the USM Bulletin which listed the GRE requirements for various graduate degrees. Mine was high enough to qualify for all of them that I investigated.

The maximum score on the GRE was 1600 (I think). So there would be quite a few people that would get higher scores than mine. But there were also many more people who get scores below mine. I overestimated the number of people in the upper group while underestimated how many were in the lower group.

My Bad

This happened in my Complex Variables course which was one of my two math classes. I had taken a similar course at the University of Illinois but had not done as well as I would have liked. This was my opportunity to learn the subject much better.

There were two or three of my students who decided to form a study group to help each other learn more about this topic. We met in various classrooms and sometimes in the library as well. (I joined them shortly after they began meeting.) There were even sometimes when Susan joined us. She was physically there, but she had no idea what we were talking about.

I was getting a lot of help from them. For the first time I began to understand the principles being taught in the textbook. Well, I did my best to hold up my end in helping the others in the areas that I well understood. Considering the A I got in the class, I had a good understanding of the subject matter.

Such could not be said for one lady in the class. She had taken this course a year before but dropped out late in the summer quarter. She did not understand it then, and it was no different now. I did all that I could to show her the principles being taught, but it did not help. She dropped the class at the end of this quarter as well.

Because of how close I had been working with her, I became attracted to her. It seems clear to me that this happened because of how close we were working together. Here I was married only seven years, and I wanted to be with someone else. Fortunately, she did not notice this at all. Her mind was on other things. She had two or three daughter which kept her busy when she was not studying and attending classes. Thanks to her, I escaped this situation.

It's not that this is unusual. Marriage counselors speak of the seven year itch. I had heard of this in college when attending some evening lectures on marriage at the U of I. But somehow this slipped my mind when I was tempted in this way.

What bothers me now but didn't then was they way my mind was working when this lady and I were studying in the library while Susan was also present. My attention was directed only toward this lady when I should have been more conscious of Susan.

I remember comparing this lady and Susan. She had knowledge of mathematics. (Well, she did not understand complex variables.) Susan did not understand math at all. From this, I concluded that this lady and I had more in common than Susan and I did. (OK, so I was not thinking very clearly at all!)

What had caused my thinking to go so far off track? Susan and I had stopped working in our marriage like we should have done. Initially, we had taken the time to introducing ourselves to each other which was a very wonderful time. But then we gradually brought back some bad habits that we did not need. And then again we developed new habits (some good and some bad). In other words, we had begun to take each other for granted. For

that matter, we had become more self centered. I know that I was.

So, now that I look back on a situation I had caused of which I am ashamed, what would be a better way? How could I have periodically fallen in love with Susan over the 35 years of our marriage? The answer appears in the writings of the late part of our lives together.

You can not wait that long? OK, here is the simple answer. Take the time to do things together with joy. Be aware of the presence of each other. Do nice little things, and sometimes make it something totally unexpected.

My bicycle

I had a three speed bicycle which I rode to the campus area every day. Obvious, I used it to get to class, but there were times when I needed to do something in the library as well. It was a good source of transportation most of the time. But one time...

This particular morning, I was having some trouble getting the gears to engage properly. I must have not engage the bike chain into the gear properly. Then I pushed down rather hard on the pedal, and the chain slipped off the gear. With the force I was applying to the pedal, there was nothing to stop the pedal from spinning around. My foot slipped off the pedal and onto the ground. That is when I lost my balance and hit my head on the pavement.

I was woozy for a little while, but I was aware that I was a bleeding in a couple of places of the right side of my head. I also was aware that the health center for the college was a couple of blocks away. So, I walked there to be checked out.

Now who do you think I saw there? One of many of Susan's aunts was on duty that morning. I had just become her next patient. She took my blood pressure which was low.

What else? I am not sure, but I remained there until it looked like the bleeding had stopped.

Then I walked another block or so to the Math Building. There was one room in this building where people could study. Usually there were also others there which were willing to help students who wanted it. I spent some time there, and I remember talking with a professor and a few of other students that I had gotten to know.

But then blood began to ooze out of the wounds again. So, I excused myself to return to the health clinic. Yup, I got Susan's aunt again for a nurse. I not sure what she did, but after a while, I headed to our apartment with the oozing stopped. (Finally!) I thought this was the best place to be for a while.

The first thing Susan did when I walked through the door was to ask me a lot of questions. Seems like someone in the health clinic had called her explaining what had happened. (I wonder who called...) I must have been more careful on my bike after that as I did not have any more problems with its gears.

Dentist

Susan was having some dental problems, so we found a dentist to take care of them. Her right top eye tooth was too far gone, so it had to be pulled. This was one time that I should have stayed in the waiting room, but I did not.

The dentist applied the pliers to the tooth and began to pull, and pull, and pull. In response, the tooth began coming out, and coming further out, and further out... My legs began getting rather weak and I was wondering if it would ever completely out. It did, but I was not feeling very good for some time.

There were some other problems in her mouth which the dentist fixed. But most of all, he was concerned with her

general dental health. Clearly she was not flossing at all. (She wasn't.) So he scheduled Susan for some training. For I think three or four appointments, she met with one of his dental hygienists. I went along and heard some things that I also needed to know. (This does not mean that I would be applying them all any more than Susan.)

For some reason the hygienist overslept one morning, so she was late. This bothered me because she was suppose to be at the dental office at the time of our appointment. Gee, the lesson I failed to learn was this: it was more important to begin the day with clean teeth that to be on time for work. The latter was in fact very important, but clean teach was even more important. (There was a caviot to this that did not make itself know to me until three decades later.

Trip to see Etta and Dick

Were we thinking straight about this or not? For some reason, we decided to visit them between the end of the summer quarter and the fall one. Finances were limited, and that is not a short trip. How were we going to manage this? It perhaps was as much as a couple of thousand miles.

Well, I did have a pattern from which I could build a plan. My family's trip to visit Uncle Arthur in 1955 worked. We camped out all of the time then. This way, there was no need for using motels. For this, we needed a tent, camp stove, perhaps our cots, cooking utensils, bedding, and some other things I have forgotten. I also had gotten maps so that I would know how we go to get there.

What about drivers? Remember that we had three drivers going to the state of Washington. Well, I got Susan to take the written driver's exam which she passed. So, she had a driver's permit. I even had her do some driving to get ready for the trip. She was scared to say the least. But there were times during this trip that she actually drove some. (She stopped driving permanently when we got back.)

Camping on the way

Now that we knew our needs, we bought the things we did not have. After school ended, we packed the car with everything we thought we needed. After a final call to Etta to tell her we were leaving, we headed out.

The first night we spent in Texas between Shreveport, LA, and Amarillo, TX. I had traveled this way on my way to see Etta and Dick when they were in Flagstaff, AZ. So, I sort of knew where I was going. We were camping in probably a state park that night.

This part of Texas has quite a few trees, and it was quite beautiful. The camp area is under a grove of them. How refreshing this was to me as the temperature was much cooler than the earlier part of that day had been.

A couple was camped close to us, and we had a very nice visit. I learned that she had nephritis which causes an irreversible kidney damage. Either she later got a kidney transplant or probably died "before her time." She might have survived a little bit longer on kidney dialysis if she was able to get this. She was so nice!

From here we headed into New Mexico and then north into Colorado. Then we turned west going up into the mountains at Colorado Springs. I don't remember where we camped in the mountains, but Susan cut her hand there. I think we tried to bandage it up some, but that was about it.

At this point we were at around 10,000 ft above sea level. This meant that the nights were cooler as were the days. But it was nice compared to the late summer we had left in Mississippi a couple of days before.

The state map had look like we could go a little west of where we were spending the night. Then we could take a state road due north into Wyoming. It looked like a good idea. Well looks could be deceiving... The map does not

show where the mountains and their passes are. Neither were there any hints of the switchbacks needed to go from the valley floors to the passes near the top of the mountains.

So soon after beginning today's leg, we headed north on this state highway. Well, going through the mountains means going up and down the sides of them. We did this quite a few times.

One time we came to a mountain that we would have to climb. The sign at the bottom listed the altitude as 4,000 ft. Since I had not planned our trip as well as Mom and Dad had in 1955, this climb was on a narrow gravel road! So, up and up we went in second gear much of the time. Yes, I remember meeting trucks during this climb. They were on the inside lane going down while we were on the outside lane going up... How far did we climb on the side of this mountain? The sign at the top (or was it a pass) listed the altitude as 8,000 ft.

This next night's stop was one of the places at which we had camped in 1955, Dinosaur National Monument on the Colorado-Utah border. It was not very far from the road we were on, so we took a quick side trip for a night's rest.

Surprising, once I got into the Monument and read the road signs, I was able to get to the camp our family had used 19 years earlier! Anyway, I drove the camp area and began getting things set up for the night. (There were not a large number of people camping in this camp ground.)

A Park Ranger came over to welcome us. That is when he noticed the bandage on Susan. He asked to see her wound, and then he insisted on treating it properly. This was really nice of him to say the least.

Then I got to hear the same lecture that I had nearly two decades before. "Do not go into the stream (or was it a river?). The water is too rapid, you will drown. The last two

people who did go in were qualified life guards." (trained as water safety instructors) Needless to say, I did not go near the water, and I made sure that Kevin could not as well. Susan? Well, I knew that she would not go near it either!

The monument had a nightly campfire as they did years before with a speech about the area. This usually starts with the speaker guessing some of the states that the visitors were from. Afterward, I surprised her a little bit with saying that I was from Mississippi. (They don't get very many people from this state.)

Back in 1955, we stayed in the monument for a few days. But I don't remember attending any of the evening campfires. If we had, we would have done it more than once. Well, this is my thinking now.

This night we had a similar experience as I had had while we were traveling west in Oregon; there was a storm. Our tent was a 5x7 wall tent. I woke up during the night with the wind howling. I also heard some of the other campers packing up and leaving. Right or wrong, we stayed put. In the morning, I could see no damage in this camp ground, so I felt vindicated. Likely, there was damage somewhere in the area though.

We were up around sunup, ate our breakfasts, and headed north again. We would be rewarded for heading out so early! In fact, it is impossible to describe what we saw this morning accurately. We were about to see why the Flaming Gorge has its name.

We were not driving very long when suddenly we saw a bright red ahead of us, as in needing sunglasses brightness. The sun had just risen enough that it was shining directly into the gorge. Oh my!! We were privileged to drive for several miles while admiring the view. Seriously, I actually thought there might be a huge fire ahead of us! Yes, I know there were no smoke, but that still did not diminish the

impression at all. This is something that I had not seen before, and I will always be glad that we did this time! It is likely something that Susan retained in her memory for as long as she still had one.

So were is a picture of this? Would you believe that I did not take one at all? Again, I don't know why. I'm not even sure that I had a camera at this time. Besides my mind might have been on getting to Jackson, WY, rather than what I was seeing there.

When we got to Wyoming, we headed west across the southern part of the state to its west side. Then it was back to heading north to Jackson Hole.

Dick was the chief of police at Jackson, WY. So, when we drove into town, Susan insisted we stop by the police station. (When she makes up her mind...) When we got there, She told the receptionist who we were and that we wanted to see Dick. It took some doing, but you know Susan...

Some time later he walked out of his office not knowing we were there. Then a lady whom he did not know walked toward him with her arm extended. I wonder what he was thinking then? Who is she? What does she want? Is she dangerous. Why hadn't I been warned about her by my people? Likely some other thought may have been going through his mind.

Perhaps he had seen me, or maybe Susan identified herself in some way. Then he knew who she had to be. Even so, he had a strange look on his face until he did know with whom he was dealing. (I wonder what the receptionist was thinking? Was she enjoying see her boss sweat a little bit? She knew how the lady was, but he did not.)

Once he had calmed down some, we had a good short visit. He also nicely explained why what we did is frowned upon. Not everyone who comes into his office is friendly

toward him. They might even wish him bodily harm. OK, he was right. However, we made sure that the people in the office knew who we were and why we were there. In modern terminology, we vetted ourselves first.

Dick still had things he needed to do, so he told us how to get to his house. Shortly thereafter we headed that way. That is when we got a very nice welcome.

They have three children, Wendy, Terri, and their baby son, Rusty, whom Etta was still nursing. After visiting and playing with the children, I brought in the things that we need inside.

Health foods

After moving to Jackson Hole, Etta had started seeing local dentist to keep her teeth in good condition. He had learned of the work done by a dentist (Dr. Fred Miller) in Pennsylvania in the area of health foods who had become very successful in preventative dentistry. Her dentist liked what he read about the way this dentist had approached healthy living. So, he decided that his patients needed to know about this.

As the saying goes, with her mouth wide open where she could not talk back, he began to tell her how she could live a more healthy life style. Of course, anything that he found wrong, he took the time to tell her how it could be made better. She became interested, and he gave her a list of books that would help her.

Then she began practicing what she read. Next she became pregnant with Terri. Almost immediately, she could tell the difference between this pregnancy and when she was carrying Wendy. Earlier she had bad problems with morning sickness; now she had none. She felt so much better in so many ways. This sold her on this program!

So, I got an earful about this. Every meal she served was based upon what she had learned. Like her dentist, she explained what was so healthy about this meal. It was not so bad. In fact, it was much better than how Mom had described it.

(Mom and Dad had made a trip out to see them earlier. It was also after Etta had begun to change the meals that she served. Mom claimed that Etta did not serve them enough food during a meal. Mom and Dad even went out to get additional food for themselves at least one time. She was not happy with the situation at all. Her opinion of the program was definitely very negative.)

While there I took the time to read what literature Etta let me read at times. I also got a list of the literature that Etta had gotten from the dentist. What I read made sense, and Etta had has was so enthusiastic about it. With Kevin's problems, anything that could make his condition better was worthwhile doing.

After getting back, I decided to follow his diet ideas with very good results. Since that time, I have had to take an antibiotic one time in 1976, and that was because I did something very stupid which resulted in blood poisoning. Gone were the twice annual bouts of flu. When my nose begins running, an antihistamine is sufficient to stop it.

Shooting situation

Dick's detective and good friend was running for Sheriff this year. During the early part of our visit, a debate was held among the candidates on the radio.(TV does not reach very far in the mountains.) While this was happening, his children at home unattended had managed to get his revolver from one locked box and bullets from another locked box. Then they loaded the gun. One shot was fired hitting a stapler shattering the bullet. One of the fragments hit one of the children. After getting the injured child to the

hospital, the others were brought to Etta and Dick's home to spend the rest of the night. The parents spent the night in the hospital room with the injured child.

The children had learned how to do all of this simply by watching what their father had done in front of them many times before. (Remember Kevin and the long distance calls?) So, this is one reason why I would not have a gun in my house while Kevin was alive. There is no telling what he might have done. (I really do not see any reason for having a gun now anyway.) While he may not be very intelligent, he was always very observant.

Here is another example of Kevin's observations. During several evenings while we were there, Etta played her piano which she is quite good at. Well, Kevin pay attention to what she was doing including watching her turn the pages as she did so. Then one morning, we saw him crawl up onto the bench in front of the piano. Then he would gently touch a few keys (not hard enough to make a sound) followed by turning a page. He repeated this process for a while. Etta, Susan, and I all got a kick out of what we saw.

Both Etta and know how strict Mom had been about things. As we watched Kevin "play" the piano, Etta commented that our mother would likely have scolded Kevin for doing this because he might harm the piano. I had to agree with that thought. This is exactly what our Mom would have done when we were young.

But over the years I saw my Mom change especially in regard to Kevin. She had more experience with people like him. She had also been with autistic children learning how they should be treated. So what we see our parents do when we were young is not always what they will do when they have had more experiences that teaches them other methods.

Does this suggest a reason for grandparents allowing grandchildren to "get by" with doing things that their children would get punished for doing? In other words, do parents sometimes punish their children for doing somethings that might not need to be punished for?

A fire caused a problem

Elk season was to begin about a month after we were there. People spent good money to get a permit to hunt elk. But not everyone is fortunate to get one of the limited license to hunt them. But one person decided to do things his way...

Then a fire began burning near his large freezer. When the firemen put the fire out they check the freezer to see if it was alright. That is when they saw the contents: it was full of elk meat! The logical conclusion was that he had shot one before the season started. So, that fire was very expensive in more than one way. Who knows when something we should not have done becomes visible to others because of something entirely unexpected!

I had been to Flagstaff to visit with Etta and Dick. But they introduced something to us that I did not recognize from the earlier visits with them. It was at the first evening meal after Dick got home from work. He gently held Etta's chair for her and slid it up to the table. His comment was that it was a way to show courtesy by the husband to the wife.

It was definitely very tenderly done. He made a very good point. In a similar way, I would open Susan's car door for her. And yes, I would open doors for her from the first time she rode with me until she died. I also do this for others even now.

But what can I do when the front doors only unlock from the driver's side? (It can only be unlocked using a key.)

Knoxville is not a place where one would want to leave the car unlock. Is she suppose to wait until I unlock my door, unlock hers from my door, and come around to her side to open her door? That is a whole lot of waiting!

On more than one occasion, Etta took Susan on a walk in the hill behind their house. Apparently these were private conversations that I did not need to be a part of. Susan later told me about one or more of them.

It seems that Etta wanted to give Susan some suggestions about being a wife and mother. Well, lessons might have been a better description. But then that is who Etta is. She sees something that works and is quite willing to show others how to take advantage of it.

Kevin did not any kidney episodes on our trip, but he had a bad tummy ache. Dick was so good to him. He placed Kevin on the rug on the floor and rubbed his tummy until it got better. He was talking to Kevin so soothingly as he did this. Things quieted down after that.

Etta was very adamant about how things were to be done. I don't know who it was that had perhaps spit up; it probably was not Kevin. Well, I had a disinfectant spray that I had brought with me. So after the mess was cleaned off the sheet, I sprayed the area. She did not like the idea very much.

What is it like to be the chief of police in a city like Jackson? Sometime, things can be serious, and other times it is easy to laugh at what is going on.

Sometime before we arrived, he had hired a young lady for the force (after proper training, of course). Her first assignment was undercover work in the area of drugs. Because she looked so young, she fit the bill for this investigation.

Dick had taken us somewhere in his car on a weekend, and we got to listen to the radio traffic. A service station had called the police station about some things that some travelers had accidentally left there. So, a police car was dispatched to stop and tell them that they needed to go back for their things.

Dick said that this was very close to what goes on from day to day. Things happen in a very slower pace than in the Adam 12 TV series. Only once in a while does something happen like the elk meat in the freezer...

By this time, it was the end of August. The weather was beginning to get cooler. It was already much cooler in the mountains around Jackson.

There were a series of adjacent peaks that are named the Sleeping Indian. Well, it does look like someone sleeping on their back. Well Dick called our attention to it on a rainy day. It took a while, and then I realized why he did. These peaks were beginning to turn white ever so slowly. We had a light rain; up on the peaks it was snowing, in August! It would take a much bigger snow for these peaks to be covered though.

After about a week, Dick had a meeting he had to attend east of Jackson. Etta wanted to be with him, so they and their son headed east for a few days. We were left with the two daughters; we became babysitters. (They really were not that much trouble either.

We did some things around town, and then we took a trip into Grand Tetons National Park. This is just north of Jackson and about 100 miles or so south from Yellowstone. It is not a very large park especially compared with its northern neighbor.

Yet it does have something that is spectacular: Jenny Lynn lake. I don't know how deep this is, but the water is so clear that you can see the bottom without any trouble at all.

It certainly is strange to watch fish swimming around knowing that they are many feet below the surface. There is even bridge across the lake, and it was sort of obvious that it was deep. Yet, I really could not tell.

The shoreline is very rocky, some of them are quite large. Anyway Wendy and Terri wanted to walk around part of the lake. They just had to climb over these large rocks, some were almost as big as they were. Well, we made it without anyone falling in. Even so, I was concerned about someone falling in and getting in over their heads. They didn't.

The meeting was over, and they returned. Now it was time for us to head back to Hattiesburg. This time we headed east first and then headed south. I think the first stop was Salinas, KS. The next night was at the border of AR and TX (Texarkana).

It was during the second day of travel that Susan developed diarrhea. Etta had earlier told us that eating yogurt to stop this. So, we tried it, and it did.

The third day, we were exhausted as we made it all the way to Hattiesburg by late afternoon. Soon, it would be time for classes for another quarter.

The weather was bad as we came in to Mississippi at Vicksburg. For the next hour or so, I drove through heavy rain. By this time we had reached the southern part of Jackson. That is when we headed south on US 45 to Hattiesburg. Boy was I getting tired!

Fall classes

This quarter I tried an experiment with my class schedule. Why not have all of them at night? Why not indeed. So, I did.

This did not turn out as well as I had thought. Daytime classes meet three times a week, I was able to absorb this information during the day between classes. With night classes, I had to absorb everything from a single lecture. That is much more information at one time. It also seemed as if we did not cover as much during the quarter as the daytime classes did of the same subject. Oh, well, live and learn. I did not do this again!

At the end of this quarter, I had only one more quarter to complete the requirements for my master's. So far, I had approximately half A's and half B's. I needed a 3.5 grade point average, and that is what I had so far. Now, if I could manage to do this well for another quarter, all will be well.

While in college at the U of I, I had heard of graduate seminars. Then after getting into the graduate program in Hattiesburg, I learned that there was one offered in mathematics. The first quarter, I just sat in on the classes. With this experience, I decided to enroll in this seminar every quarter I took classes after this.

There was no book for it. The instructor handed out several sheets of mathematical statements. During class the students were to prove that the given statements were true. To do so required that we learn much more about the topic under consideration in each statement. This took a lot of deep thinking!

Kevin's health

Once back in Hattiesburg after our trip to Jackson Hole, I continued to study the things Etta had given me as well as

to get books on the subject. I also located a health food store in the city and visited it periodically. I became one of their good customers.

Then I began applying what I was learning about health to Kevin. We were still using the same pediatrician that we had begun to use the summer of 1973. What would he think of the research I had done? What would he think of the ideas put forth by the health food industry? I doubt that he had any positive feelings though.

The doctor was rather hard headed. Much of what he said was what we did, but he was dictatorial. (Yes, there were times when we needed to have someone dictate what we should do.) So, when it came to what vitamins I gave Kevin, I said nothing. I gave the ones I believed he needed based upon what Adell Davis had written.

Then again, I had access to medical journals in the library, so I was doing research other than what I read from the "health food" group. As a result of my research, I began giving Kevin vitamins, some in dosages way beyond the usual amounts. For example, he was taking 30,000 units of Vitamin A a day. The only reason he could take such a large amount was because of the disease he had.

Children with this disease had been given over 100,000 units of vitamin A per pound of body weight with no problems in studies that had been published in medical journals. (Patients with this disease do not store Vitamin A in the liver.) These were all decades old. The latest recommendation for nephrotic syndrome was 0.5 mg of prednisone per pound of body weight as a maintenance dose and 1.0 mg per pound of body weight when the disease was active.

There were additional pills that I gave him each day other than the prednisone: 300 IU vitamin E, 1 gram of something

that helped the body metabolize fats, and a multivitamin-mineral. There may have been some more...

During the spring of 1975, the doctor told us he wanted to see if he could reduce the amount of prednisone Kevin was taking. He told us how: reduce the dosage in half and monitor protein in his urine. This we did.

After two week, he called to ask how things were going, and I reported urine protein was negative. Then we reduced the dosage in half again. Same results during the next two weeks. We continued this routine until he was no longer taking none.

Unfortunately, the usefulness of fiber was not mentioned in the literature. I did not know the purpose that fiber served at the time. Constipation was always solved by taking a laxative was the way I had been raised. Why we did not give Kevin any of this when this problem developed, I don't know. I'm am pretty sure that we did not mention anything to our pediatrician either.

For some reason, Mildred wanted to keep Kevin for a while during this time. (I don't know what Susan and I were doing at the time.) Anyway, Mildred mentioned the problem to an old doctor. He recommended Haley's MO which contains mineral oil. She did and his urine protein almost immediately shot up to 4+ which is the highest level. This was the only time this had happened without him getting sick first.

This made me a bit more than really angry at the doctor. Maybe Kevin did need a lubricant to help him with his BM's, but mineral oil was not the thing to use. It really had no medicinal purpose at all.

What it did as near as I can tell was to absorb all of the vitamin A from his system and excrete it in a BM. (Vitamin A is dissolves in fat just as sugar dissolves in water.) Well, it was an old remedy before people learned the bad effects

this had. It would be two more years before he no longer needed to take prednisone.

Among other thing, I research mineral oil. That is when I learned about its uses and why it was not really good for any of them. There are much better and safer ways to stimulate a bowel movement than using it.

Tornado!

The weather was looking stormy — rain looked very likely. But I had a couple of classes this morning. So, I got on my bike and headed to the math building where both of my classes were held. Since there was a study room in the building, I did not have to leave it until after my eleven o'clock class. Even so, the weather continued to look worse.

For some reason, Kevin had remained at home that day, so he and Susan had been in our apartment together. Well she did not like bad weather, and what she saw outside the window was something that really bothered her. She did not really want to be alone the way things were looking.

She had made a friend in another apartment building some time in the past year. As time past and the weather got worse, she had become scared enough that she took Kevin with her to her friend's apartment. She got there before the storm broke which was good. Unfortunately, she did not take time to write me a note before she left.

As I got out of class shortly before noon, things looked really bad! I almost decided to remain in the building until the storm blew over, but I was concerned with Susan and Kevin. I knew they would be terrified. So, I forced myself to get on my bike and head to our apartment pumping as hard as I could. I really needed to get home!

I had not gone much more than a block or two when it began to rain. I kept on pumping the pedals. And then the rain became more intense: many more droplets and falling

faster. Ow, that hurt! Something was beginning to mix in with the rain. I realized suddenly I had been hit with some small hail. I kept on riding. In fact I was nearing the other end of our apartment building. I had to keep going.

But the hail, small though they were, were falling in larger quantities. This was beginning to hurt too much. By this time I was near the middle breezeway of our building, so I sought shelter under the stairs leading to the second floor.

At least I was not being hit with hail anymore. But I was very wet, the wind was blowing, and the temperature was dropping. I was getting very cold! Not long after I arrived at the breezeway, someone from a bottom floor apartments saw me out of their kitchen window. They invited me inside for which I was very grateful. I began to warm up just a little bit.

After a while, the storm broke, so I could continue on to our apartment. Obviously, the first thing I did was to get dried off. Then I began to worry about Susan and Kevin. Where were they? Well, they came in a little later no worse for wear. (I wish that I could say the same. I had marks on my skin from the hail for several days.)

Later I learned that a tornado had touched down about a mile east of us. A couple of church people were living in that direction, but they were not affected.

Graduation at USM 1975

With the winter quarter coming to a close, I had completed all of my course work for my degree: I had accumulated 36 semester hours. My grade point average was 3.5 which was the minimal requirement. So far, so good.

Sometime over the winter, my faculty advisor told me that I had to take an exam covering all of graduate courses I

had taken. This bothered me a little bit, but I did some review of my past courses before taking it. I passed. So, I would be in the spring graduation ceremony. That's nice!

(I continued to take courses during the spring and summer semesters which I planned to apply toward a doctoral degree.)

When I graduated from U of I, I was in Biloxi at the time of my graduation ceremony in June. So, I missed that one. But I was in Hattiesburg on this June day.

Mom, Dad, and all of Tom and Elaine's family came down for it which was very nice. Jennifer and Marianne were rather young, and Elaine was pregnant with Angela. It would have been better if they could have stayed for a day or so. (They arrived in the afternoon before graduation and left the next morning.) But both Dad and Tom were working people and the graduation was in the middle of the week. So, they did not have the time for a very long visit.

Memories of the ceremony: the 'sash' that went with the graduation gown, the long winded speaker who was a state official in Louisiana (boring!!!!), and the very short speech by the president of USM. It was less than 50 words. (I have no idea what the 'sash' was called.)

Graduation gowns were different for people getting master's and doctoral degrees from those getting a bachelor's. We had a sash that we wore with a colored stripe. Perhaps the color was indicating what college the person was graduating from. It also seems to me that the doctoral candidates had more stripes in their sash. (These are rather shaky memories though.)

Summer School

One of the magazines that Etta had recommended that I subscribe to was Prevention, and I did shortly after returning

to school. I found it to be very helpful, but I did not know yet just how up to day this magazine was.

The local TV station was an NBC network station. So, one July morning, I was watching the Today Show when they mentioned about some health effects that are good. This definitely caught my attention! Yet there was something that nagged me in the back of my mind. It seemed like I had heard something about this topic before.

Given the amount of information I had been stuffing in my brain, I trusted my brain. What I heard had to be something that I had read or heard before. So, I got out my stack of Prevention to see if it was in it. Sure enough, I found it. It was in the May edition! Gee, NBC, you sure are up to date with your information. I had just read what you report today, but I read it two months ago. Oh well.

One of the graduate math courses was Plane Geometry. Silly me, I thought that this was something more advanced than the high school course. It really was not! Well, I tried to keep from being board... (This was really a course for people teaching high school mathematics, especially plane geometry.)

My professor turned the tables in a way. Well call it a challenge on the final exam. She included a test question for extra credit with one caviot: it must be answered by any doctoral candidates. (I was the only one in the class.) I had no problem solving it.

Things were beginning to get better grade wise. Between the spring and summer quarters my grade point average was 3.85. Well, I messed up somewhere because of the eight courses I had taken, one of them was a B.

Home in Forrest

By this summer, it was obvious that we were not going to permanently live here. In fact, we had not really lived in it

for a year or more. This was against the rules of the Farmer's Home Administration. Besides the home owner's insurance required that we live in this house for the insurance to be good. Something had to be done and soon.

For a few months during the past year, we had rented the house for the amount we were paying for the mortgage. They were related to a family living across the street. But this did not work out, and they move to somewhere else.

And a couple of times we came up for some reason and spent the night. One time it was during the summer. Since we had had a cat for a while, there were fleas all over the place! Talking about flea bites: we had them all over our bodies. (Somehow we survived.)

Following someone's instructions, someone was found to buy our home during this summer. They basically took over the mortgage as we did not have enough equity to matter either way. So, that solved this problem.

Mr. Slaughter

He had a small store near us in Forrest, and I went to see him during this summer letting him know that I had gotten my MS degree. He was as pleased as I was. After we talked for a while, he took me into the clothing area. That is when he started laying out some shirts and ties.

I did not really know what he was doing. He finally got me to understand that he was letting me choose my graduation present from him. Oh! It was so nice of him. He was always special to me, strict but special.

Third teaching job: Gulf Coast 1975-1977

During the summer after graduation, I continued to take more graduate level courses so that I would have an income during the summer. I also spent a considerable amount of

time in the college placement office looking for employment. That is when I noticed a math position available in North Biloxi (an area across the "Back Bay" from Biloxi). I applied and was accepted for the position.

The placement office had a very, very long list of schools that were looking for teachers. One I noticed was not a school at all, well not in the usual sense. It was a penitentiary! Soon afterward, I was in the math building talking with some other graduate students. I mentioned what I had seen, and we began to make fun about this situation. For example, a teacher there would not have to worry about having the students' complete attention. (I suppose this is because the guards would make sure the convicts paid attention.)

Preparing to move back to Biloxi

In August, I went down to the coast looking for a place to live that was near the school. While there, the fuel pump stopped working. With the help of the Ruffins, I got a used fuel pump, which they had, wired into my car, and it was running again. I went by the school and met with the vice-principle and perhaps the principle. That is when the paperwork was signed. Then I headed back to Hattiesburg 70 miles away.

As the summer neared its end, Susan and I headed back to North Biloxi, and accomplished two things: we opened a local bank account, and signed a mortgage for a house that was within walking distance from the school.

This was a very stupid idea on our part. The student body was very unruly. Our house being near the school made it a target for their bad actions. While there was not that many problems the first year, we lost several windows in later years to students throwing rocks at them. They also egged the house with what they thought were rotten ones. This

was one time that I caught them in the act, and their parents made them wash the eggs off the following day after school.

We made another mistake on this trip: we had left Kevin at the center for retarded citizens all day. But then we were not thinking very well. The big problem was that the Hattiesburg area was under tornado warnings that afternoon, and we could not be contacted. Needless the head of the center was very displeased with our actions!

And I was not finished with making mistakes that day. It was this day that Susan and I signed for the house. They needed some money to complete the deal. So I wrote them a check on the new checking account which was yet to get its first deposit. This did not make the bank very happy either. We were back in North Biloxi within another day or so, and deposited money to cover that check. (The bank covered the check until we did which was very nice of them. Thereafter, I made sure that I always had more money in the account than the checks that were written on it.

I do not remember how we got Kevin set up for his schooling, but we did. Probably we talked with someone in the office and got things set up that way. I would walk him to school with me and take him to where he got on a bus to ride to the county seat in Pascagoula 30 miles away. (He loved this!) Then Susan would walk over to the school to pick him up in the afternoon since this was before my last class was over.

Teaching again

1975-1976

When I got my classroom assignment, it was in a temporary building across from the gym's side door which also had a soda machine. Furthermore, the coaches were responsible for the PE classes, but they did absolutely

nothing! The students were left on their own as in they sat in the gym the entire period without having anything to do.. Add that to their being on their worst behavior, this adds up to a very bad situation. Well, add that fact that I was somewhat timid when it came to discipline... (Enough said!) It was a disaster waiting to happen.

I was assigned to teach two classes of Plane Geometry and three classes of ninth grade general math. Neither group was interested in really learning very much. This was especially true of the ninth graders. I did have one exception: a blind student who somehow learned Plane Geometry backwards and forwards.

There was a time that I thought that at least part of the problem was the administration. When I arrived the fall of 1975, I had a master's plus 30 hours. I was the only one in the math department with this much education. The others would get their master's degrees the following summer. So, I thought I should have been given the advanced math classes. But no, the freshman football coach was a close friend to the principal, so he got them. I still think that I deserved teaching the advanced classes based upon education. **However**, the main problem was with me. The students would not have gotten a better education with me as the teacher than the coach. Perhaps it would have been much worse.

I was also known as the teacher that brought his own lunch. This obviously went back to our trip to Wyoming and our introduction to health foods. I was still determined to eat a healthy diet. Dried beans was an important part of it. So, every evening, I would make a thermos full of cooked dried beans. Then I would heat them up and place them into the thermos.

Before this, I had looked at some vacuum bottles to see what was available. I was a little concerned about the glass

lining when I ate out of the thermos. Then I found a wide mouth one that had a thick plastic coating on the inside. The wide mouth made it easier to eat food out of it. The plastic made it highly unlikely that the glass would break... Looks like it was just what I needed! So, I bought it, and used for quite a while.

Some of the students were surprised to see anyone do what I was doing. They even came over to congratulate me on "missing" the meals served in the cafeteria. Obviously, they did not like the food served there.

It was now February. Most of the things were not going very well for anyone. But the school chorus wanted to make some money for something they needed. So, the first of this month they began selling valentines for other students for 25¢ each.

One of members of the chorus was in my home room. So, she approached me about buying one. It was an intriguing idea, but the size they were selling were far smaller than what I wanted. So, I made a counter offer. I asked her, "What do you have that costs \$3.00?" During this day, she checked with the music teacher. They thought they could come up with something worth that much. So, I agreed, and she went to work with the help of her teacher.

It was far more than I had expected. She began with a 12x18 sheet of red construction paper. Then using a glue stick, she drew a heart on it. Sprinkling glitter on the glue was a very nice touch. Finally she wrote the poem on the paper inside the glittering heart. I made sure that the last line of the poem read, "Won't you please, forever be mine."

After school was out, I headed home with something Susan was not expected at all! So with a big smile on my face and my heart swelling, I handed her the valentine. I was well rewarded for my effort!

This was one of the times when I was doing something very special for Susan. This is one of the things that keeps a marriage going and the love light glowing. In a simple way, I was saying, "I love you," which is what a wife needs to hear and feel once in a while.

Church

I had been part of this church from summer 1965 to the spring of 1969. I was actively engaged in its activities. Yet, when we returned the fall of 1975, we were not really recognized very much at all. For several if not most of them, it was as if I had never been there before.

After one meeting, one member was having problems with his car starting. Everyone was checking with one another, but no one had a pair of jumper cables. No one thought to ask me. Finally I noticed that something was wrong so I ask what it was. When I was told, I promptly replied that I had what was needed. So, that took care of this problem, but it also pointed out a problem.

Kevin's Doctor

Because Kevin was still taking prednisone, we needed a doctor for him. Very likely one of the church members in Biloxi had suggested the Schmidt brothers. Richard was the pediatrician, and the other two brothers had other specialties. So this was really a family clinic. And Kevin would have no problem getting his monthly kidney medicine filled. If he had a cold, he could be treated.

Family Dentistry

I think we use the yellow pages to find a dentist. His office was in North Biloxi, so he would be very close. Besides, for this we did not have to down into Biloxi for this service.

He had recently graduated from dental school, and his wife had graduated as a dental hygienist. So, theirs was a

small office. They may have had a secretary, but that was about it.

Because of the prednisone, Kevin was developing some dental problems of his own. This medication had adverse effects on how calcium is used by the body. As a result, one of his permanent upper right teeth was causing a problem.

We did not see him until the end of the day. He examined the situation and decided that it was either pull the tooth or do a root canal. He would prefer the latter, and we agreed. It was better to try to save the tooth. It would take a shot to deaden the gum enough to be able to pull it. This was a big problem! How do we give Kevin the shot?

So, he began the root canal procedure without the shot. At first we had a problem holding Kevin down. While the rest of us were having this problem, his wife was using the suction to keep Kevin's mouth fairly dry. At least she was getting something done right.

Then she noticed something that saved the day. (Well it was really saved the evening as it was perhaps 7 PM before he finished the root canal.) She could keep Kevin occupied by using the suction to play with Kevin's tongue. He became so occupied that he did not notice what the dentist was doing. So, we left the office that evening with everything taken care of.

He became our family dentist. At least Susan and I were getting our teeth professionally cleaned yearly (or was it more often?).

1976-1977

There was not that much difference between the first and second year on the coast. I was still in a temporary building next to the side gym door. The students suppose to be having gym class, were sitting in the gym unsupervised. There were other students milling around the campus as

well. The soda machines were always an inviting place to congregate. Some of the teachers including me went to a school board meeting this year asking that something be done about the discipline problem at this school. Well they did clean house at the end of the year. Both the principle and vice-principle were not offered another contract, but neither was I.

My wife had become very friendly with one of the mothers in North Biloxi. And the time came Susan had to try to console her. It was on afternoon in which Susan and I were walking back from my school. A student on a motorbike was rather wildly driving in down our street. She said (actually yelled) some very angry things about him. Sometime later he had traveled further north to one of the I-10 interchanges where he was making figure 8's in the pavement. A car was going too fast to stop had hit and killed him.

Later in the evening we learned that the mother had just lost her son... He was the one riding very recklessly on his motor bike. He thought he knew what he was doing; he did not need to listen to any corrections others were saying or shouting at him...

The funeral was a few days later, and I visited the funeral home to show my mistakes. This almost shocked some of the other students. The boy that had died was one of the ones causing me the most trouble. (They told me so. If they had not seen me there, they would never have believed it.)

There was another tragedy this fall. Some of the football players had gone to a bridge north of us. They were taking turns jumping off the bridge into the water. Well, one driver did not like what they were doing. So, he deliberately ran into the group of them. Some may have been hit, but most if not all managed to jump off the bridge into the water. One of them when he came to the surface had blood running out

of his mouth. (He was already dead.) Others would have extensive hospitalization.

I did have a few bright spot this year though. The student that had been injured last fall at the bridge was out of the hospital and came back to school (he had broken bones in both legs). He was put into my classroom. As I mentioned, he was as wild as before the accident. In the end, he failed my basic math class for lack of learning anything.

Part of this class included an introduction to algebra. I taught the meaning of the simple equations contained in the book. It bugged me that no one really tried to understand what I was saying.

Then that summer he drove into my driveway. He had come to thank me for the insight I had given him about this very topic! He had just come from this class that he was taking in summer school. Something had clicked in his mind, and he suddenly "saw the light." Now this topic was very simple to him.

I was surprised that he had actually taken the time to come to my house to tell me! Maybe he was growing up. Maybe there was more to him than I had earlier thought. Hopefully, he used this lesson to apply to other areas and made something of himself.

Another time was when the math subject was graphs. I decide to change things around just a little bit. First I discussed the purpose of graphs: using coordinates to determine where a given dot is located. Once we got that understood, I gave them an assignment in which they used this information. They were to draw any figure of their choice on graph paper including points and straight lines between the points. Then they were to list the end points of every line in the drawing so that someone else could draw the figure on another graph sheet using the coordinates of the points. Everyone really got deeply involved in this.

One student who had problems doing anything right in my math class drew a very elaborate drawing with seeming several dozen lines (or more). It was a joy to me to see how he could really apply himself if he wanted to.

I wonder now whether this might have something to do with the visitor I had that summer thanking for something I had done in the class room. This exercise with graph paper teaches the students that they were capable of learning something new and apply it to something they had never done before. **They discovered that they had abilities.**

Various events while living on the coast

One might think that the three years or so that we spent in North Biloxi was a time to forget if all possible. In fact, my initial draft of this contained only a few paragraphs. But such was not the case when I take my time to look back on events during this period of time. These will not necessarily be in any particular order although there are some things that I can pin down at least to a given year.

I decided one spring to have a garden in the backyard. We had several pine trees in one side of it, so I started digging the other half of the backyard. What I did was dig up my telephone wire (utility wires in this area were all underground because of the periodic hurricanes the area experiences). But why the phone line would be approximately 6 inches below the surface of the ground? It seems that it should have been deeper. So, for a while, I had a lot of static on my phone line especially in wet weather until this problem was fixed.

The ground was not very fertile, and I did not learn enough about how Dad had used manure and leaves to enrich the soil. But we only had pine trees in the area, and they are not useful for this purpose at all (pine needles have

almost no fertilizer value.) So, I basically pretended to be a gardener.

Our bionic dog

At some point we got a small, but very energetic dog. In fact, I called it a bionic dog. The backyard had a four foot chain link fence, and it could jump high enough to see over the fence. (His head cleared the top of it.) Many times I saw him do this while standing next to the fence!

He was also a very fast runner and loved to catch squirrels which bothered our next door neighbor. She did not like him killing them. Normally, the squirrels would go from tree to tree by going from branch to branch. But some of them tried to do this on the ground. Very seldom did one travel the distance of ten feet between the trees without the dog catch it.

One day, he was barking at something that was at the edge of the concrete patio out back. So, I went out to see what he was barking at. When I spoke, my wife wondered what in the world I was talking about. All that I had said was, "Where is the other one." The dog had cornered a small crab which had lost its right pincher some time before. I could see a new pincher beginning to grow. I think I may have moved the crab to an area where it was safe from our dog.

When we moved from North Biloxi, we gave our dog to Susan's Uncle Johnny Ward. Later he reported that it had gotten too close to a bull, and it was faster than he was: it gored and killed him, sad to say.

Citizen Band Radio (CB)

This was another one of my electronic toys. But it was even more of a toy for Susan. It gave her something to do during the day while Kevin and I were in school. She was known as the "Susie Q" to many of the truckers that monitored channel 19 as they drove on US 90 heading east

or west. (I was known as Euclid.) She also talked to a large number of people who lived in the area as well. This included the mother who lost her son in the motorcycle accident mentioned above.

I began my experience with a CB in our car. This included an antenna which was attached by a strong magnet to the top of the car. I had a frame designed to hold the CB which I attached under the dashboard. It also had a place to put the microphone.

I would use it when traveling. We also used it when going to and from Susan's parents. It seemed a little strange to me, but Susan would spend the first part of the trip (either way) talking on the CB. Then she would tire of this and want it to be turned off. Me? I would have it on most if not all of the time when she was not in the car with me.

At first, I rigged a power supply to provide my CB unit with 12 volts. (I had installed it into the car so that it could be removed whenever I wanted.) I also bought an antenna (27' tall), 2 wires, five 6 foot stacking poles. So, I then had a mast that put the top of the antenna just under 60'. The two wires were attached to the bottom of the antenna and something connected into the ground which kept the antenna stable when the wind was blowing. I also fastened the mast to the roof to keep it from falling over. (Once in a while, I did have to take the mast apart when the wind was scheduled to be fairly strong.)

Once I had the parts, I connected them. So, now we could talk to others here from our kitchen table and me in the car. Not only that, but we could do this with people who lived farther away than I could reach from our car. (The taller the antenna, the farther the broadcast will go.) I "sort" of did something wrong with the CB unit and got into some trouble later.

The CB could transmit and receive on channels 2 - 40. Of these, channel 9 was reserved for emergency traffic only. As a result a group of people who called their group REACT monitored channel 9 reporting any emergencies to the appropriate authorities.

I joined this group and would usually monitor the channel between 5 and 6 AM. Most of the time, I was listening to nothing. But once in a while, it was another matter.

One of them was rather comical to me but not to the trucker who reported it. He was driving east on US 90 when he saw what looked like a body that was partially buried in the sand! I called the police and they sent someone out to check it. Turns out that someone had decided to get some sleep on the sand. They partially buried themselves to keep warmer. So, no one was hurt or dead, but I think that the truck driver was certainly wide awake for a while for sure.

Another morning, I got a call from a boat about 20 miles south in the ocean. (While he may have had a amplifier to boost his signal, a CB signal will travel a long way out on the water.) He had heard a distress call somewhere near where he was, so he reported it. So, I called the coast guard and gave them as much information as I could which was not much. It turned out that they had gotten a similar report earlier and had sent a cutter out to investigate it. Up to that point they did not find anything. Was it a false alarm? I don't know. It might have been. They did get calls like this once in a while when nothing is found.

Before I got the base unit, I was doing something at the back of the CB unit for my car in our kitchen and I accidentally damaged a zener diode which controlled the power output at the antenna. With it working, I would transmit 6 watts of power. However, with it damaged, I was transmitting closer to 15 watts. To make matters worse, the couple across the street had a metal roof with a TV antenna

on top of it. This excess power was bouncing off the roof and directly to the antenna!

So, she complained to the Federal Communications Commission. (I really did not blame her!) I was visited by a fellow CBer, sent by the FCC. He did some tests and explained the situation. Then he told me what had to be done about it. So, I did what I was told. This partially solved the problem.

Sometime after this, I bought a CB base station which I connected to my antenna. Susan was sure happy about this! Now, even while I was away from home, she could chat on the base station. Also, when I got back within range, I would let her would know I was OK and on my way home. This made life a little easier on her.

I continued to use my toy and do some experimenting. I read of a type of antenna that I could make which was suppose to improve how far I could transmit and receive. So, I built one. I never did find out how far I could get out, but one morning I heard another CB transmit from about 50 miles away using channel 9 (the emergency channel).

Channel 19 was the "trucker channel" which everyone else used as well. So, there was a lot of background noise on it. My meter would usually read 2 or 3 because of static in the afternoon which seems to have been normal for this time of the day. However, when I connected the experimental antenna to my CB base station, the reading would drop to 1. (The antenna filtered out much of the noise.)

Not only did I belong to REACT, but we also were a part of a local CB group. One meeting that I remember had a dance. (I don't remember any other dances though.)

One time when the music began to play, a lady walked up to me and took my hands in hers. Instinctively, I broke free from her grasp to which she said, "I only wanted to

dance with you." My reply was, "I only dance with my wife." Besides even after more than 10 years of marriage, I was rather nervous about getting that close to someone other than my wife. (I absolutely enjoyed being as close to my wife as I could get!) I am still that way more than 35 years after this incident.

Sometime during the summer, I learned about sheets of a silver like material that could help reduce air conditioning bills. Likely it would also reduce heating bills. It was a film that was applied to the inside of the window. It greatly reduced the amount of sunlight inside the building and heat leaking through the glass. (Visibility outside was limited though.)

I really liked the idea, so I bought and installed it on the large window in the living room. I was surprised at the difference it made. Before the sunlight would be quite warm on the interior living room wall. Afterward there was very little heat from sunshine in that same area!

It basically made the window a one way mirror. When the sun was shining we could see outside fairly well. It was impossible to see inside. At night with the lights on, the situation was reversed. People could see inside, but we could not see outside. Even so, the bedroom next to the living room did not have this film on the window. So, I could see out quite clearly at night. During the day, I did not go into this room: it was too hot. (Obviously, I kept the door closed to this bedroom during the day.

My communion with God came at various times when I was laying out in a lounge chair in the back yard. Like in Champaign, I could strongly feel His presence. I felt a peace flow over me. It was so relaxing!

1978 Medicals

It was in January 1978 when Kevin had his last bout with nephrotic syndrome. He had gotten sick enough to require

one night in the hospital but got quickly better. He had been taking a maintenance amount of prednisone, and we increased this to the full 1 mg per pound of body weight. Then in early February, we thought he had been exposed to chicken pox which can be very serious if not deadly for anyone taking this medicine.

So, the doctor had us to immediately stop giving it to him and monitor him very closely for a while. Even this was a potentially a very serious situation: quitting cold turkey. There are all kinds of side effects doing this. Fortunately, he did not get the chicken pox and the nephrotic syndrome did not appear again. It appeared that he had finally outgrown it.

Kevin had been first hospitalized with this seven years earlier. It was while he was in the Intensive Care Unit that one of the nurses working in it gave us some hope once the last crisis was over. She had had this disease when she was a child about 50 years earlier. So, even from the beginning there was hope that he would someday outgrow it.

Sometime later in the year, our neighbor lady was having some problems with her washer. So, I volunteered to help fix the problem. Something had clogged up the movement of water through it which I fixed. In the process, I got grease under my fingernails. Brilliant me, I saw a pimple (or something similar on the back of my left hand and busted it with my greasy thumbnail. This resulted in blood poisoning. (I think they call it septic now.) So, I had to see a doctor.

Because it might require lancing, I had an appointment with the pediatrician at our doctors' clinic. (He was the only doctor there who was licensed to do minor surgery such as this.) He looked at it, decided that it did not require lancing and gave me an antibiotic shot and a prescription.

Ever since that time, I have not required an antibiotic except for one time: the dentist used an antibiotic one time

to reduce the inflammation in the gum next to a lot of plaque that had accumulated because of poor dental hygiene (not flossing at night).

Hitting bottom

This period of time when I sold insurance was a terrible time for me and my family. I had a very low income which meant that our assets kept getting lower and lower. At the same time, the bills kept getting larger and larger. It is a time that I would much rather not think about let alone write about. I was as close to my wit's end October 1978 as I could ever get. I had to do something. I was getting desperate.

But this did not mean that I was without God. He was present and let me know it at times. It was a similar time as when I was in Champaign going to college. Times were bad, but He went through them with me. Even so, I got discouraged from time to time.

What surprises me now is that our marriage survived this time, but it did. So, I attribute its survival to God's grace and mercy.

And yet life was not all bad. Other marriages may have faced similar circumstances and fallen apart. What might be at least part of the reason why?

Our love life had to be part of it. Even during this time we would regularly make love because that is what we wanted to do. Twice a week was the norm with sometimes three times a week. Each did what was known to please the other. This meant of course that our problems had to be put aside for a while.

How we slept each night had to be important as well as in sleeping very close together. As my Mom observed on time

we were visiting my parents, we only used half of the bed when we slept.

It is known as the spoon position. Both of us would be on their side facing the same of the edge of the bed with their bodies touching (back to front. When I was behind her, I would put my arms around her and cupping her lower breast in my hand. Often she would hold this hand in hers keeping my hand in place. In simple words we spent our nights cuddling.

When she was behind me, I could feel her breasts against my back. Like me she would cup my lower breast in her hand. I loved to hold this hand up close to that breast. What a way to drift off to sleep!

Could you say that we were shutting out the world and our problems? I really think so. Yes, there were worries, but there were also the joys which we shared with each other as a married couple.

Looking for work

One of the first things I did was to apply to the ship yard at Pascagoula. But when they discovered how much education I had, they would not hire me. I was over qualified for the position I wanted and apparently under qualified for something requiring additional education. I couldn't find any employment opportunities in the newspaper either.

My ability to sell

Finally, I turned to selling insurance. This only made our financial situation worse and worse. The first company was a disaster. It involved going door to door selling policies that provided an income when a person was in an automobile accident. This lasted from summer to November.

First I had to get a license to sell them. This means that I had to read a thick book issued by the Mississippi

Commissioner of Insurance. Then I had to pass a rather rigorous exam. With my education, piece of cake huh? It really was. But this was not the problem; getting people to buy the policies was.

Then came the training, such as it was. We had our speech we were to give, and I memorized that as well. But it is another thing to say these things with the appropriate emotions. This required that I have total belief in the product I was selling. Well... I didn't. So, even though I had limited help from the company, I was my worse enemy.

Then I noticed an ad for the Combined Insurance Company with headquarters in Chicago. They had either a two or was it three week training class before putting their agents out in the field. So, I took it. They flew me to Chicago and back. There were things that I learned from this training that have stayed with me ever since. Did this improve my ability to sell to others? Not really because I still did not have enough confidence in myself. Well there was one day that I had a glimmer of that confidence, but only that one day. (My commissions for that day were much higher than any day that I sold for this company.)

Since I would be out of state, Susan and Kevin were going to stay with her mother. As a result, I decided I ought to fly out of Meridian when going to Chicago for training. It was the beginning of December, 1978.

I had never been to Chicago before, but I knew that it would be cold! So I packed the warmest clothes I had for the trip. This included the top coat that was a part of my Air Force uniform. (I took my vitamins along for health reasons.) I was also given a book to take with me, but they did not tell me why. This would be obvious when classes begun.

So with the ticket provided by the Combined Insurance Co., I went to Key Field on a Sunday to begin my journey to Chicago. After changing planes in Atlanta, GA, I headed to

O'Hare. There I got transportation to the hotel where I would spend the night over the next few weeks.

Monday morning we got on buses that took us to the company headquarters where the training was conducted. Once we got there, we had breakfast. (All three meals were provided there.) Then it was time for our training to begin.

A great deal of emphasis was placed upon positive thinking and emotions. So each class began with expressing them. We were given phrases that we were to repeat with great feeling. There were morals in these sayings that were important. We began with "When you act enthusiastic, you feel enthusiastic!" We would repeat this over and over again while acting more enthusiastic each time.

What do you know! This actually works. This really surprised me. As we went through repeating this sentence with feeling, I could the changes in my emotions. It was a start.

Here are some of the others. "What the mind of man can conceive and believe, he can achieve!" (W. Clemment Stone added something important to this statement. What a person conceives and believes must be in accord with the laws of God and man.) "Do it now!" (This was obviously pointed to the need to overcome procrastination.)

The book I had been given was the autobiography of W. Clemment Stone, himself. (*The Success System that Never Fails*) Everything in it told of his rise from insurance salesman to his creating and building the Combined Insurance Co. It discussed the lessons he had learned and then applied to doing this.

After doing the exercises to get us in a more positive mood and energized, we were told to get this book out. At the same time they passed out a 5x7 notebook. We were about to be taught how to study this book.

It is called the 1357 method. The book is divided into small sections reading one each day. For each of these there is a page in the notebook that contains four questions which are to be answered. The reading and question answering are to be completed in 13 minutes and 57 seconds. The most important part is that the answers had to be answered in a personal way.

The questions fell into four categories: inspiration, activity knowledge, know-how, and action. What did I read that I find to be important to me? (Inspiration). What does this mean to me? (activity-knowledge) How can I use this? (know-how) Specifically how will I use this? (Action).

These four questions takes a thought that comes to mind while reading, defines it, determines how it can be used, and commits oneself to actually using it in a practical way. This is one good way to learn a subject and is far superior to memorizing it.

W. Clement Stone was in Florida when he saw this being used in a Sunday School class. So, he applied this to his own situation. It was important to him (Inspiration). This could be used by his agents to learn more about selling insurance (activity knowledge). He could send a positive thinking book to his agents every 3 months to be read by them using this method. He could also provide his new agents with one or more of these books to get them started. He would have to search for the books that would provide the help his agents needed.(Know-how). He came back home and began doing what he set out to do. (Action) Since this began, he also wrote a book about himself which was used as one the initial books given to agents.

Reading positive thinking books

The classroom was the beginning point for applying positive thinking to how we as insurance agents direct our lives. We did not finish reading the book and filling in the

notebook during the time we were in training in Chicago. We were expected to complete this project some weeks afterward while working in the field.

After the class was over, we were all sent home with one more book, *Think and Grow Rich*. (Author: Napoleon Hill) We were to apply the 1357 plan to this book as well. In this case, we were to divide this book into sections, make a workbook for this project like the notebook they had given us.

(W. Clemment Stone co-authored another book with Napoleon Hill: *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude*).

Then every quarter of the year, we were sent another book to study. This was the first time I had ever had a course in how to learn from reading a book that was close to this. This was not for learning facts but for getting information from a book that can be applied to life experiences. And when people learn to do this, their lives can change rather quickly.

The emphasis was upon a positive mental attitude. There are also other terms such as self-esteem, self-worth, etc. Among the Primitive Baptist, these terms are not looked upon as good qualities. But that is because the concept behind them is not understood. And when someone misunderstands something, they are more likely to say things that are not true. Perhaps putting the emphasis upon having faith in God. We do things in a godly manner depending upon His grace to help us accomplish it. He provides.

For example, when David fought Goliath, he was the only one in the battlefield that had a positive attitude. He knew what God could do through him. No one else knew what God could do through them; otherwise, one of them would have already destroyed the giant long before David arrived.

For a follower of Christ, positive thinking is about this very thing: what God does through him for his own good and the good of others. He does everything through the grace that God gives him. He is not doing the great works, but it is God's grace that is with him. Yes, we are all sinners. Yet it through God's grace that we rise far above our nature of sin.

1 Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

The children of Israel that came out of Egyptian bondage were examples of negative thinking with few exceptions. Even though they had heard that God was going to bring them out of their misery, they constantly murmured and complained. The only thing that they seemed to be sure about was that God was not going to provide them with the good He had told them He would. Contrasted with this was the positive attitude of Joshua.

Moses had been on Mt. Sinai for 40 days being given things that Israel needed to know. By this time, many of the people were sure that Moses had died somewhere on the mountain perhaps burned in the fire they had seen on it. So, he would not be able to lead them anywhere. They began to look for another way to get where they wanted to go. They even reverted to creating the molten calf as their god that they should worship and follow.

Where was Joshua during this time? He was at the base of Mt. Sinai patiently waiting for Moses whom he was sure would return. Yes, the first person Moses saw when he stepped of Mt. Sinai was Joshua.

As I look back on this now, I see that I never did really use the lesson being taught with this method. I did not search out what I needed to know to produce the results I wanted. So, I did not learn the things I needed to do, decide when I was going to do them, nor putting the learning into action. I would begin to do this later, and it took even a longer time to realize it.

Back to training at headquarters

Cold was a very good description of the temperature with it remaining below 20 and sometimes below 10. And then again Chicago is known as "the windy city." So the wind chill factor was even lower still. My overcoat did manage to keep me warm though.

There were two buses taking us to the headquarters and two bringing us back. In the latter case, one came back at 5:45 and the second one came back at 6 PM. So, we did not have to hurry eating our evening meal.

But there was an exception: the day a training class ended. One of the buses brought that class back leaving only one bus there. So we all had to be ready to go at 5:45. If we weren't, we had to get back to the hotel at our own expense. They would not send anyone to get us! (This was always on a Friday.)

There was one day (not a Friday) that I and some others decided to wait for the 6 PM bus. But it did not show up like it should have. None of us liked the idea of having to shell out good money because someone else goofed up. Well, one person called the hotel to complain. He convinced them that the bus had not properly waited for us. Besides we did not have any warning about both buses (if there had been two of them) leaving early). So, they relented and sent a bus. That was a close call!

Also during the week I got a call from my Dad who wanted to know how were things going. He had also been in

contact with some Primitive Baptist in the Chicago area. They had agreed to pick me up the next Sunday that they had services. He had also given them my phone number, so they would be calling me to make contact.

I got the call and was ready when they came by to pick me up. When we got there, I immediately recognized the minister, Elder Raymond Webb, from west central Illinois. I had known him for about 20 years. We had a good visit before church.

One day we got a huge surprise in class, a "visitor." It was the founder and owner, W. Clemment Stone! That day we were suppose to recite the sales pitch which we were to use out in the field. He was both critical of how we spoke this and well as encouraging.

While he only chose to listen to some of the class, one of that "some" was me! He was a little intimidating to say the least. One thing became very clear to me as I stood beside him: he cared!

Then Friday, Dec 22nd arrived and I would be returning home. I left for Atlanta in the afternoon but would not arrive at Meridian until about 9:30 PM. I had asked Susan to be there when I got there, and arrangements were made for this to happen. But, the plane was late, as in an hour late. I was very worried about the situation and so was Susan. (I did not think we left Atlanta late, so I did not understand why we were late.)

Anyway, I had another book to read, *Think and grow Rich*. So, I began to read it just to see what it contained. This occupied my time until my nervousness about being late stopped me.

I would later take the time to divide this book into reading sections. (Or had someone in the company done

this for me?) Then I began studying it using the 1357 method.

But I finally got off of the plane and was extremely glad that Susan was there. After I got my luggage and paid the parking fee for my car, we headed for Union, MS. Very likely, her Mom was also concerned about the time.

The following week was Christmas, so it would be the beginning of the year before I would be out in the field. We had Christmas in Union this year.

Trying to sell life insurance

Then I headed to where my first assignment was. Company policy was that we stay in the area where we worked for a given week. So, I had to get a motel for the week.

Each morning, the agents working this area got together with the manager over this area. By the time of the meeting we were expected to have read our daily assignment and filled out the page in the notebook. Discussion concerned the things that we would be doing this day. With that we headed out into the field.

There were quite a few people from the Gulf Coast area in my class in Chicago. Some of them had either "washed out" or volunteered to leave on their own. Those, who had graduated, were divided into several areas of the state of Mississippi. Each area manager was responsible for the new agents assigned to them. Also, some of the other area managers were sent to area managers with new trainees.

On each trainee's first day out, he/she went with the manager (or his assistant) to observe how he sold life insurance policies. Possibly on another day, I did the talking, and the manager did the critiquing.

In future weeks, I worked the southeastern part of Mississippi. How much of this time Susan was back in North

Biloxi, I don't know. I do know that I was not really doing as well as I should have.

Within a couple of months or less, I wound up being assigned to the Southwest part of the state; the area manager was Sam Warren. (He sold \$1,000,000 of life insurance every quarter. It would have been nice if this would have rubbed off on me. Maybe not.)

He lived in Brookhaven, and I found an apartment there for my family. So, we moved there not long before spring, 1978. My sales were not what the state manager wanted.

I had been working north of Brookhaven on this day. The weather was stormy as I headed down I-55 toward home with the radio on. That is when I heard a tornado warning. A tornado was heading directly toward this highway! I did not like the idea of driving down it where the tornado was crossing! So, I exited at a town about 30 miles north of Brookhaven. I could hear sirens going off as I got into town. I stopped in a business to ask about a shelter. There was one in the basement of a church, so that is where I headed. Quite a few people did as well. When the all clear came, I headed on home, but not before I called Susan to tell her that I was OK. This way I knew that she was too.

Once again, she was scared of bad weather, and we were on the second floor. But someone in the apartment below us invited her and Kevin into her apartment. So, she had someone to calm her nerves at least a little bit.

Sometime during this spring, I had put Susan and Kevin on a bus to Union for some reason. I worked out of Tylertown this week, so I stayed at a motel there this week. We had icing problems, and come Friday, we all decided to call it quits a day early. I had a couple of things to do, so I remained around for a while.

I had not checked the tread depth on my tires, but it turned out there was not much of any. Let me see, the roads

had ice on them, and my tires were almost slick... This was definitely a bad mixture, and my conclusions about the situation were even worse.

To start with, I was driving down the road when I began to sliding around in a circle. Well, I had never practiced doing what I needed to do then. As I continued to spin, I hit a rural mail box and came to a halt. I got back on the highway and headed in a different direction when I should have checked back into the motel...

Later I was going up a hill when another car was coming down it. In the front seat was a male driver; his wife was holding a baby in the passenger side. He lost control and was heading toward me. I kept moving closer and closer to my edge of the road. Too late! We met near my edge of the road. A deputy sheriff came out, declared that it was not anyone's fault, told us to contact our insurance company to repair the damage.

The only problem was that I could not afford the insurance. I had it towed into town, and got a motel. The next morning I was going to take a bus from this town to Union.

This got worse in the morning. I only have enough money to ride the bus most but not all of the way. I think it was Carolyn who drove her Dad's car to get me.

And then I made more mistakes. The only thing I was thinking about was getting a vehicle so that I could earn some more money. The only thing was that I was not making enough money to pay for the car. I rented a car in Meridian anyway. Getting myself into every deeper financially.

Within the next couple of months, Mildred had the pulpwood cut on the land that she and her daughter's owned. So Susan got her share of the money. It wound up being used to buy a car.

And to make matters worse, I had to be forced to return the rental car! No, I was not really thinking at all.

And then there was not enough money to pay the rent... So, we were evicted. I managed to move our furniture to a farm house close to Tylertown that I had been given permission to use. No electricity and no phone. We are still sinking.

With the help of church people in Tylertown, we got help moving from this house to an apartment in Tylertown itself. They even helped with the rent, gas and electricity. But before any of this was paid, we had to use the camp stove to cook meals and heat water for a while. Susan and Kevin were on the bus to Union to remain there until things got straightened out.

We were definitely down at this point, but things would still get worse into February 1979.

Manufacturing job

By October 1978, my finances were becoming dire. It was obvious that I could not make a living for my family selling insurance. Besides, I was just going through the motions when I made sales pitches to people. I really did not believe in what I was doing. I had no enthusiasm in my voice at all. Boring presentations produce bad results!

So by the first of November, I checked the local employment office for potential jobs in the area. This is when I discovered that a local plant was in need of new employees to work on a final assembly line putting together garden tractors with the Ford logo. So, I applied.

Pre-employment test

The first thing I had to do was to take this test. This included some physical dexterity and well as a written test. The test results astounded me! Of the 200 occupations the test evaluated for, I was highly qualified in 10 of them. Of

the other 190, I would have to work at it, but I could do much more than an adequate job on any of them. So, I was hired.

With test results like this, I often wonder why I have not been accepted for what I can do. Because I think in a different way than others does not mean that I do not know what I am doing or saying. Is it because I don't respect myself that others don't respect me? Or, might it be that I need to stand up for myself? But when I say something, others need to take the time to discover whether I know what I'm talking about before doubting me.

Because of where I would be working, all people had to wear safety glasses, no exceptions. (The company paid for the eye exam and the safety glasses.) So, at least this was not an extra expense that I had to bare.

I started working in Brookhaven around the time that we moved into the apartment in Tylertown. My work schedule was 10 hours a day six days a week. We got paid on the Friday following the pay period or it might have been a week after this. (One or the other) So, I had to leave fairly early to drive the 20 or so miles to reach the plant at 6 AM. I clocked out at 4:30 PM and drove back home.

I'm not sure how, but Susan contacted the school system about Kevin. They had a program for people like him, so she was at home for a while each day alone. It was likely near five or later when I got home. At least we had the evenings and Sundays together.

After a while, she began to have problems with the owner of the apartment. So we moved again. Somehow she had met a lady who lived in one side of a converted chicken house. I suppose it was cheaper, but I don't know that this was the best thing to do. Nor did I have any idea of what else to do...

Living in converted chicken coop

The church people again helped us to move our furniture. (This was almost as low as we could get!)

We still had the freezer that we had gotten sometime in the past, but there was no refrigerator. So we improvised. We filled milk jugs with water and froze them. Then we put them into our ice chest to keep things cool. For laundry, our neighbor on the other side of this chicken house let us use theirs. (We got well acquainted during the time we lived there.)

The real problem was heat during the winter. First of all, there was no insulation and only space heaters. But we made do. Finally, I had some money in the bank, and my rent was about \$30 a month, I think.

I was assigned a station next to the end of the assembly line. They showed me what I was suppose to do and then put me to work.

By the time that the tractors got to me, they were already put completely together and sitting on the bottom of the crate. I began the crating process.

The front and rear axles had to be banded to the bottom of the crate. I was also told to check the play in the tractor wheel. (I don't know why; any that I sent back because of excess play came back without any changes. I also got fussed at for sending any of them back.)

It did not take very long for me to get good doing this. Well, my supervisor did not think so, it seems. He would fuss and threaten to fire people if things did not pick up. Of course this got to me and started to worry me. Well, he never did really do any thing. Some times I helped the person after me to finish crating tractors. He fussed about that at least one time. Regardless of what he said about

this, the line was not slowing down because of our working together sometimes.

I had a repetitive job. With my intelligence, why didn't I get board quickly and start making mistakes? This often happens to most people with higher intelligence. But it all has to do with one's attitude. I wanted to do a good job. This means that the axles had to be banded to a certain tension. So, I paid close attention to how I banded each tractor down. This meant that I closely observed each banding that I did. Each one of these was a new time. With each one, I got the feeling: I did this right! So, it ceased to be repetitive.

There were a couple of Sundays that they wanted to run the line. Fortunately it was not mandatory, so we went to church instead. I really don't know why they even did this. The report I got the following Monday was that the ones that came to work were mostly under the influence of alcohol. I definitely did not want to be around them.

I don't know if I brought my lunch or not. I really don't think so. That is because I remember buying some canned stew in the lunch area several times. There was a microwave in this room that would heat it up for me.

The longer I worked, the colder the temperature was outside. Unfortunately, there was no heat where I worked. In time, I wore gloves while I worked; I wore a jacket and perhaps a stocking hat.

All of this resulted in my getting a cold, and I was running a low fever. For this I concocted a kickapu drink. To make sure that I did not get dehydrated, I brought a 2 quart thermos daily (or something to hold that much water). When I began running a fever, I added a gram of vitamin C tablets into the water along with some lemon juice. After three or four days of doing this, I got over the cold. (Needless to say, I got teased about this concoction.)

Laid off December 31, 1978

As December progressed, the company got closer to their goal of garden tractors, so they began to lay off people. The last ones hired were the first ones laid off. For a while, the assembly line continued to run. Then they were only running it some of the days. Well, during the off days I was sent to another part of the building to do some other task.

Some of the initial tasks were to stamp out some of the metal structures of something they manufactured. Another time I was on an assembly line for lawn mowers.

My turn did not come until the last day of the year which was on a Saturday. It sure does seem strange to give a pink slip on Saturday afternoon to someone after they worked 60 hours that week! But they did.

Everyone laid off was told to apply for unemployment insurance. Others likely did. I had one problem. I had to have worked for three months to qualify. My work for Combine Insurance did not count. I did not really have very much money put aside. So, we were facing a financial meltdown.

This time I turned to the county welfare office. I was told that I did not qualify for welfare either. But with Kevin's mental problems, he qualified for SSI. It was not much (~\$324) plus my last week's pay check (~\$165), but it did tide us over.

To make matters worse, the car refused to start. Let me see. We had very little money left. We definitely did not have enough to pay a mechanic to fix my car. Well, I did walk to the local Chevrolet dealership to see what was possible. The parts department told me it sounded like the starter needed to be replaced. He also told me that I could do this on my own. All I had to do was to unscrew three long screws which loosened the starter. The cable to the battery had to be removed from the starter. Then it was a matter of doing the opposite to attach the starter to the motor again.

So, I thanked him, bought the starter, and headed back to the chicken coop. It was in January, so it must have been a cold day. It definitely was that. Next, I crawled under the car and began doing what he had told me to do.

It took a couple of hours for me to accomplish what I was told. Meanwhile Susan was inside worrying about a lot of things. I was laying on the cold, cold ground for a long time. That could not be good. I had spent good hard cash on the starter, and she was sure that I would not be able to switch the good one for the bad one.

After a while, I thought that I had done it right. So, I crawled into the car and turned the key. It started! Obviously, Susan was thrilled when she heard the car start. So, this was one less thing to worry about. We still were not out of the financial situation I had dug us into though.

Every weekday morning after being laid off, I spent the morning in the employment office looking for work. For the most part, there was not anything available. It got very discouraging to say the least. Then one possibility came open: a sales position in McComb which was 20 miles or less from my home.

So, I arranged for an appointment and drove to McComb for it. It was a small store run by a woman. Her business was good enough that she thought it was time to hire someone to help her. Well she was disappointed when she saw me. What she really wanted to do was to hire another woman. Of course, this was discrimination, pure and simple. But she said that she was sorry, but she could not hire me. Furthermore, if I raised any objections to what she was doing, she would deny it.

Actually, she did me a great favor although I could not see this at the time. (I wanted a job very, very much.) The pay for this position was minimum wage. Just how was I

suppose to buy the gas needed to drive that far as well as to provide for my family? The obvious answer was: I could not.

So the next morning, I was back in the employment office again. When asked about the interview, I simply told her that the interview did not work out and nothing more. She never knew the real reason.

Meanwhile, our neighbor in the converted chicken coop had gotten a puppy. Well Susan had to have one also, so she did. It was a poodle of some kind. We should have had a vet give it its shots, but we did not. It also needed some quality puppy food, but I am not sure that is what we fed it either. With the very limited funds we had, we really could not give it what it needed.

Dry cleaning job

A company in Sulphur, LA, (Supervisory Services, Inc.) ran many One Hour Martinizing stores throughout the state of Louisiana including one in Bogalusa, LA. This one was a small plant doing about \$1000 a week. The company was very unhappy with the way this store was run, so they decided to replace him. (Financially, it had been running in the **red** for a while and would continue to do so.)

Preliminaries

One of the company's vice-presidents was sent to McComb to the employment office to interview applicants. (His nickname was *Frenchy*.) Apparently, it was close enough to Bogalusa that a move there would not be a hardship. It was also far enough away that word would not get back to the present manager. Frenchy was only going to be there one day.

I had already been to the employment office checking on jobs this morning, but this opportunity had not shown up yet when I left. But the lady running this office saw it later in the day and immediately thought of me.

As the end of January was coming to a close, the lady from the employment drove down to our home which was totally unexpected. In fact, she was not suppose to do this at all. But she really wanted to do everything she could to get me a job. A job opening had opened up, and this would not wait until the following morning. So, she took a chance.

I quickly told her that I was very much interested. So, she let the McComb employment office know that I would be there in an hour or so.

I was a different person than I was when I got the job in Brookhaven. Specifically, my attitude was much different. I had learned new skills; I had gained confidence in my

abilities. I could begin to dream more and better. In other words, I was finally ready to do what would be required of me in this new job. (Well, I had to get the job first.)

So, I quickly bathed, shaved, etc., and drove to McComb...

I met the company vice-president and we chatted for a while. He certainly had quite a few questions. Apparently he liked what he had heard because he asked one more question. "Are you a Christian? (Now this is **not** what a person should be asked, but he did anyway.

My answer was not exactly what he was expecting. I said, "Observe my actions for a while and then you tell me." (Where did that come from? I had never answered that way before when someone asked me.) I could have answered the question, "Yes." But being a Christian is a way of life. A person's actions answers the question much better and more accurately than the single word a person might use to answer it verbally. Besides someone who is not one could very easily say "yes" even though this would be a lie. Who would really know? God would, and so would those who observes the person's actions over a period of time.

Where did I get the confidence to say this let alone say it in the way that I did? This was completely out of my character! I had not talked this way to the lady who had interviewed me for a sales position not all that long before.

In the end, I have to say that God provided me with the courage that I needed. Oh, I had three years of experience in the student union cafeteria as a college student. Over that period of time, I had been given more and more responsibilities. So, counter work should not be that much of a problem. Neither should the paperwork.

There were all of the positive thinking books that I had studied up to this point. In addition, there was the test I had

to take to be eligible to work at Brookhaven. I was told that I could do quite well in any of the 200 jobs that this test covered. Besides I was quite satisfied in how well I did my job. I daily saw that I was doing the things very well that I had been assigned to do. (Well I would have liked to have been faster especially on the different tasks I was given near the end of my employment.)

And then there was all the time I spent ironing my clothes as a child. While obviously, using pressing equipment was not the same as moving a hot iron over clothes, the principles were still the same. Besides, I had recently proven that I could learn how to use machinery.

And then there is the starter motor that I replaced. Susan doubted me, but the person in the parts department where I bought it had confidence in me. Besides, I had to do it. I could not afford to have someone else do it for me.

Likely it was a combination of all of these things which brings me back to God. It was all part of his plan. It was another reason why I needed to attend college in Champaign instead of Edwardsville. The confidence I had when I interviewed for this position was the same that I had when I was working in the cafeteria. It was also the same when I was working on the assembly line. Specifically, I had the feeling, "I can do this!"

Hiring

He was impressed with me enough to schedule a lie detector test in McComb in the next couple of days. Someone would call me later to tell me whether I had passed it or not. Also, I think he also described briefly the training program in Lake Charles, LA.

There was one major problem. How was I going to be contacted? We did not have a phone. Well, a neighbor had already given us permission to give his phone number for

anything that was important. I considered getting a job to be exactly that.

The lie detector test was a new experience for me. He first went over the questions that he would then ask me. Then he hooked me up to the machine and ran some sample questions to make fine adjustments in the machine. Then he went through the questions one by one in a monotone.

Close to the end of the first round of questions, he asked me a question that he had not mentioned before, and this gave a questionable reading. Then he realized what he may have done. I told him that I did not remember his mentioning it with the other questions.

So, of course he got a different reading. I had to think quickly as to what I should say.

Then it was time for the final run of questions. This time he deliberately asked a question that had nothing to do with any of the earlier ones: "Have you every lied to your wife?" I did not have to think about this very long before replying, Yes.

He said that he accidentally did not asked the question when he first went through the questions, but now I wonder if this was the truth or not. It seems possible that this was his method of testing people. At least this is what I think now. You see I do not have a lie detector machine so I could find out.

This question could be taken in at least two different ways. A lie could be something about something I did that I should not have done. Or, it might be about what I was planning to get her for a Christmas present. Both are lies, but they do not produce the same results.

Training

Within a couple of days, my neighbor got a call as to where and when I was to appear for their manager training class. So, now there was some planning that needed to be done and fairly quickly. I would be gone for three weeks, so Susan would not have any way of going anywhere at all. Financially speaking, we had very little money at all. So, no money for just about anything including the gasoline required to drive to Lake Charles.

What about the puppy? It could not be taken on the bus. We needed someone to take care of it during the three weeks or so that neither I nor Susan could take care of it. What about our neighbor keeping it? Well they agreed, so this problem was solved.

So the first decision was for Susan and Kevin once more take the bus to Union to be with her mother until... We did not know my time table after my training was over. This would cut into what little money I had left. To solve the rest of the finances, I asked for help from the church people, and they came through. I promised to repay everything when I got back. (They were much, much better to me than I deserved any way you want to look at it!)

I drove to Lake Charles on the first Sunday of February arriving in the evening. It took a little time to follow the directions that I had been given. I was a little nervous, but excited as well. I very well may have used my imagination. But I knew that I needed to get to bed by 9 PM. What I did not know was that another man is also in training and is two weeks ahead of me. He was staying at the same motel.

Then the alarm went off at 5 AM. OK, it is time to shower, shave, etc. Then wearing clean clothes, I drove to a diner fairly close to where I would be training. (I seem to remember someone telling me where it was located.) Having filled up my tummy, I headed south to McNeese OHM for my first day of training.

(This diner was proof of the eating and drinking habits of the area. Acadia Parrish was less than 50 miles away. This area and points further east had been settled by French Canadians that had been forced from their homes in Canada. [The poem, *Evangeline*, describes these people and their woes.] Anyway, they served two types of coffee. Neither one of them was decaf. There was the regular coffee, and there was coffee with chicory. The latter was said to be strong enough to melt a spoon.)

After I pulled onto the driveway of McNeese OHM and parked in the back. Then I got acquainted with some of the employees. Then it was time to get down to business. Joe Fontenote was the area supervisor as well as responsible for the training. He probably had some paperwork for me to sign for a beginning. Well, he wrote my name on a time card and had me clock in first.

Training consisted of three parts: front counter work, cleaning clothes, and pressing them. One week was spent in each area. So, we got plenty of on the job training. These were the things that have to be done during the business hours. There were also things that had to be done every morning before the doors were open for business. Other things had to be done after the doors were locked at 6 PM. We were doing these things every day during our training. 7 AM was when I was to begin the day on the first day. 6:30 AM was the actual time to clock in the rest of the time.

As soon as Joe went over the basics, it was time to begin actual training. This started with the dry cleaning ticket and the price sheet. I was shown how to write out a ticket, and I also got to see some of the other counter people take an order a few times. Then it was my turn. Yes, I made errors as others have done while training. But I had some help, and I got better at it.

By this time, it was time for me to eat lunch. So I clocked out, and left to get a meal. I may have eaten at the same diner. I often did this while in training. Even so, the amount of money I had in my pocket was dwindling fast. I was not sure if I had enough money to last until the following week or not.

Another part of the counter work was to put tags into the clothes so each piece could be identified at each point in the cleaning process. The tags were at the bottom of the ticket. These were torn off and pinned to specific places on the items to be cleaned. Then we had to go through each pocket to remove anything in them. If we found anything valuable, it was to be attached to the ticket. (The customer would get it back when they picked up their order.) Finally, we rolled up the items and tied this with a special rope. This went into the dirty clothes basket.

This store farmed out their laundry, so for these orders we only tagged them, checked their pockets, and put them into bags. The laundry store sent a truck to pick up the laundry bags (twice daily) and sent the cleaned laundry back in their individual orders (each afternoon).

For the most part these are the things I did for the first day. When 6 PM came, it was time to lock the doors. This was when the other trainee and I went to Joe's office for at least an hour of education on the art of cleaning. This was also a daily occurrence. He also gave me some written literature. This left very little time to do much of anything other than study a while and go to bed.

Tuesday morning threw a wrench into my memorizing the price list! Tues — Thurs were sale days. On one week four pieces of clothing dried cleaned costs \$6.99. They could also get three shirts laundered for \$1.49 with a dry cleaning order. During the other week, three pairs of slacks dry cleaned for \$3.99. I think there was also a special for

laundered bluejeans this week. But I survived. You see, I like to play with numbers. (I had ever since I had been a cashier in college.)

By Thursday, I was out of money, and it was time to get lunch. Frenchy happened to notice what was wrong, and said something to me. When I told him, he loaned me enough money to keep me until my first check the following week. (I promptly paid him back.)

There is one more part to "counter work." We were responsible for taking the separate cleaned items and assembling them together again. With small orders we could put the entire order under one plastic cover using a twist tie to hold the hangers together. With larger orders, we would divide the order into small groups. Then a plastic cover would be placed over each group. Finally, a twist tie was used to tie the groups together.

Saturday night came, and I was tired. I did manage to do some reading before I went to bed to get a good night's sleep. Gee, I don't have to get up tomorrow morning and go to work!

On Sunday morning, I drove to Orange Texas for church. I got the directions from someone probably before I left. It was an enjoyable service; the pastor was an Elder Peterson. One of the things that made this day so nice was that his family were all singers and sang during the lunch hour. Since I like to sing, I joined them. I also learned a few new songs to add to my memory which I sing to myself every once in a while. It was a very enjoyable day!

But it is now Monday morning. I'm a trainee again. Time to learn more new things. This week will cover how to clean clothes. OK, I am wide awake. Let's get started.

This time the training came from the store manager. Every week, the machinery required some maintenance, and for this store this was the day. Specifically, every

moving point needed to be greased. So, the manager had the grease gun in his hand and was prepared to do the greasing while he talked.

This is when I stopped him. I told him very clearly and seriously that I wanted to be the one who did the greasing. I wanted him to tell me where to grease and if I was not giving it not enough or too much. I don't know if what I said and how I said it surprised him, but I quickly found the grease gun in my hand. I also heard him point to the grease nipples were one at a time as I greased them.

As I understood it, I would be running a store in Bogalusa which was in the middle of nowhere so to speak. I really needed to not only know what to do but be well practice in doing it. As it turns out, this was what actually happened.

Here was an example of my "taking command" when I spoke to the manager. I knew that I needed the experience of greasing the equipment and that best way to do this was to start doing it while in training. So, this is why I insisted that I be permitted to do it. (No one would be looking over my shoulder in Bogalusa.) Well, I had already made it through the first week learning how to do the work of a counter person, and I had learned by doing.

This week was when I began learning how to clean clothes. This began with double checking the pockets and look closely for any spots that need to be pretreated. This meant I had to learn how to determine what kind of spot I had and the proper chemical to use to help remove it. There was a spotting board where harder to remove spots could be worked on.

As far as maintenance is concerned, the "washer" needed daily attention besides the weekly greasing. It had a lint filter that needs to be cleaned, and the fluid level checked. As a side issue, the boiler had to have a solution added to it

each morning before it was turned on. This was to treat the hard water they had in Lake Charles.

The dry cleaning fluid (perchloroethylene ["perc"]) needed to be cleansed as well. During the day, the perc was continuously run through a filter containing a white powder (to trap small solids that came from the clothes) and activated charcoal (help remove unwanted dyes). We had a cooker into which we would fill with perc and the filter contents. Then we would distill it to remove the perc and leave a solid residue which we would remove.

How well did I do in cleaning clothes? Almost all of the time I caught the items missed by the people tagging the clothes. But one time, I let a small sample tube of pink lipstick get by me. A couple of items were stained beyond removal. The other items took quite some time to remove their stains. A tricky garment was a pair of navy blue/light blue hounds tooth pants. Finding the pink in the small print of the pants was very nerve racking!

While I hated that this happened, it was a great benefit to me. I got plenty of experience of removing hard stains with the help of my trainer. By the time this week was out, I had worked with stains anywhere from the simple though these stains which I had caused. So, I was more prepared for working without supervision later than I would have been if this had not happened.

Another way to answer this question (of how well I did in cleaning clothes) is to mention what the area supervisor did when I was the manager at Baker, LA, years later. He brought me an item of clothing with a stain in it. When I could not get it out, he told the office that the stain could not be removed. At least he had a great deal of confidence in me. (Or he might have been told to take it to me to see if the stain could be removed.)

But you must remember that this was some years after I was a trainee. And during all of these years, I had continued to learn more about how to dry clean clothes.

Another training week had ended. I was free to go to church once more. Orange TX met on the second and fourth Sundays, so I had to travel further to Vidor TX. It was here that I was asked to introduce services, which I did. (I had no idea why I was asked, and I still don't. The only answer? God) I got to meet some more people while I was there, and there were some member of the church at Orange present there as well.

While I was in Lake Charles, my battery died and had to be replaced. I know it was on a weekend, but I do not remember which one. Perhaps it was on my way home the third weekend or sometime in the fourth one. In either case the mechanic showed me how to check for a dead cell in a battery. (I really appreciated that. In fact, I have used that a couple of times since that time.

The third week's training was the pressing department. This is where Mom's insistence that all of her boys would learn how to do the ironing was a great help. The only difference was that I was learning to use more complex equipment to accomplish the same things as with an iron.

Here I think that the things I did on the manufacturing plant in Brookhaven was also a great help. I was use to using equipment to get done what I wanted to do. I had the basic principles, and I only used the equipment to apply them to the clothing I had in front of me.

I did quite well This week. Seemingly, none of the clothes I worked on presented any problems. Well, there was one very fancy dress made of cotton that I sort of balked at. I just did not think that I could do this. Its skirt had all kinds of parts, and spray starch had to be used to give it the stiffness that it needed. (I did watch very closely though.)

Less I forget, the first thing on Monday of the third week, the equipment was greased (I got more practice) as it would be on Monday of the fourth week. The special attention that the cleaning equipment needed was done at the beginning of each work day. So, I had been doing this daily since the beginning of the second week. I was getting use to doing what needed to be done daily. It was becoming a habit.

Fourth Sunday morning, I was back to the church at Orange again. After lunch, I went home with one of the members for a while for a visit. While there, I was given directions for how to get to the DeRidder church which had a evening service that day. I got to talking too much, so I left too late to arrive at the church until after the pastor began his sermon.

One of the ladies who had been in Vider the previous Sunday had told him that I had introduced services there. Apparently she was somewhat impressed with what she heard. So, as I walked into the church he stopped his preaching, told me that he wanted to hear me preach, and made it quite plain that I would have to come into the pulpit to speak. So, I did. Then he picked up where he had stopped earlier and finished his sermon.

With this short time in the pulpit, my desire to preach came alive again. That is because I greatly enjoyed the time I spoke. But it was yet to be...

It was Monday morning again. I had already packed my things and checked out of the motel. This would be "wrap up" day. As with the weeks before, all of the weekly greasing and daily care for the equipment was done. Then Joe Fontenot spent the rest of the morning reviewing seemingly everything that he could think of. By the time he allowed me to leave, I did not make it to Bogalusa by 6 PM, closing time.

I began training on February 2, 1979. On Feb 23, I finished my training, receiving last minute instructions. Then

I was heading east to my first store as a manager. I was met by the area manager from New Orleans a little after 6 PM. No one was there but him. Apparently, the wife had already closed the store and gone home before the area manager had arrived.

Bogalusa OHM

He told me that the manager did not know that he was to be fired this day. Besides, his wife when she heard about it would probably quit as well. So, basically there was myself and a Negro presser, Felix, to run the store.

The manager of the store came in several minutes later. Shortly after I was introduced to him, I think he realized that his time as the manager was at an end. Then together the three of us took a physical inventory of the clothing in the store. Then the paperwork was signed that made me the manager, and I headed back to Tylertown for a night's sleep. Since Susan was still in Union, MS, I would be alone. I certainly missed her. But I was on my own for a while; I did not yet know how long...

The next morning I arrived before 7 AM and performed the before opening check list. The boiler was treated and started. The equipment was greased. The dry cleaning filtration system was taken care of. The air compressor was started. Everything was done just as I had been doing for the previous couple of weeks.

Well I had one big problem with the dry cleaning filter. The lint trap was stuffed full of lint and did not want to come out so I could get rid of the lint. I think it finally took a pair of pliers to pull it out. Next problem: there was no perc in the container for the lint trap. It was suppose to be half full. So, I added perc, and replaced the cleaned lint trap, and tightened the lid of the container.

I put the petty cash into the register, and opened the store at 7 AM. My new area supervisor was suppose to arrive by 10 AM.

I began spotting clothes for my first load of clothes (about 35 lbs and put them into the washer. Everything worked fine during the wash cycle. Then it was time for the machine to extract the perc from the clothes.

(The perc weighs 13 times heavier than water. So you can imagine just how much the clothes and perc weighed. Because of this, the machine had two motors: ran while the clothes were washing, and a heavy duty motor kicked in to extract the perc.)

Well, the extract motor kicked in as it was suppose to do. But within a very few seconds, I heard a very loud, unearthly noise as pieces of metal was flying out of the extract motor! I had no idea what was going on, but I instinctively turned the machine off as fast as I could. At least the noise quickly decreased in volume as the drum containing the machines slowed down to a halt. Here I was on my first day and I could not clean any clothes at all!

What had caused this? Lack of any maintenance on the machine. The machinery was supposed to be greased every week, but the manager had not done this for quite some time. Over a period of time, the extract motor bearing had become very dry. When it went into extract this time, the bearings seized up.

The New Orleans supervisor came in soon after this. (He was suppose to be there for the first few days.) I let him take over this problem. He got me calmed down a little bit, and then called the office in Sulphur, LA to tell the company what had happened and arranged for a mechanic to replace the motor.

After a while, people started coming in with clothes to be dry cleaned. At the suggestion of the area manager, both of

us told the people that the washer was not working. We promised to have the clothes cleaned later in the week. We just did not know yet how soon that would be.

And so it went for the rest of the day. Well, some people also came in to pick up clothes so there was some money coming in. So, I would be making a bank deposit tonight.

It was a little after mid afternoon that the previous manager's wife should have come in to work if she wanted to keep her job. She didn't. (I learned later that she got very made the previous night when he got home. She definitely did not like the idea that he had been fired!)

After closing the store at 6 PM, both the area manager and I remained at the store for a while. I suppose I was waiting for the maintenance man to get there. Whether he did or not, I don't know. But as we waited, he made some long distance calls, some of them were personal ones. How did I know this at the time? He told me two things: first he was making them, and secondly he would pay for them. Even so, I wondered if he was telling me the truth. Finally, I went by the bank and then headed home. It was 10 PM or later when I got home.

By sometime that night, a service man had arrived and tried to install a motor he had brought with him. He wired the motor wrong, and it burned out as well. He would be there all night.

When I arrived Wednesday morning, he was still trying to get the motor to work. So, he was in the back doing something, and I was opening the store for another day. Well more clothes came in, and more went out as well.

I even had some people who wanted to put in applications to work at this store. I even had some time to interview at least one of them. So, dirty clothes continued to pile up throughout the day. When closing time came, I locked the doors and did my daily report. Then it was off to

the bank for a deposit and then home. Still weighing on my mind: when will this machine finally get fixed???

Sometime Wednesday, the chief mechanic arrived with another motor. He had just driven half a day from Sulphur, LA. He promised that it would be fixed, but after two days, I was beginning to wonder...

When the mail came today, one thing was done right. My check for the previous week came. I had some spending money! Other than that, I continued to take in dirty clothes while others were picking up their clean ones. Once again, I closed the store, made a bank deposit, and drove to an empty apartment.

On Thursday morning, I arrived at the store to open it. The motor was still not working. Well, at least clothes continued to come in and be picked up. At least I had something to do. Finally by around 10 AM, a motor was installed and working. This was the supervisor's third and final day with me. But rather than remain in the store for the day, he left shortly after I got the first load of clothes going in the 'washer'. So, basically, I had very little help from him. I would never see him again as he quit a few weeks later. It would perhaps be August before I had a visit from a supervisor from New Orleans again. I was completely on my own.

Well, I had Felix, the presser, with me. Besides, I finally had something for him to do. Actually, I had a lot for his to do. It takes an hour to clean a load of clothes, transfer them to the dryer, and then dry them. So, before the day was out, I had brought at least 165 lbs of clothes to press. If I was smart, I would have cleaned two more loads before I left for the night. They would also be laid out for him. This way he could begin pressing as soon as he arrived.

It would have been nice if all I had to do was spot and clean the dirty clothes, but I had to reassemble the pressed

clothes into individual orders. Then they had to be placed numerically on the clothes rack.

The lady that had filled out an application earlier in the week had really impressed me at the time. So, I was going to schedule a lie detector test for her the following week. So, I was getting closer to having all the personnel that I needed assuming that she would pass it... But I still had a huge pile of dirty clothes staring me in the face. I needed to get some cleaning done.

Friday was obviously rather busy. Felix began pressing clothes as he arrived. I continued to do all the things I had the previous day. Meanwhile there were more people picking up or dropping off clothes than there had been on Thursday. I was being stretched a little too thin...

Saturday was very busy day! It seemed like everyone either wanted to get their cleaned clothes or get dirty ones cleaned. So seemingly I was running to the counter to wait on a customer quite often. So, I had less time to clean or bag clothes. I really needed a third person to do the counter work, and I needed it right then. But no such luck. It would have been nice if I could have scheduled a polygraph test for the applicant I wanted to hire before this weekend. (Wishful thinking!)

I was about to drop literally by 6 PM when I locked the door! Felix had definitely worked very hard this day as well. Meanwhile, seemingly every where I looked in the working area was orders of dirty clothes. I had a stack of receipts for the orders picked up this day that seemed to be higher than I would have thought possible. Well I had to start somewhere...

By this time I was not thinking very clearly. I knew what needed to be done which was quite a few different things. So, I just did one of them (whatever it was) for about an hour. I was getting more desperate and tired at the same

time. I made a phone call, "Do you still want to work here?" When she replied, "Yes," I told her to **come now** as I had to have some help.

She arrived by 7 PM. It was almost 9 PM before we got the financial part done so that I could make a deposit for the day. I don't know how much more we got done, but probably not that much. The clothes would have to wait until Monday to be tagged, cleaned, pressed and bagged. I wearily made the bank deposit and headed home. I fixed me something to eat and went to bed.

Technically, I should not have her working for me until after she passed the polygraph, but I had to have some help right then. But she did not have access to the cash that was in the store at any time while she was there. We were doing paperwork of various times during the two hours she was there. Besides, she earned her pay that night!

It had been three weeks since I had seen Susan and Kevin, but I was in no shape to drive to see them after work today. And there was no way for to be able to drive to Union and back on Sunday either.

Sunday morning, I went to church. I wonder if I went to sleep in church. I certainly was tired enough (probably not though). Afterward I saw the deacon who had arranged to help me with money for getting to my training. I gave him all that I had borrowed. So, he was happy and so was I.

Monday morning arrived, and I was completing my first full week as a manager. And it was time to grease the equipment once again. Well, there was the boiler treatment and all of the other daily items that needed to be done before the store opened. The weekly tasks were all were done as they should be for only the second time in quite some time. The store opened on time, and I alternated between tagging last Saturday's dirty clothes and cleaning load after load of them.

At 3 PM, my new counter attendant arrived, and I made an appointment for her to take a lie detector test in next couple of days. Then I began to teach how do her new job. She is very nice, and I hope this works out well.

She got plenty of practice tagging clothes as I had not yet tagged all of the ones which had come in Saturday. And then there were the clothes which had come in this day as well. I think we may have tagged them all by the time the store closed. Counting Saturday evening and Monday afternoon, we both had had a baptism of fire.

Because Monday is seldom a busy day, I got a lot more cleaning done which meant that Felix had plenty of pressing to do. Even so, I was concerned about how his equipment was working. So, I asked him if the presses were working right. His reply was, "They are working easier now. (OK, this means that they had not been greased prior to my coming. But now they are working better.)"

Normally, she would have left at 6 when the store closed. But Monday night is the end of the week, inventory had to be taken of the orders that were still on the clothes racks. This was done by 7:30 to 8 PM. Then we both went home.

During this next week I began to settle into my duties as a manager, and the lady was a very good counter person. She was also a quick learner. (Obviously, she took her polygraph and passed it.) Felix continued to be a very efficient, excellent worker.

Getting Susan back home

Saturday morning arrived without fanfare. I was there first, Felix came at his usual 8 AM, and she arrived perhaps 10 AM or later as scheduled. With three of us working, things ran rather smoothly. She had already had enough counter experience that she could handle that by herself for the most part. This left me with plenty of time to clean the clothes. When I was not busy, I helped her when more than

one customer came in at the same time. Also, we shared the responsibility of putting the clothes into their proper orders and then bagging them.

So, by closing time, everything was done. Surprise! I was not tired like I had been one week earlier. So, this time I made the bank deposit and headed to Union, MS. I really, really wanted to see Susan! It would be very nice to see Kevin also!

As I was driving to see them, I was repeating something that my Dad had done 36 years earlier. Mom was driving herself and three young children from Columbus, Ohio taking all day to do it. Her designation was her in-laws in Lawrenceville, IL (400 miles). Dad was driving 150 miles across the state of Illinois to meet her. They had not seen each other for a few months. Well, to me, three weeks seemed like months!

So, I was thinking about this as I drove. I was looking forward for the kisses I would get from Susan just as my Mom had looked forward to the kisses she got from Dad. From Susan's response to my kisses, she had definitely looked forward to the ones I gave her!

Since the last time I had been there, her Mom had moved into an apartment for low income people. It had two or three bedrooms, probably 2. Anyway, not long after I got there, Susan had Kevin laying on the bed she and he had shared for four weeks. This is when I learned what she had been doing with her time. She was teaching him how to spell words.

Remember that he had a very low IQ, but he could learn how to repeat sounds. She began with the letters of the alphabet. Since all of these letters except **w** are single syllables, he could repeat them. He actually memorized them. Then he learned to repeat a small number of letters and associate them with given words. A couple of example

are cat and dog. When she said, "Spell cat." He learned to say *C-a-t*. Over the years, he increased his spelling vocabulary to near 30 words including *turkey*.

I really did not have very much time to visit this weekend. I ate supper, and soon afterward, it was time to go to bed. (Susan would have to wait until we got back to Tylertown for any love making. Well, we curled around each other anyway. Then sometime during the day we drove back to Tylertown.

The three weeks of training had been engrained in my consciousness, very good strong habits. So I had a foundation upon which to make a go of this job. I also had five positive thinking books that I had studied using the 1357 method. (Two of them I got before leaving Chicago.)

This was a foundation upon which I could learn how to use my imagination to improve how well I did my work. There were many times that I applied the principles of these books during the year I spent in Bogalusa.

Car problems

It was not all that long before I was having car trouble again. The anti-pollution system has a valve in it that connects to the carburetor. It completely clogged up one night as I was driving home, so the engine stopped working and would not start again. Somehow I was able to contact a mechanic out in the country. (Somehow? God is working in the background again.) He got my car to his place of business, and I was there for a while before I managed to get a ride the rest of the way to Tylertown. (It was not very far.) So, it was almost 12 PM before I got home. (Yes, Susan was very worried until I arrived because we still did not have a phone.) The mechanic promised to have it fixed by the next morning.

Again, on the next morning, somehow I managed to get a ride to his place. Sure enough, he had replaced the valve. It started right up, and off I drove. When I arrived at the store at 10 AM, there was Felix standing in front of the store waiting patiently. I explained what had happened while I did the daily things required before opening the store. (The Lord certainly looked out for me this time.)

More about the dry cleaning plant

One of my regular customers ran a service station which included mechanical work. So his uniforms were very greasy! Well, the perc used to dry clean clothes dissolves grease fairly well. But it would not take all of the greasy spots even when cleaned twice. Even so, his wife said that I got them cleaner than anyone else ever had. So, this was why she was one of my regular customers!

We also had special services which required mixing chemicals to provide them. One was water proofing which was seldom requested by customer. The other one was sizing. I had a 55 gallon drum and a basket for each one of these. That baskets was had two hooks to fit over the top of the drum.

The solutions were created by mixing perc with both sizing and water repellent. How much did I need to mix? Seemingly, the solutions were somewhere between six to nine inches in depth.

The clothes were placed into the basket and then lowered into the solution. Once the clothes were thoroughly wet, the hooks were used to suspend the clothes above the solution where the excess liquid could drip off. After the dripping ended, I would move the clothes to the dryer to completely dry these clothes.

Well, one of my customers liked to wear bluejeans. She really wanted a straight crease in them. This could usually be done by laundering them, but I did not have access to a

laundry. I'm not sure if she really wanted to wear starched bluejeans either. Well she had figured out a way probably by trial and error.

She would bring several new bluejeans to be cleaned and sized. This was not that much of a problem so far. But putting straight creases was very difficult taking several minutes to accomplish for each pair of jeans. I did a lot of pulling this way and that to get the leg seams to line up and remain there.

In a couple of weeks or so, she would be back with them for me to do this all over again. And so it went for a while. About the third time, I noticed it my job was getting easier. The seams were much easier to line up. The next time, I laid out the legs to press them without having to line the seams up: the legs just laid out that way. That is when she stop bringing them in. She could wash, dry, and iron her jeans herself from here on. She now had straight creases all of the time.

Meanwhile, I had something that I needed to do once a month. I was using spotting chemicals, perc, plastic bags for clothes, and hangers. So, these things had to be ordered on a regular basis so that I would always have them when I needed them.

The first thing I did was to inventory the supplies that I had on hand. As I would discover when transferred from one store to another, I had an over abundance of some chemicals I use in spotting. I did not have to order any of these. Nor did I have to order some supplies for the same reason. A week or so later, a truck pulled up to the back of the building and delivered what I had order.

I had a 125 gallon tank for the perc. This always had to be topped off. Given the fact that I would clean the clothes in one machine and transfer them wet into another machine (the dryer), perc evaporated into the air. So, I was perhaps

using more than half a tank of perc each month. If the perc was not topped off each time, I might not have enough to last until the next supply delivery.

There was another thing I did on a monthly basis. I would receive a large letter from IFI (International Fabricare Institute) with 8x11 pages of information about dry cleaning. They covered a wide range of topics. Each store was to have a 3-ring notebook (probably 3") with dividers into which they were to place these pages.

Every month when this came in, I would dutifully arrange these pages in the notebook where they belonged. Very likely the previous manager had not done this; often when I was moved to a new store, I would find these envelopes somewhere unopened as well. So, he was not different from many of the managers working for Supervisory Services.

Assuming he did what other managers also did, I found the 3-ring notebook and many unopened letters. Then when I found time, I opened them and put the pages where they belonged in the notebook. From time to time, I also began reading them. There was a lot of information in those pages! I suppose you could call this my on the job training.

Late one afternoon, a man named Ron Shaw came into my store with another man. Who was the other man? I don't remember. I do remember that Ron was the State Supervisor for Supervisory Services.

Since that time I learned that he was in the habit of traveling to the company stores usually visiting them at night. This way he knew what was going on without causing any problems (unless there was a problem with the store he was visiting).

But this late afternoon, he came in and went to the pressing area. Then he asked the other man for his coat. He wanted to demonstrate how to roll a suit lapel properly. (I don't know if he had seen some suit lapels pressed wrong or

not. I just made sure I rolled the lapels this way because I liked the way the coat looked.)

And now I am going back to some personal items. One of the books I had gotten while out in the field while selling insurance for Combined Insurance Co had some exercises in it that I began doing after I took over the Bogalusa store. Specifically, one of them involved putting my hands on top of my head and stretch my head upward for a count of several seconds. I then repeated this for a total of ten times. (This stretched my backbone.)

By this time, I had been moving clothes to and from the clothes rack on a regular basis. And then something began to seem very strange. I had never before noticed that the of my head was getting so close the the rack. In fact, I seemed to remember there being at least half an inch between my head and the rack in the beginning. Now I was able to stand flat footed and touch the rack with the top of my head. (OK, I was stretching up a little to do this.)

I could remember that in high school that I was measured how tall I was. (This was at home.) I personally measured just how tall I could reach with my right arm. Well, I measured both of these things later. Strangely enough, my height was half an inch higher, and my reach had also increased the same amount. Unfortunately, 38 years later, I have lost a full inch from the measurement that spring. Even doing stretching exercises has not helped any...

I was taught many things in training and did not always believe everything I heard. The perfect example: dry cleaning is a much gentler method of cleaning. In fact, water is a very harsh method. Well I got a change to see for myself.

I did not notice anything in the service station uniform pockets, so I let a piece of paper get by me. (It is the one that is used to clean windshields.) Well, I found it later when

I was steaming the top of the pants. It was a little thinner, but it was still usable!

Later I found three sheets of toilet paper in someone's pocket after the pants had been cleaned and dried. Now, these were much thinner than they would have been coming directly off the roll at home. However, they were still recognizable! They would have been a matted mess if the pants had been washed instead of dry cleaned though.

Then again I wonder exactly what is meant by *gentle*. You see, a man brought in a pair of pants to be dry cleaned. This was after he had cut down a pine tree and sat on the stump... Yes, the bottom of these pants had very sticky pine sap that had hardened. I don't know if he had tried to wash them or not before he brought them to me. Given that pine sap is organic, it likely was oil soluble. So, I told him that I could probably take the stain. However, I could not nor would I make any absolute promises.

So to my next dark load, I added these pants. But first of all, I tried some of my strongest oil solvents. Neither of them seemed to do anything to the stain at all. I certainly got a sinking feeling at this point. Having all but given up, I put the whole load into the washer.

When the load finished extracting, I began pulling out all of the clothes so I could move them to the dryer. While doing this, I saw this pair of pants. So, I took a quick at the bottom of them. The perc had completely dissolved the stain! I was relieved to say the least. When the gentleman returned for the pants, I was proud to show him that they had not been ruined by the stain.

Perc is a very strong oil based solvent. So, in this case, I would not consider it to be gentle as far as oil based things are concerned. And considering how the perc fumes rusted my sewing machine beyond useability, the perc was not gentle to this machine either.

Housing

After a while I was getting tired of driving for far each day. Gas was not expensive, but I was only making \$200 a week minus all of the deductions. So, I decided that I needed to find a place in Bogalusa. It turned out that the couple owning the service station had a place for rent. So, she and I came to an agreement. It was a week or so later when we moved all of our things.

Louisiana was known as a zero pollution state. That is, no industry was suppose to pollute the air. However, the facts did not fit the claim. Bogalusa was built around a pulp wood plant, and their exhaust was toxic. In fact, when the wind was out of the south, the whole northern part of the city suffered from the fumes. A car dealership near me had to repaint new cars because the fumes literally ate holes in the paint. There were times when the air was really bad even at the northern edge of the city. We put up with this for a while. Sometime in the summer, we found an apartment on the southern part of the city (part of a duplex). Then we moved south. The air was certainly much better!

We had a small dog when we first came to Bogalusa that had been given to us by the people who lived next door to us in the chicken house. Something happened to to it, and sometime later we got a cat but we did not keep it very long either.

Easter

It was Tuesday morning that I put up the dry cleaning specials (for Tuesday through Thursday) in the windows. [This was something I had done every week since I took over.] But as the day went on, the number of customers seemed to be more than normal. Wednesday was even busier. And this trend continued through Friday.

By 3:30 PM when I normally stop cleaning, we had so many clothes that I had Felix remain until 6 PM. I continued

to clean, and he continued to press. He left right after I locked the front door. The counter attendant remained long enough to bag the last of the orders. There was not any dirty clothes left to clean. All this time I was also thinking about Saturday's schedule. I thought that 8 AM was soon enough for the two of them to come to work. Well, I did not think it would get busy until a little later in the day. What did I know about people's habits on Easter weekend?

Well, I learned the hard way! I had everything up and running by the time I opened the front door at 7. During the next hour, I had people waiting in line at times. In fact, I had written over \$100 in orders during this time! Was I ever glad to see my employees when they got there.

The rest of the day continued just this busy. In fact, we could not get to all of the orders brought in that day even though I continued to clean and Felix continued to press until closing time. This day had been far busier than my first Saturday had been. (Such was the case at every store I had ever managed. Some were easier to handle because we had more employees, but all were perhaps the busiest day of the year. Well Christmas came close one time at Plank OHM in Baton Rouge.)

The next week was just the opposite. It was much slower than even a normal week. Well it did give us a chance to clean all of the clothes we could not get cleaned on Saturday. It would be some time before many of these orders were picked up. I *personally* wondered if they had really needed them cleaned just before Easter. Or did they decide to wear something else instead at the last moment? If so, they would not need what they had thought they did for some time anyway.

Somewhere along the line, I had been told not allow a person to pick up just part of an order. Well, I had to learn the hard way... A lady came in to do exactly that.

Her order consisted of a ball gown and a pair of pants, and she wanted to pick up just the pants. I knew it was wrong, but I thought that surely she would come back to get the gown. These are rather expensive items. Why would she leave it? But she did. The gown was still there the following March when I was transferred to another city.

What I did not consider was the financial part of the situation. The dress cost a lot more to clean than the pants (probably less than \$20 verses \$2). For her to not get the entire order meant that she did not have very much money. So, it should have followed that she would not have enough to get the dress at a later time.

And then there was the time when a nice two piece dress had been brought in for cleaning. I thought we had done a good job. But when they came to pick it up, they found some fault with it. It turned out that this was for a lady who had died. This order was never picked up. Why should it be? She had been buried in something else.

Sometime in the spring, my parents made a trip to see us. While we did not really have a bed for them, they really did not need one. They came in a cargo van that Dad had modified into a camper.

Sometime after Dad retired, they learned about an Elder Hostel which was being held at the local college. This organization puts on programs at various colleges throughout the country. Mom and Dad decided to attend the local one. They enjoyed it so much that they decided to attend the ones in other parts of the country that interested them.

From this came the purchase of the cargo van and Dad using his knowledge of carpentry to modify it. To begin with, he built a bed frame and added a mattress that was wide enough for the two of them to fit comfortably while sleeping. He also built a cabinet to store some things. Oh

yes, the bed frame fit across the cargo area rather than along the length. It was about two feet inside the back doors leaving room for luggage between the bed and back doors.

So, they slept outside in the van while they were there. The rest of the time they spent visiting with us. This time, they did not visit my shop, and I really do not know why I didn't ask them to do so. (I would do this in 1981 though.)

Kevin

After moving to Bogalusa, we contacted the school system so that Kevin could go back to special education classes. That is when we ran into a problem. He was not potty trained, and they were not prepared to clean up the messes he made.

This led to a conference at school with someone whom had also attended the University of Southern Mississippi when I did. (We took the same class.) He pointed out very clearly that Kevin had to be accepted as a student, but this did not mean that the school he attended had to be in Bogalusa. (This was the law.) He also made it very plain that Bogalusa would not be where Kevin would be schooled.

So Kevin was institutionalized in Southwest Louisiana State (I'm not sure of the rest of the name, but it was located near Iola, LA, about 40 miles north east of Lake Charles.) The range of the clients was from somewhat better than Kevin to much worse. He would be there for about 2 years.

I was working six days a week, and traveling across the entire state to see Kevin was exhausting. Besides that, the closest churches that I knew to be in that area were at Orange and Vidor, TX. This added even more miles of travel. We basically had to settle for making the trip once a month. Even so, this was hard on me, and not seeing Kevin any more than this was very hard on Susan. However, while we were later living in Baton Rouge, we learned that he could

be accepted by the school system there. (I will pick up this part of my story then.)

On one of the trips, I saw a family having a problem getting a tire changed, so I stopped to help (suit and all). I got the car jacked up enough to replace one tire with the other. But before I could put the nuts on, the jack slipped. Fortunately, the tire remained on the bolts, so I was able to put the nuts on and tighten them. (Thank you LORD!) Then we were off again, late for church, and just a little bit greasy.

On another trip, Southwest Louisiana had received a lot of rain. As we drove on the interstate, we saw pools of water everywhere. In some places the shoulders of the interstate were just damp, in other places the water was almost to the edge of the highway. Regardless, we were able to get to where Kevin was.

Summer

I had a strange experience with a bumble bee in the counter area of my store. I happen to see it buzzing around and that bothered me. Still, I did not want to bother it very much. It was much bigger than a normal one. (OK, it sure looked bigger to me!)

I did not have an insect spray, but I did have some very strong chemicals. Specifically, this one was aromatic and was a very strong grease remover. This just might do the trick. I was going to try anyway.

So, I got a squeeze bottle of it from my spotting table. Then I walked back to the counter area. It was still flying around the One Hour Martinizing sign in the front window. I managed to get close enough to drop one drop of this chemical on the bee. This worked all right because it killed the bee instantly. It dropped to the floor the instant the chemical dropped onto the its body!

My counter attendant had been having marital problems and finally got a divorce. In the process, she found someone who she wanted to live with. So, she remarried. When she did so she quit. But she did not leave me without suggestion as to who I could hire: a friend, Skeet, of hers who needed a job. (Maybe they were related as in cousins, but I am not sure.)

So I talked to Skeet (nickname) about hiring. She seemed to be OK, so I scheduled a polygraph for her; she passed.

Once I got her trained doing the counter work, she mentioned that she knew how to sew. Actually, I think she suggested that we could increase our business by also doing alterations; she knew how. So, I brought our sewing machine from home, and a new service was now available at the store.

As the summer wore on, alterations increased which was nice. And then word got back to the central office somehow about what I had done. I was told to pay myself 25% of the alteration price for the use of the machine. In one month, alterations accounted for about \$480 in sales! This was 12% of my usual weekly sales. My share was \$120 which was about the same amount as when I had bought the sewing machine new. (When the office saw how many alterations we were getting, they decided that I needed a new sewing machine. More later.)

I found out that I had some things yet to learn. A lady brought in a velvet ladies suit to be pressed. Actually steamed would be more correct. You see the problem with this material is that it is not safe to touch it while or after steaming. It has to dry first. Otherwise, anything touching it leaves an indentation. Well I carefully steamed the skirt, and it looked OK. I placed the jacket on the Susie to steam it.

Now this piece of equipment is shaped like a dress form. It had a metal form with a cloth "dress" covering it. The top

of the form was designed to place the shoulders of dresses or coats. Then there was a timer which controlled the amount of steam blown into the "dress" and then air which dried the garment. Oh yes, it also had a long pad which could be firmly placed against the garment and locked into place.

This last feature was my undoing! When I put the velvet jacket of Susie, I locked this pad against the jacket... Yes, when I unlocked this pad, there was the impression that I did not want. I had ruined the jacket. Once this happened, there was absolutely no way to correct the problem. A claim was filed and then paid.

In the meanwhile Skeet had set her sights on becoming a nurse's aide. This required taking a course at the local junior college which she did.

She ran into a problem though. She had to learn the metric system and some simple chemistry as well. She failed to pass the test. Anyway, she quit, and I had to find another counter attendant.

I did, and she could also sew. This was part of the reason that the alterations had taken off: what Skeet had started, this lady continued.

When I had worked on the assembly line, I had taken water in a half gallon container. Well, I took it with me everyday to make sure that I was drinking enough water.

I thought that 8 glasses of water a day was enough. It was not. A dry cleaning plant is hot even in the mild part of the winter. But in the hot summer, it is much hotter. My water intake should have been double as in a gallon a day. I would not learn this until after I was transferred to Baton Rouge the next year.

One day I was checking the pockets of a suit coat to make sure there was not anything in them. Well there was

something in one of them. When I pulled it out, it was a plastic sandwich bag with some really dried plant in it. What is this? I wondered. I was not sure. It might be pot though. I was going to find out.

So, I put the bag in my pocket and walked to the police station a couple of blocks away. I walked into the building and dropped on the desk where a policeman was sitting. "What is this?" I asked him. "What do you think it is?" He replied. "It might be marijuana," I said, "but I really don't know. I have never seen it to know." He told me that I was right.

Then I told him where I had found it to whom the suit coat belongs. (He was a known pot user.) But there was nothing more that could be done legally. The person who own the suit could claim that I had planted the pot in his suit coat.

One of my employees knew the person who had left pot in his suit coat, and he had told her that this bag of pot (a "lid") had cost him \$35. He had bought it but never got to use any of it.

OK, what did I learn? I know what pot looks like. There is really nothing that can be done legally about it when pot is found in some dirty clothes. So I flushed any that I found after that day.

I was a stickler when it came to smoking. I did not want any cigarettes near the clothes. In fact, when I hired a smoker, I told her that she would have to smoke outside. She was the one that I trained to do the pressing when Felix had to retire.

Small supply order? Not!

In July, I made my usual supply order, and it was not for very much. About a week later, the truck arrived with my supplies. He kept bringing in supplies that I knew that I had

not ordered. What was going on? Well, it was the end of the fiscal year. The office was sending out additional supplies for tax purposes. So, I had to make room for the extra items. Most of them were either shirt or pant hangers. In fact, I still had several boxes of each when I was transferred to Baton Rouge the following March!

I really did not like what the office had done. I was trying to make a profit, and they were increasing my expenses??? I hated this.

One thing was for sure. For the rest of the time I was at Bogalusa, my supply orders were much smaller than they had been during the first few months that I was there.

When my supplies arrived in August, I got even more heated. The extra item had a hefty price tag: \$1,500+. It was a commercial sewing machine! What did I need with this?

Well, August is when school begins in Bogalusa. This means a lot of alterations. The office was not going to pay for the use of my sewing machine any longer than necessary. What I had not considered was the amount of alterations we were doing. In the end, it was paid for within four months by alterations and then some.

Who are you?

One morning in August, a woman with a 3" notebook binder under her arm walked in the store and began to walk behind the counter.

I quickly told her that she needed to remain in the counter area. I did not need a customer in the back part of the store.

That is when she told me that she was the area supervisor from New Orleans. This was a relief to me. We got acquainted, and she left. She promised she would visit the store again, but I don't think I saw her again...

I still don't know why none of the area managers from New Orleans had not called me once in a while. At least they would have some idea of what was happening other than the financial reports they were getting about my store.

With all of this going on, I came to the store one morning, and Felix was not there. I learned fairly soon that he was in the hospital after undergoing an operation. He was no longer able to work: I had to find and train another presser. I was certainly going to miss him!

Well, I needed more than a good presser for this order: a wedding dress. It would be my first one. At least I had done my homework on this one. Unless a wedding dress is plain, there can be serious problems with cleaning them before or after the ceremony. The extra sequins and beads have to be attached somehow: using glue or needle and thread. Glue will make the application of these items faster. Well, there are two kinds of glue: some are not dissolved by perc, and some are not. I had read in my IFI literature about this topic. In all too many cases, the glue used was soluble in perc. So, the dress went into the dry cleaning machine with all of the beads and sequins attached. When it came out, none of them were still attached to the dress. This can be a very costly mistake.

Well, when I inspected the dress, I saw obvious signs of glue having been used. So, I told the lady the problems that had cropped up with dresses like hers. I told her that I would clean it, but she had to agree to having all of the beads and sequins sewn onto the dress. Otherwise, they might all come off, I even had her sign a release for for this.

It took the counter attendant/seamstress quite some time to do this. I was thankful for how diligently she worked on it. Finally, it was time to spot and clean it. Sure enough, when the dress came out of the dryer, there was no sign of the glue that had held the beads and sequins on the dress. On

the other hand, as near as I could tell, all of the decorations on the dress were still there.

The dress was pressed, and it really looked lovely! It really did. Now, there was one more thing for me to do: box it.

I had ordered a wedding gown box, and now it was time to put the gown into it. And here is where one's imagination solves the problem of how to get the gown into the box. Well, I might have had some help... We started with putting the bust form together and then putting the form in it. Then it took at least a couple of us to fold the skirt back and forth. The bust was then centered over it. Then the lid was used to close the box. That is when I looked at our handiwork. There was a clear plastic window in the lid so that we could see the dress.

I won't say that I got misty when I viewed our finished work, but I was very proud of the results! I was giddy! So was everyone who had had a part in doing this. When the lady came to get it, I was excited all over again. You could say that I was gushing...

After this, a woman brought in a pair of pants with an obvious cigarette burn hole. It was as close to a perfect circle as you could get. She accused us of having done this which I denied a couple of times. Then I explained why we could not do this. No worker was allowed to smoke inside the building. That ended this discussion. This was a rule that I strictly enforced.

Moving to the south side

Mildred and Carolyn came down to visit which surprised me. It was the only time that they did. This happened to be at the same time when I moved my family to the south side of town. (I was getting tired of the horrible smell that we would get when the wind was out of the south.) Actually, it

was one of my employees mentioned that this would be a good idea.

During this move, we got to smell this odor up close and personal. To get from our old apartment to the new one I had to drive across the north end of the pulpwood plant grounds. We really had to hold our breaths as we drove across . In fact we had to do this several times.

One of our customers had a young cat that he needed to find a good home for. He was moving to another place, and he could not take the cat with him. So, I decided to take it home with me.

The cat was somewhat spoiled though. It had been allowed to sleep curled around the top of its owner's head. So, it chose me as the person to receive this treatment. Well, at least the top of my head was always warm! I also had to be careful not to move very much as well.

Then one night, the back of my neck was very sore. We had some Ben Gay in the bathroom, so I put some on the sore area. For some reason, the cat did not like the smell! That sort of stopped it from sleeping curled around the top of my head any more. We were able to keep the cat until we moved the following March. Why? It was rather skittish, and we could not catch it.

The other side of the duplex was rented by a young dentist whom we got to know. Well Susan decided to take advantage of this.

She liked to drink soft drinks, and I did not want her to drink them. So in the midst of a conversation with him, she asked about drinking them. His reply was that it would be alright if the soda was sugar free. Boy was Susan glad to hear that! Yes, I got a "told you so" look from her for sure.

But I had a little something up my sleeve: I have a chemistry background, and I used this knowledge. I had

read the ingredients of various sodas. The first ingredient was a strong acid; the most common one phosphoric acid. So, I asked a very simple question, "What about the phosphoric acid?" His answer was, "Whoops, that is what I use to etch teeth."

Then it was my turn to look back at Susan with **my** "told you so." But this did not stop her from drinking soda until she had to have a feeding tube placed into her stomach 21 years later.

It was more than 30 years later before research revealed that the acid in soda reduces the thickness of a person's enamel on their teeth. My comment to the dentist was certainly way ahead of its time. Yet, it is common sense to a person why has worked with strong acids. Another acid that was used was citric acid. Then again, this can be made strong enough that one company used it as the main ingredient for their toilet bowl cleaner. This is also too strong to be drinking as well.

One evening after I ate supper. Susan and I were doing something when we heard a fire engine siren, and it was coming closer. So we went outside to see what was going on. A house nearby had an out building that was completely engulfed in flames.

The fire truck pulled up, and a fireman connected a hose to the truck. Then another fireman walked through the burning building's door turning the nozzle on as he went. It only took a couple of seconds for the flames to completely die down! This also created a huge amount of smoke, so much so that the smoke alarms in both our and the dentist's apartments began making a horrible noise. It took quite some time to get most of the smoke out of our apartments!

I actually had time to go to the library once in a while. There were two books that I remember over any others this summer.

Because of the positive thinking books I had gotten from the insurance company, I looked for these kinds of books in the library. One of them had many events that turned out quite well because of something called TNT. But nowhere could I find anything to tell me what TNT was. I did not think that it had anything to do with explosives although the results of these events was very explosive in another sense.

I had actually worked with TNT during the summer of 1961, so I knew what it was used for; I knew would blow up under certain conditions. I also knew that its chemical name was trinitrotoluene. But it was not until many years later I learned what this book was talking about: **Today Not Tomorrow**. So what had this book been about? When you want something done, do it today and not tomorrow. This matches with one of the sayings from my insurance days: Do it now!

The other book seemed like it was about positive thinking, but it was not. It was about seven mental states of being. The author claimed that he had experienced all of these. Yet, as I read the book, it did not ring true. This included comments about Marilyn Monroe. According to him, she had found a way to get to one of these higher levels of existence where he claimed he had seen her. Well, this was some time after she committed suicide. My opinion on the book and author: thumbs down all the way. (Reminds me of the books I read about flying saucers in high school...

Business drop off

In September, the pulpwood mill was doing maintenance on two of their 5 electrical generators when one of the other three stopped working. This put a lot of people off of work for a while, so my business took a quick nose dive. There was not much that could be done except report the problem to the office so they would understand the drop in sales. In

about 3-4 weeks business began picking up again as the generator problem was fixed.

I wanted to build the business more, but I was not sure how to do so. But I was going to find out. I have mentioned about getting literature from IFI (International Fabricare Institute). Since I was running a One Hour Martinizing store, I was also getting information from them.

This is when I notice that I could order (free of course!) a tape with 30 second commercials on it. This came from the headquarters of the One Hour Martinizing. Of course, I ordered one. After it arrived, I contacted the local radio station about advertizing on their station. An arrangement was made, and my add began to air weekly. I paid the cost out of my pocket.

The person who sold me the air time managed to get me to go on line with him for a half hour program. Whether this help very much or not, I do not know. But it could not have hurt since I was given free air time. (It was a nice experience.)

I needed to call the office about something and happened to mention what I had done. I was quickly told by the office that I was to send the monthly bills to the office. They would issue a check from there. So, I did. How much did this help the store? I really do not know.

The office had developed a strict rule as to what had to happen when a customer did not bring back the receipt that they had been given when they dropped off their clothes. We had a spiral notebook where we were to enter certain information (date picked up, ticket number, signature, and driver's license number, ...).

It was during college football season when a man came to pick up some clothes and did not have his receipt. So, I duly took this information. Some time later, his wife came into the store with the ticket. Well, at first I could not find

the order matching her ticket. So, I took out this notebook to see if someone had picked up this order. Sure enough, I found the entry that I had made earlier in the day.

I let her see what I had entered and asked if she recognized the signature. She did: it was her husband's! What had happened? He was at home watching football on the TV a little earlier and noticed the dry cleaning receipt. Well, he handed it to his wife and asked her if she would get his dry cleaning. Apparently, he was so engrossed in the football game that he forgot that he had already picked them up. (I wonder what she said to him when she got back home?)

There was a reason why we had to keep records on people when they did not bring back the receipt. It came out of the larger cities where Supervisory Services had stores. People were coming in without a receipt. (This was before we had to write down the person's driver's license.) They would sign for the clothes, and then come back in a few days with the receipt demanding their clothes. Of course, they were not there anymore. So, they filed a claim for the "lost" order. Without proof of who had taken the clothes, the claim had to be paid.

I had one lady who never could remember to bring in her receipts. So when I saw her coming into the store, I automatically opened the spiral notebook. After finding her clothes, I entered the required information. (We both knew the drill.)

Then one day, someone else came to pick up his clothes without a receipt. He was under the influence of some substance and did not have a driver's license. I could not give him what he wanted, and he was standing there arguing with me when she walked in the door. After a while, he realized that he was not going to get what he wanted and left.

Well, this was a wake up call for her. For the first time she saw why I had to get the information that I did. From then on, she had her receipt with her.

As the end of the year approached, the store next door to me went out of business. I really wanted the store to grow. So, I got the idea of perhaps expanding into the store next door turning it into a laundry. I even made some petitions for customers to sign requesting this service. (I did not have any idea of what this would require nor what I would have to do to run it. I would find out within a few months though.)

One of the things I did was to talk to the owner of the building, and I learned that the rent was going up the next year. So, this was another reason for wanting a bigger business: more money was needed for the next lease.

Another thing I did was to talk to the office about this. I included the number of people who had signed my petitions. It did not matter; they had other plans for me. It would seem that God did also.

Baton Rouge Area

I was the first manager to put the Bogalusa store in the black. People in the home office saw that and decided to move me to where I could put my talents to use in a larger store. They felt that I was being wasted in that small store.

First of all, I had started with the store \$2,000 in the red. The commercial sewing machine added to that deficit by \$1,500+. Yet, the financial statement for the year had a \$1,000 profit. So, I had made up \$3,500 in expenses and added \$1,000 in profit beyond that. It sure looks like they were right.

So, I was asked to transfer from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge in March, a little over 14 months after I began training as a manager. Of course, I agreed. I think it came with an

increase in pay. (It should have with the extra responsibilities.)

In March 1980, I was sent to manage the Goodwood One Hour Martinizing store to replace a manager who had left (unwillingly). This had been done rather quickly, so there was not three weeks to train a new manager. Besides Ron Shaw had temporarily taken over the managerial position, and someone needed to be brought in so he could get back to his job as the state supervisor again. With what I had done for the past year, I looked like a very good choice to be the manager.

What about a new manager for my store? Well I had trained my counter attendant to spot clothes as well as filling out the paper work. The store would need a new counter attendant, but other than that, it could function fairly well, or so I thought.

So on the designated Monday, I left her in charge as I drove to Baton Rouge. The area manager for Baton Rouge, LaFayette, and points south also arrived before closing. Then the three of us began the physical inventory of the clothes. When this was completed along with some paperwork, I was officially the manager of Goodwood OHM.

Then the three of us went out to eat. Well, with the salary that I had been getting, I could not afford to eat at what I considered to be an expensive restaurant. But we went to Red Lobster anyway. The area manager paid for all three meals (company expense account). Afterward, I went to my motel room that the company had also provided.

So, I was at work around 6:30 AM which was my usual time. After clocking in, I went about my usual Tuesday morning rituals. One of the first things was to get the boiler going. Well, Bogalusa has hard water, but Baton Rouge has very soft water. (I did not know this!) So, I found the boiler treatment that I had been using and added it to the boiler.

Bad mistake! I had problems with the boiler for some time because of the foam that the treatment had created. Then I greased the equipment, and this included the laundry machines. This took some extra time because I had to search for the nipples that needed to be greased. Ron came in after the store opened.

I would have liked to have some hands on training in running this store, but I really did not get the attention that I thought I needed. Ron was trying to help me while still doing his job as state supervisor. So the most I got from him was a few do this or do that.

Besides he thought he had a way to help me without him being there all of the time. He had hired a lady to be the assistant manager who was suppose to help me understand what was going on. Well, I did rely on her, but she was not dependable to the extent that she should have been.

Goodwood OHM

This store was located in a strip mall several stores from a Deli which I and my employees frequently bought a submarine sandwich for lunch. (I don't remember how many stores were in this mall, but we were at the northern end, and the Deli was in the middle.) Another item in my store was a refrigerator which was stocked with soda.

During the rest of this week, I found an apartment and signed a lease. Then over the weekend, I drove a U-Haul truck to Bogalusa and loaded everything that I could put into the truck. I hated to do so, but I had to leave a upright freezer. To be honest, I really left the apartment in a mess. I only hope they used or sold the freezer and that this was enough to pay for the time and cost for preparing the apartment for the next tenant. But we headed back to Baton Rouge.

One of the first things I needed to do was to get a Louisiana commercial driver's license so I could drive the

laundry delivery truck if necessary. When I moved to Bogalusa, I had taken the regular driver's license passing it with a score of 100. (Bragging: I did not bother to read the Louisiana Rules of the Road first.) But I decided perhaps there might be some harder questions of the commercial license, so I read the commercial section before taking the test. I was right, and as a result I passed this test also (not a perfect score though).

I had asked to have a drying cleaning and laundry set up in Bogalusa, but I was sent to such a store in another city. Was this an accident? Or, was this the results of my "asking and receiving"? I'm inclined to believe the latter. What I also found out was that I was not yet ready for such a large business. I had not yet developed the attitude I needed to successfully run it.

In Bogalusa, I was part of everything that was done from accepting the dirty clothes, cleaning them, pressing them, etc. At Goodwood, one lady ran the dry cleaning section by herself: cleaned and pressed the clothes. I had two ladies that pressed the laundry (jeans and shirts). I also had a couple of ladies who did the counter work (One was also our seamstress). Finally, I had a truck driver who picked up and delivered the laundry we did for other stores in town. So, my job was essentially washing the laundry and supervise everyone. This also means that I was the truck driver whenever we did not have one or he was not available (well I did have one woman truck driver while there). I also had the maintenance and repairs to do. The repairs were a very big headache because the equipment was not in good condition. One night I did not get home until after midnight because of this.

Another problem was someone hired by Ron Shaw: an assistant manager. She caused more problems than she was worth. We lost at least two employees (one in laundry and

the other the dry cleaning presser) because of her. Actually she wanted to run the store her way, and I was not standing up to her. She even ran off the wonderful lady that cleaned and pressed all of the dry cleaning. Her comment: "I can do as good a job as she can."

The purpose of the assistant manager was to give me some help while I adjusted to the much bigger store. However, even the idea of an assistant was foreign to me, so I did not learn how to use her effectively. (Sounds a lot like my first year teaching fourth grade.)

The summer of 1980 was very hot. As a result, there were rolling black outs during the day. This meant that we would be without electricity for up to two hours a day. We just did not know when this would occur.

There there was the day a squirrel was running on a power line. This was no problem until it also touched a grounded wire! It was instantaneously electrocuted, and the fuse on our transformer blew. Suddenly, we had no electricity. So all of the exhaust fans that move the very hot air out of the back of the building stopped... The steam lines and all of the equipment that the steam heated continued to put out heat. It rather quickly became stifling hot! (The same thing happened during rolling blackouts.) My guess is that it may have been over 115°F if not 120.

This makes it difficult to get the work done on time. People were complaining that their clothes were not ready when promised. They did not want to hear anything about us not having any electricity for a while that day. I suppose they were in air conditioning all day, so they did not stop to think about what we were facing.

One of largest problem was that I did not know what to do in situations like this, and no one thought enough to tell me. Well, maybe I was told after the fact. Then again, I did not think to ask about what should be done either.

And then there was a problem with a dress that a lady brought to have cleaned. Her daughter was getting married, and she wanted to have some stains removed from it. Well, she had gone to another daughter's wedding 13 years before. She just had not had it cleaned since then... Big problems: stains left that long in a dress are not going to come out without cutting them out. OK, there is perhaps one stain in a million that would. None of these were that one. I told her that we would try, but most likely they could not be removed.

And then there was a laundry order. We offer 2 hour service on laundry for those who want it. Well, a shirt was brought in requesting this service including heavy starch. The only problem was that the shirt content was 90% polyester and only 10% cotton. There is no way that this shirt will take heavy starch! She would have been much better off having it dry cleaned and then apply sizing to it. I guess, she did not understand that the more polyester a shirt contains the less starch it will absorb.

Housing

I may have had help finding the apartment or found it in a newspaper. In any case, I was given some money to help with the move which was very much welcomed!

Our apartment was the front one of a triplex. When we moved in, all three were occupied. One off the back ones moved out after a while. But we got acquainted with them before they did.

Now, Susan was all alone again, this time in a large city while Kevin was still half a state away. She did become friends with the lady in the next triplex. Compared to Susan, this lady had much worse mental problems. Besides, her husband was dictatorial and an abuser.

One day he beat her up right in front of their children. He was put in jail for a while, and the police recommended that

we take her and her children somewhere before he had to be released. So we did: we took her to her relatives in Mississippi that afternoon where she was seen by a doctor.

Of course, he was ready to have me charged with kidnapping since he was the one who had legal custody of the children. So we went back to Mississippi to get them. (A lawyer told me later that he had a legal right to do what he had threatened. But what I do not understand was why the police did not mention any of the facilities for battered women in the Baton Rouge area. That would have been the logical place to take her. But how many such shelters did there exist in the area?)

Dehydration and cure

While at Bogalusa, I was drinking 8 glasses of water a day. Considering the amount of heat that I was exposed to, this was not nearly enough. So I lost weight (from 130 to 110 or was it 100?) , and my clothes were hanging on me. By Sunday each week, I was very, very tired. (Yes, I thought I knew what I was doing. I didn't!)

Somehow I realized something had to be done. So, I began drinking more water, and paying more attention to my weight once I got to Baton Rouge. I began to gain weight and feel better. I continued to drink a lot of water until my weight got back to 130. From then on, I adjusted my drinking up or down based upon how much I weighed.

Accidents

A family had parked in front the store's door and picked up their dry cleaning. Everyone but the teenage daughter went down toward the Deli to get somethings. I'm not sure why, but she got into the car to go somewhere. (To the Deli, perhaps?)

When she started the car, the engine died on her. Then the car began to rolled down toward the building. Whether

she tried to stop it or not, I don't know. Even if she had tried, the car had power brakes. To stop the car, she would have had to push down on the brake pedal very hard. Most people could not have stopped the car under this condition either. Well it might have been stopped if the driver had thought to use the parking brake...

But she only had a learner's permit. So, the car ran into the front door of my store. There was a sudden noise of breaking glass. Now she was really scarred!

The family soon returned to face a problem that they had not anticipated. That is when I called the home office in Sulphur, LA. I found out what I needed to do and then handed the phone to the girl's father. That is when he found out what he needed to do. Needless to say, he very embarrassed over the incident.

Then I called someone to get the broken glass repaired as instructed. It was not all that long before someone came out, and the repairs were done before the store closed that evening.

Some people say that things happen in threes, but I really do not believe that applies to this though. It would be several months before a truck ran through another window. Finally, it was at least another six years before a car broke the glass in the front window of 171 OHM in Lake Charles, LA. Somehow, six years just seems like a bit too far apart to qualify for this...

The laundry equipment was directly behind the counter area, and the dry cleaning equipment was to the side of both of these. Large glass panes were in the counter area, and there was two large ones in front of the dry cleaning area that went from floor to ceiling. In between the two panes was a 24" wide area with glass slats that could be rolled in and out. This allowed air to be pulled through the building to help remove the excess heat.

A couple had come to the shopping center in a van and parked in front of the glass slats. Then they had done some shopping. When they finished doing this, they came back to the van. But it would not start at all. So, they got another way home that evening.

The husband sent his mechanic to see what he could do with the van, so he did. I don't know what else he had done, but he got under the van. Now if a piece of metal is placed between certain places on the starter, it will start. He did, and the van motor began running.

There was one major problem: the transmission was in gear! So, the van headed toward the store breaking the glass as it slowly moved into the store. (Fortunately, the mechanic made sure he was not where the back wheels could run over him.)

The area where the van entered does not have any equipment that would stop it. But the fortunate thing was that it was a van rather than a car. There was not any equipment there, but there was the clothes rack where we put the cleaned clothes back into their respective orders. It was hanging less than 6 feet from the floor. So, this stopped the van. It was less than a minute before the mechanic came through the front door, went to the van and turned the key off.

This is when I found out what the problem was. There is a linkage which connects the gear selector to the transmission which had become defective. The gear selector was still in park, but the transmission was in drive! He was lucky to be alive, and we were fortunate to that no one in the building was injured. Well, the sewing area was only a few feet away from the path of the van.

OK, I knew what to do this time. I first called the office to report the problem. The mechanic called his boss. The boss contacted the office if not the reverse. Then I called the

glass company, again. Situation was back to normal before noon.

What else happened? Well, the owner's wife won a seat in the Louisiana Legislature, so I got to meet her one time. And there was another time when I met some of their children.

And then it was still during the spring of 1980 that one of their sons told me that his father had made a trip to Canada to hunt Canadian geese. It took me a very short time to realize that this was not true. This is during the time when the geese are laying eggs, hatching them, and then leaving their nests during the *fall*. A person could get in a lot of trouble hunting in the spring. I told him so.

That is when he confided that there had been rumors that Joe Lowenthau was sick. This story was to put the rumor to rest. It did not work for me, but neither did I tell anyone else what I knew.

There were times when a driver had quit, and I had to drive the truck to deliver the laundry. (Given I only lasted in this store barely more than six months, I went through several drivers!)

The first thing that I noticed was how scattered the stores were. They went from the southeastern corner to northwestern corner. So, weather could be quite different from one store to another! One afternoon I drove to the store on the southeastern where it was raining rather hard. My next stop was on Starling Lane, close to Louisiana State University (southwest part). It was dry as a bone. But then again, these were the usual pop up storms that were very isolated. Besides, I saw no more rain that afternoon during the rest of my deliveries.

My evening counter girl was Sheila whose parents were Cajun which meant that she had a slightly darker skin color. Then came vacation time and she spent several days of it

on the beaches of Hawaii. She came back with a rather deep tan. Problems with this? She was good looking and she was getting asked out by some of the black customers thinking that she was also black. It was definitely a problem for her. But this subsided after a while.

And then I learned the importance of making absolutely sure that all pockets were checked. Someone had dropped off some shirts to be laundered at Starling Lane, but they had not done this. Well, my people caught their error and it was a very big one. One shirt contained a platinum credit card in its pocket!

It was brought to me immediately. I bagged the credit card and stapled it to the appropriate laundry ticket. Then I called Starling Lane to tell them what we had found. I think that the customer may have already contacted them looking for the card.

It turned out that I did not have a driver this day so I delivered the clothes this afternoon personally. When I got to the store, I made the counter attendant verify that I had returned the card and then made her to sign showing that she had received it.

I should mention that during the time I was at Goodwood, I got well acquainted with the lady that did the alterations. Even as I write this, I can see her face and almost hear her speak, but I do not remember her name...

Back to my assistant manager: she had gotten the lady that pressed the shirts in the laundry department to quit. So, I had to replace her. Well, one of the things I had heard was that women who had had left their husbands were reported to be hard workers. Well, this turned out not to be the truth. The exact opposite can also happen. Well, for the one I hired, the latter was the case. She did not like the heat, nor did she really like to work that much. So, I had to get someone else.

And this goes back to the early days as manager here. Periodically, the managers were suppose to go through the inventory and weed out the orders that were more than a year old. Then they were to notify the person by letter. If after a given period of time, no one had come to pick up the clothes, they could be donated to a charity.

Well Ron Shaw when he took over this store from the fired manager had not done all of this. He had simply removed the old clothes and donated to an organization that he had a relationship with. Well, he make a list of orders that he had removed which was also required.

I was not aware of this until a "little old lady" was looking for her coat. I think she still had her ticket stub. Well, it was not there. So, I looked for this ticket number on the list Ron had provided. It was on it.

Then I explained that she had left this order for more than a year and what we do in these cases. Her reply was that this was her favorite coat. At the time, I wondered why she had left her favorite coat in the cleaners over an entire winter. The date on the ticket was during the fall of 1978, and this was the spring of 1960. But perhaps this had slipped her mind?

Bad news, or was it?

By the end of September, my managerial skills problems had come to a head. On the 29th, the state and area supervisors appeared at closing time. I knew that something was drastically wrong. I was right: I was being replaced! Fortunately for me and the company, the area supervisor had come to my rescue by suggesting that I should be swapped with the manager of a smaller store, Plank Road OHM, in the northern part of the city. So, I was checked out of this store and told to begin work the following morning at the other store. I was so ashamed of this happening that I did not tell Susan for some time.

Plank Road OHM

The next morning I began working with some trepidation (Would you believe tons of it?). But, I soon learned that the things I had learned to do in Bogalusa could be done the same way in this store. So, now I could relax and do what I knew how to do and do well. Again I settled into the same habits that had worked so well at my first store.

I was not the only one transferring from these two stores. Mary at Plank Road OHM had worked with the manager, also a Mary, there for so long that she wanted to remain working for her. So, her wish was honored and Sheila was asked to transfer from Goodwood to Plank Road which she did.

Then I did something that I had not done before. I kept a record of year to year sales. I did this using one of the forms we used to keep track of the sales for a given day. (It really was not much different in concept.

The form had four columns so I used the first and third columns for the first day of the week of the previous year and present year respectively. The second and fourth columns contained the sales of the previous and present years respectively.

As a result, I could compare the sales last year verses this year week by week. I could very easily compare sales year to year for any part of a year.

It took me a while to go through the the sales back to the first of January, 1979. As I did, I entered the weekly dates and dry cleaning sales amounts down the first two columns beginning on the left side of the report form until I got to the end of December, 1979. Then I filled in the dates and sales for 1980 to the time I took over the store. Then each week there after, I filled in that weeks information.

Some business experiences

OK, this time I was showing off my knowledge of health issues and had to back down. A lady had brought in some clothes to be cleaned, and we chatted a little bit while I wrote the ticket.

During the conversation, she made a comment about going to buy some coffee. Well, I had learned that doing this affects the amount of B vitamins in the person's body. So I said something about this. Her quick reply, "I'll have you know that my hermetical level is quite high." I did not have the slightest idea what she meant. So, she told me: her iron count was quite high. She also told me that she was a nurse that kept close tabs on her iron count.

What did this have to do with the B vitamins? Well, one effects of the B vitamins is the larger the amount of B vitamins taken the higher the iron count goes. In other words, she had taken enough B vitamins to elevate her iron count to what she wanted it to be. She would regularly check her iron count and adjust the amount of B vitamins she took accordingly.

Another time I was chatting with a middle age male customer who was somewhat nostalgic about the building my store was in.

Some time in the past, this location had been a drug store. Some 20 years ago, he had just finished his schooling in pharmacy. His first job was at that drug store.

He remembered the first prescription very well. It was for a tonic, but just not any tonic. It was for strychnine! This seemed to be rather strange to me. After all, this is a poison.

But then I remember my organic chemistry. This poison as well as some others have certain properties that can be useful medically speaking. They have to be taken in very small doses though. A little to much is deadly. Apparently the doctor thought his patient needed the strychnine.

Now 20 years later, he was working for the state of Louisiana in pharmacology. His responsibility was to visit the drug stores on a regular basis to review their prescription records looking for possible errors or illegal activities.

Another customer, who worked for the post office, owned a very large number of slacks. Twice a month, we had a sale of dry cleaning pants (3 for \$4.99). Each time she would bring in several pairs, but seldom would she come back to get all of the ones she brought. In time I must had over 30 pairs of her cleaned slacks. What she would do once in a while is look through the slacks that I had to determine which orders she would get that day. I suppose my store was her extra closet.

While I was enjoying getting to know my customers, I was also becoming much more secure in my job. I was getting to know my employees as well, and everyone was content with how things were going. Business was also picking up; I could see this in my weekly year of year statistics.

By this time it was mid December and my 39th birthday was here. Just like any other day, I headed home that Saturday evening. This being the third weekend, I was expecting to go to church this evening and also in the morning.

My wife had a different idea. When I got home, I saw Sheila and her boyfriend there. What were they doing there? I had no idea. So, Susan told me. They were there to help celebrate my birthday. She was so happy to have surprised me.

Well, I though that going to church was more important so I did not enjoy the celebration as much as I should, but this was my problem.

During the next two weeks our business picked up quite a bit. Just like Easter, the people wanted their clothes cleaned.

But there was something different about this time of the year. I noticed this when I did the weekly inventory of the clothing orders. As Christmas approached the amount of inventory decreased by a few hundred dollars or more. (This seemed strange!) But the inventory taken the Monday after Christmas was quite a bit higher.

While things at the store was humming along without any problems, sales were increasing. In fact they were doing much better than the previous year. Sales for 1980 were \$69,000+ compared to \$56,000+ for 1979.

And then came the week before Easter... We had the usual very busy week as had been the case the previous two years. Then came Saturday; what a day! There was enough business to keep two pressers very busy; well they never ran out of clothes to press. And this was not the busiest part of the day!

By late morning, people started coming in to get their clothes. A line developed inside the store. And then the line kept getting longer and longer... For a very long time, Sheila and I were constantly passing each other getting clothes and taking them to the customers. As soon as a customer got their orders and went out someone else came in the door to get theirs. Both of us had to eat on the run; there was no time to stop to eat. And so it went for most of the afternoon. Honestly, I don't understand now how I could have cleaned clothes and helped her on the counter; it was that hectic!

Well, I did have to stop long enough to check the laundry that came back from Goodwood. It checked out, so I gave the driver what I owed (nearly \$100) and got back to working with customers.

Finally! It was 6 PM, and I locked the front door. I did the required paperwork and made my night deposit. It was over \$900. That's right, our sales receipts for this one day was

over \$1,000! I could have used a couple more counter attendants on this day, that was for sure. And remember that this was when a pair of pants costs \$2.00; a two piece suit or simple dress was \$5. That was a large volume of dry cleaning that had been picked up!

We had a very good crew that worked well together. They had to on this day, and they all came through doing a great job. I'm fairly certain that everyone went home very tired. I know that I did.

Around the same time a lady came into the store asking if we stored fur coats for the summer. The office replied to me, "Yes, we do." I also learned what I needed to do. Then the lady brought in her coat, and we arranged to store it. It was mid to late September that the fur coat was returned to my store.

I was not sure when this happened but it certainly got my attention. It was almost 3:30 PM which is when we stopped taking clothes for the same day. Well, a lady came in with a wedding dress that she wanted to have cleaned that afternoon. I told her that I was sorry, but I could not get this cleaned and pressed before the store closed that afternoon. It took more time than this. Besides, there were all the possible problems with beads and sequins if it had any. If there were, it would take several days to make sure they were secure before I could even clean it. (Why would someone wait until the very "last second" to bring something that requires a lot of hard work to make it look like it should?)

Somewhat later in the spring of 1981, my parents made another trip to see us. (It had been two years since the last time we had seen them. They may well have come by before or after an Elder Hostel event.)

This time I insisted that they let me show them my store on a Sunday afternoon. With the continued increases in

sales, I was proud of the store and what I had been able to do with it. Yes, I was also proud of my employees as well!

I was very giddy as I took them through the store explaining what we did there as I went. In fact, I was like a child with a brand new toy!

On another Sunday, we and they made the trip to lola to see Kevin. (I don't remember asking what they thought of the facilities there.) Then it was back to Baton Rouge before they left for home. (Or perhaps they headed home from lola; I don't remember which.)

As summer approached, my weekly inventory of clothes was getting bigger and bigger. So, I was running out of space on the motorized clothes rack. Something had to go.

So, I went through all the orders that were dated prior to the summer of 1980. Each of them was sent a letter telling them to please pick up their dry cleaning or it would be disposed of. I also included the amount of the order or orders and the ticket numbers. Most of the letters were returned as not deliverable.

But then again some of the people did come. I will never forget one lady who came in asking, "Is this my drapes?" I went to the back to see what the order was. Sure enough, it contained her drapes. When I told her, "Yes," she was so very happy. So was I because I now had another happy customer. The fact that the order was for \$165 didn't hurt either!

A month or two after I sent the letters out, I disposed of the unclaimed orders of dry cleaning as per office requirements. I also removed them from my inventory. Finally, I had room for more clothes!

It may have been soon after the Saturday before Easter that we had been so busy. I was talking with one of my customers as I was want to do. This time I was complaining

somewhat of how hard we had had to work that day. Well, he certainly stopped this "pity party!" In a somewhat serious tone, he told me, "You don't get paid for doing nothing." He was right we are paid for working. OH, well.

Boiler pressure for dry cleaning only plants was set at 80 PSI. Laundry/dry cleaning plants had boilers set at 120 PSI. In either case, the equipment and steam lines produces a large amount of heat. This is somewhat of a problem in the summer, but it certainly keeps the building warm in the winter.

By the summer 1980, the steam lines were insulated in all of our stores. This reduced the amount of heat loss from the steam lines. Even so, Goodwood was very hot that summer. Yet, people who had worked there for several years could tell the difference!

Even so, In stores in Alexandria and Shreveport, LA, the morning temperatures were quite cold in the winter when the employees came to work in the morning. Not only that, but it took more time to get the boiler up to pressure. Also, they were having to replace steam traps in the steam lines more often because the water in them would freeze over night especially between Saturday evening and Monday morning.

Somebody somewhere came up with the idea of running the boiler during the night. (This would definitely work.) But fuel wise, this is somewhat expensive. That is when someone changed the the on/off electrical switch to a three way switch. (One position for off, one for full pressure, and one for 40 PSI setting.) This used much less fuel, and there was enough pressure to keep the steam pushing any liquid water in the lines back to the boiler.

When they changed out these switches on our boilers, we were told to use the "low" setting anytime the temperature is suppose to go below 30. Otherwise, we were to shut the

boiler off. On cold days we could turn the switch to "low" to keep the building comfortable. Then at 6 PM we were to determine whether to leave the boiler on "low" or turn it off depending upon expected nighttime temperatures.

Sure enough this saved fuel. Maintenance costs went down, and the building was much more comfortable temperature wise.

During the two winters that I was at Plank Road, there were several times each winter that I needed to keep the boiler running all night. Sometimes I would stay up half the night before driving to the store to turn the boiler on. This was usually on Sunday night because the boiler was off Saturday night.

Speaking of cold weather, we had an ice storm one time. I looked at the trees across the street. There had to be at least a quarter inch on the limbs. Needless to say, we did not have a lot of customers that day. Besides, I drove very carefully to and from work!

This next item was a problem that I had regardless of the temperature, hot or cold. While I was still drinking plenty of water based upon my weight which I monitored. I began to wake up in the middle of the night with terrible leg cramps. These were known as shin splints as they involved the shin muscles. They were bad enough that I could not put my feet flat on the floor. These muscles were that tight and sore!

For some reason, I thought some calcium might help the situation. Well, I had Cal-Mag from Amway which is a calcium and magnesium tablet. By this time, I also knew that Vitamin C would help my body absorb the calcium. So, I took a cal-Mag tablet along with 250 mg Vit C tablet with a glass of water. Then I hobbled back to bed and gingerly got in bet. Within a few minutes, I was fast asleep! This happened several times, so I am confident that this combination works.

Years later I asked a nurse practitioner about this combination of tablets and why I thought it had work. She suggested that it was the magnesium rather than the calcium. That was her opinion. Well, I thought she probably would know given her expertise.

Then recently, I saw an add for Doan's Pills. The main ingredient of these pills? It is magnesium. This has been marketed for decades for the relief of muscle pains. Now I understand why. She was right. I had happened to select the correct pills to give me the relief that I needed. Or, did God guide me in that direction?

Sales Increase!

I continued to keep my records of sales on a week verses week basis. The sales continued to increase. I had heard that the manager of one of the other One Hour Martinizing stores in our area had been guilty of adultery, and that I was getting some of his customers. True or false? I don't know. But my sales were increasing at a rate of over 35%.

By the fall, the office informed me of what I already knew: our sales were way up from previous years, and this continued to be true as we entered the last quarter of the year. This meant that we were also doing well above the sales that we had accomplished after I took over the previous year. So, I got a well deserved pay raise.

Sometime during the early fall, someone asked about cleaning and storing some winter clothes. So, I checked with the office about this. Yes, we could do this. So, I informed the customer of this and also ordered the needed supplies to do this. (Just a way to increase sales.)

The increasing sales reached a crescendo the week of Christmas which was on a Friday. By the early part of the week, we had clothes everywhere. And this situation only got worse as the week progressed. In fact, by Wednesday I had so many orders still not process that I could not possibly

get all of them done by Thursday night. In fact, I had told the customers as they came in that the earliest we could get to their clothes was the following Monday, Dec 28!

Everyone worked extra hours this entire week. I was keeping my two pressers as late as I dared everyday. Even so, I was cleaning clothes after they left. This way they had plenty of clothes ready to be pressed when they returned in the morning.

While the number of customers picking up clothes was nowhere as near as it had been the previous Easter, we were still trying to get as many orders done as we could. So, when 6 PM came on Dec 24, I told everyone it was time to quit for the day as I locked the front door. We were all weary by this time! What clothes had been processed would have to wait until Monday morning. Even so, the pressers had a large quantity of clothes that they had not been able to press yet. To this I added the last load of clothes that I took out of the dryer.

My sales for this week was \$3,400+ which was huge considering that my average weekly sale for 1981 was \$2,000. We really had to work hard this week. To give you an idea of what this meant, stores doing this much business in a week were considered to be among the larger ones operated by Supervisory Services!

December 28th ended the calendar year at the close of business. So after taking inventory that evening, I had now had all of the sales written down. Given the time, it was time to make the bank deposit and head home. I could fill my sales on my personal year to year sales comparison on Tuesday when business was a little slow.

From the previous week, I knew that the sales to date had been more than \$96,500. So, I was a little anxious as to the final results this Tuesday. It was \$3,400+! This is very close to 100 thousand. Then I entered the numbers and did

the final total. I was a little let down. The grand total for the year was less than \$100,000. So close, yet so far away! Well, maybe next year. Still, I wanted to know more. What about increase in sales? What was the percentage? It turned out that it was 37.5%! OK, this was really something. This was far more than would be expected. After all I had a \$39,000+ increase in raw numbers.

I had completed 5 quarters in this store. While doing so, I had made quite a few decisions as to what needed to be done in specific circumstances. So I was continuing to grow in my position and confidence. I was much more at ease in the decisions made. What did this next year have in store for me? I did not know, but I did not worry about it either. If there were any problems, either I would figure them out or know enough to ask others to find out what needed to be done.

Actually, this happened sometime during the two and a half years that I managed this store. A man came in and showed me his constable badge. He had a legal paper stating that I had to give him a certain amount of money or I would have to close the doors of my store.

A article of clothing had been damaged, and the customer took it to court. Mr. Lowenthau had hired a local lawyer to take care of the case. Well, he had not done so. The court awarded damages, but the lawyer did not report this at all. The first the office knew of this, was when this man came in with the legal claim for the damages awarded.

So, immediately I called the office talking with Sandra, the office manager. She wanted to speak to the man, and I handed the phone to him. Then I let the two of them to sort out the details. When he hung up, he thanked me for helping him accomplish his task and left.

There was one more thing I was thinking about as 1981 came to a close: a saying that I had heard my Dad first say

thirty years earlier and then some times as he got older. "Life begins at 40." Well his take on this was that life begins to go down hill at 40. Well, I had turned 40 at the end of this wonderful year. So, my personal opinion became that I found life to be quite different. My life was just beginning in many respects as I was just beginning to hit my stride at 40.

I am not sure why, but I was not paying my rent at the first of the month. Apparently, I was not watching my finances as well as I did after I retired. Anyway, the owner finally got tired of waiting and told me to find another place to live. I'm thinking this was around late winter to early spring of 1982. So, with some help, I found another place which was closer to my work. This time we were living in a duplex.

The Reagan recession

But all things have to come to an end. As 1982 unfolded, the weekly sales began to drop off. I did not know why, but this heading tells you why: we were entering a recession. While our president has his name attached to it, there is much more to it.

Ever since LBJ thought we could fight a war while out spending the country's income, inflation had become a problem. It had gotten really bad during the Jimmy Carter era. The chairman of the Federal Reserve Board decided that something drastic had to be done. The interest rate that the board did control was increase to the point that borrowing money became very expensive. Meanwhile the Reagan people were not doing anything to stop this. The economy slowed down, way down.

I think it was about March or April that my area supervisor mentioned the drop in sales in a monthly meeting of the managers under his supervision. I basically said, "Oh, that. I all ready knew that." This was not news to

me, I had seen it in my record of weekly sales over the past month or more.

The word got back to the office that I knew something that the others had not noticed. So, the next time the owner of the company was in Baton Rouge, he stopped in my store and asked to see my records. So, I told him where he would find them. From then on he made a point to come to my store probably any time he was in Baton Rouge. This was alright with me. If my figures would help him, let him look. (I always kept the paperwork in the same bottom drawer.)

I remember one time he came in that we were rather busy. I would have preferred to talk with him for a while (just to be agreeable.) But I had also learned that work comes first. So, I excused myself and went back to work. He got no more attention from me that day. (This was one of the things I was learning that was making me a more valuable manager: get the work done before taking time for other things.)

Seafood Gumbo!

It was likely during the summer of this year that one of my counter ladies (Sheila Reynaud) brought me some of that which her mother had cooked. It was absolutely delicious! Well, it was very hot also. Can't you just see me smiling, saying how great it was? I was doing exactly that. However I was also breathing in and out of my mouth to cool it down! But if I had another chance to eat a dish like this, I would do it today without every thinking twice about it!

Reynaud is sort of French. In reality, it is Cajun, and Sheila's mother only speaks this language. (Cajun derives from French.) Her recipe for this had to be handed down from generation to generation. She was an excellent cook, and this dish proved it.

The store was not as busy this year as the previous year. I was so impressed with the results 1981 that I have completely forgotten how well we did in 1982! What I do remember occurred as we neared the 6 PM closing time on Friday, December 24th. Across the side street from our store was a Catholic church. I saw young ladies going to the evening mass wearing rabbit fur coats, blue-jeans, and high heels. This seemed to be a strange sight to me.

It was this December that Kevin came home for a visit. He had a hard time getting to sleep the first night or so, crying rather loudly (screaming?) for long periods of time. By the third night, he had calmed down enough that there were no more outbursts from him. (He would continue to have the same problem anytime he was put to bed in a strange environment for the rest of his life.)

I still did not like the idea of Kevin being so far away from us. So, I decided to check out any possibilities of keeping him at home. I don't know whom I talked to in the Baton Rouge school system, but I found out that he might be able to attend a special education class in Baton Rouge. So, I made arrangements for him to do this, and I did not take him back to the institution. Kevin was home to stay. **YES!!!**

Baker OHM

The company had decided to open a new store north of the Airport during the late spring of 1983, and I was chosen to open and manage it. This was fine with me because I was still in my environment of a "small" store. Besides this would be a challenge to start from scratch. I would manage this store for almost 3 years before being tapped to be the training manager in Lake Charles. There was at least one time when I ran the store by myself until I was able to hire someone to work with me.

The store was located in the southwest corner of a fairly new shopping center. The stores were located along the

east and south sides of a large parking area. Then for some reason, a shoe store was placed between my store and the highway (Plank Road). It blocked the view of my store for anyone traveling north on it. (Some in the company later thought that the positioning of this store had a negative effect on the store's sales.) This definitely had an effect on the amount of traffic that came through the drive-in window until the customer noticed its existence which could take several visits to do so.

The Army/Navy Recruiting office was next to me and opened at the same time. They, however, had a celebration in mid May. The mayor was present, and the army flew a helicopter to the parking area in front of our stores. (I was hoping that something would be similarly done, but I was disappointed.)

One more thing that I needed to do was to hire a counter person. (Or did someone come with me from Plank Road? Who knows?) How long did it take to do this? I really do not remember. But I eventually picked someone, sent her to take a lie detector test, and trained her. One thing I am sure of: the days seemed very long because of the low number of customers for a while.

Store layout

Before the store was ready to open, the area manager and I were shown the inside of it by Ron Shaw. It was 20' wide and 50' or more long. We went into the counter area first. In front of us was two counters with bars to hang orders on, and on the left was a sliding glass door giving access to the bottom part of the conveyor belt that would hold the orders after they were cleaned and bagged. To our right was a window on the wall equip as a drive up window. This room look so new and nice. And to think that it was air conditioned! I had never heard of such a thing.

It got better, believe it or not. We walked through two swinging doors to the work area. Coming out of the ceiling on either side were two large air ducts that allowed air from the front to flow all the way to the back of the building. On our right was where we tagged incoming clothes which included a bin to hold the dirty clothes to be dry cleaned. On our left was where the clothes would be bagged. Beside that was access to the conveyor belt so orders could be placed on it after being reassembled.

Going further back on the left, the conveyor belt went up close to the ceiling and then was level for perhaps 20' or more. Underneath this was an area to store some supplies as well as my desk where I would be doing my paperwork.

Most conveyor belts (motorized clothes racks) have the clothes hung on a flat metal perhaps 1.5" wide. This way the clothes can be slid around without any problem. But mine would have rectangular metal connected to the conveyor. The bottom of the metal had teeth so that orders could be placed between teeth. Well, my area supervisor was wondering why this particular conveyor needed to have teeth like this. Ron answered that the conveyor was on two levels. Without the teeth the clothes on the top level would just slide down to the lower level. This is assuming that the clothes could ever be gotten to the top level without the teeth. (Makes sense when one thinks about it.)

Was this a stupid question? Not really; well not according to a sign that someone had placed on the front wall of the work area. It read, "The only stupid question is the one that is not asked." Of course, the supervisor pointed to this sign to justify his question.

Now on to my guided tour. Back from the clothes bin where the dirty clothes were stored, was where we pressed the pants. First was where we steamed the pants tops. (Someone nicknamed it Sam since Susie was used when

pressing dresses and coats.) Then came the pants press. (Actually it only pressed the pants legs). And then came Susie followed by the utility press where dresses and coats were pressed.

As we got closer to the back of the room, there was the table where I spotted clothes before cleaning them. And the spotting table was next to the side wall in the same area. And next came the dry cleaning machine along with the air compressor. Last but not least on this side of the room was the most important room: the bathroom! Well, we also stored things above the ceiling of it as well.

On the other side back past my desk was the 125 gallon tank of perc. Behind it in a room containing the boiler. Its only entrance was from the outside at the back of the building. This room and bathrooms formed a hallway to the back of the building.

Going toward the back door, there was a pump along the edge of the hall. There was a pipe going from it to the dry cleaning machine. Another pipe went out the back of the building to a cooling tower filled with an antifreeze — water solution. Obviously, there was also a pipe going from the dry cleaning machine back to the cooling tower. When the machine was drying the clothes, this solution transferred the heat between the two.

And above the back door was a high speed fan. It really moved the air through the building! Its suction was such that it made it difficult to open the front door (this opens out as required by the fire marshal). And if someone succeeds to open it, the swinging doors would swing back toward the work area.

Remember the air ducts I mentioned? Well while all air was coming in from the front, the wind of air ducts made it difficult to press pants legs! The pants cuff when pressed point toward the air ducts. Enough air was blowing on the

cuffs to cause them to billow up! (Conclusion, we really did not need that much air to be flowing through the work area.)

It could be a little dangerous as one man found out. Since it can be rather warm in early May in the Baton Rouge area, the fan was running while the equipment was being installed. One man was standing behind the swinging door when another man came back inside the front door... Yes, the door hit the first man in the face rather hard. Can anyone say, "bloody nose?"

But a work around was found that worked. Someone found out that a 2x4 placed between the partially open rear door and its door frame would reduce the air flow from the front to a reasonable level. Even so, it made the work area cooler. The suction from the fan made it difficult to open the door enough to come through the back doorway as well.

The bottoms of the air ducts were about 8' above the floor which permitted all of the hot air we were created to be sucked out of the building. How well did these air ducts work? Very well as a matter of fact. I decided to take some measurements above the utility press just to see. About a foot directly above this press, the temperature did not go above 90 degrees when the fan was on. That was far cooler than at any of the stores I had managed.

Back to the drive up window (which had burglar bars of course). It was designed so that they could be locked (as in shortly after hours) while allowing us to pass the clothing orders under them and collecting the money for them.

Opening a new store

I thought there would be a certain amount of celebration with this happening, but there was not. I had been signed out of the Plank Road store the previous day (probably right after the store closed on Monday).

Come Tuesday morning, I drove to the store arriving around 6:30 AM. I performed the weekly maintenance items. Then I unlocked the burglar bars and front door opening the store for business for the first time. Then it was a matter of waiting before my first customer came through the door...

I had learned how important greasing the equipment was my first day at Bogalusa. So, I wanted to make sure that I made sure my equipment was properly greased. Most of the equipment was very similar to the ones I had been using for several years, so I quickly found the places to grease them. But the dry cleaning machine was different. So, I got out the manual for it and looked very carefully for where I should grease it. I found it. From this point on, everything was greased once a week for as long as I was there on Tuesday. (I really don't know if someone else greased everything during the weeks I was on vacation or not.)

I actually had more than one customer the first day, but the first week was very slow. At the rate they began to come in, I could run the business by myself. But I had plenty of time to train a counter attendant. The only problem was that I did not have very many orders for her to practice on. There weren't many orders to bag either. So things slipped into July as business began to pick up a little bit, but not by much.

The dry cleaning machine

I finally had nearly a closed system as far as the perc was concerned. Once I spotted the clothes, weighed them, and put them into the machine. they would be cleaned and dried before I had to open the door again. This way only a small amount of perc would escape. This was nice!

How did this work? The washing part of the cycle was basically the same as the older machines. The only difference, there was a closed vent. After the clothes were extracted, the vent opened and heated air was blown into

the cylinder. From here the air and perc were blown through a "radiator" through which the cold water was pumped. This caused the perc vapors to become liquid which would then run back into the perc tank at the bottom of the machine. Meanwhile the air continued to move back to where it was heated once more. This cycle was continued until the clothes were dry.

The following are guesses, but I do not think they are far off. When in Bogalusa, I would use about 60 gallons of perc per month. It seem like this machine was using about 40 gallons a month. That is about a one third savings. Considering the cost of it, that is a very good savings!

Bible reading plan

I was getting bored for a lack of something to do. Thus, I was looking for something else to do to take up my time especially after 3:30 PM when I shut down the cleaning operations. I decided that I needed to learn what was in the Bible. So around the beginning of July, this is what I did.

I wanted to read all of it (cover to cover). So I looked at my Bible as I tried to work out a plan. At this point I went back to what I had been taught in Chicago about dividing the book into smaller sections. This meant that I first needed to know how many pages were in the book.

The Old and New Testaments began with page one, so I added the last page of the Old and the last page of the New to get 710 pages. If I divided this total by the number of days in a year (365), I got a little less than 2 pages per day. But to make it simple, I decided that I would read 2 pages a day. As It turns out, this rate of reading would take me through the Bible in 11 months and 1 day. (The first day's reading was Genesis 1 through 3. The second day's began with Genesis 4:1.)

But I felt in the beginning that I needed to know more about the Bible as quickly as possible, so I doubled the rate.

For the next 22 months and 2 days, I read four pages per day. This permitted me to read through the Bible 4 times in 22 months and 2 days. Then I slowed down to 2 pages a day. I have continued reading at this rate daily ever since. On September 28, 2014, I began my 36th complete reading of the Bible.

This has been a great help to me. It is very seldom that I ever hear a preacher begin to quote Bible verses that I do not know whether he is quoting it correctly or not. Once he has begun quoting, most of the time I can mentally finish it for him. Even if I do not recognize the quote, I often can turn to the place in the Bible where it is located. Of course, this creates a problem for me if the preacher is using anything other than the KJB.

My study of the Bible is somewhat different from many people. When I concentrate on a given portion of verses, I ask myself these questions: "What is this teaching? What do people say it means? Are they right? Why or Why not?" As a result, my beliefs are different from others. (What people think the Bible teaches is not always what is written on its pages.)

We all can be guilty of saying that a verse or group of verses has a specific meaning when its actual meaning is different from what we say. This is something that has commonly happened down through the centuries. The Pharisees and Sadducees were positive that they knew what Genesis through Malachi taught. But Jesus taught the true teachings; the others got angry for Him saying what they "knew" was not the truth.

Probably later in the year, someone brought in some drapes to be cleaned and pressed. While I did not have the equipment to do this in my store, I knew that I could do this at the Plank Road store. So, I wrote a ticket out for them.

After cleaning them, I drove down to Plank Road OHM and put them on the drapery machine. When they were done, I packaged them and headed back to my store. This was not much, but it was an order.

This was when I went to thinking. Perhaps I could expand my business by offering a drapery service. So, I called the office and asked if the drapery machine could be moved to my store. Plank Road was not using it, and I thought I could. In less than a month, this was moved to my store.

Perhaps around this time or maybe later, the office had another idea that should increase my sales. Someone developed a product that would create a permanent crease in pants. They are cleaned, pressed, and turned inside out. Then a thin bead of a special glue is placed inside all four creases.

This worked as advertized for slacks, but it never really caught on. Bluejeans were a different story because the bluejeans would not hold the their creases when they were turned inside out. This was true whether the bluejeans were dry cleaned or laundered.

It's Cold inside!

The weather was cold December 23rd, so when I went home early, I left the boiler running on low. I had watched the local weather at 5 PM. They said that the temperature was 32 degrees and was not expected to go any lower that night. So, I called my counter lady telling her to turn the boiler off when she closed the store. (What a mistake!)

The next morning, Christmas Eve, the temperature was in the teens. This presented me with some very challenging problems. I got the boiler going although it took much longer to build up any steam pressure than usual. Needless to say, the building was very cold all day long. Besides I had a sprinkle system. It was cold enough in the counter area that water had frozen in the sprinkler heads forcing them to

open a little. I had water dripping from one of these heads onto the counters below them in the front of the building. (The drops immediately turned to ice shortly after hitting the counter.)

I also had a water tower for the dry cleaning machine. While it had several gallons of anti-freeze, some of the water/anti-freeze mixture froze. (Green ice can have a strange look to it.) Of course, the pump used by the water tower had pieces of ice flowing through it, so the pump would need some repair work done later.

Most of our stores in south Louisiana had turned off their boilers at 3:30 PM since that was when they no longer took clothes to be cleaned that day. So, the water in their boilers and steam lines had a longer time to cool than mine did. Consequently they had much more damage than I did. It was worse in New Orleans than where I was. None of those store could even get their boilers going that day.

What I should have done was to leave my boiler on that night. I would still have had some problems from the cold. But I believe that the conditions of my store would have been better than their stores became.

I was wearing gloves all day, and my feet felt like blocks of ice. Well, I could not wear gloves while spotting clothes, but I did while pressing them. Boy that was strange! But believe it or not, I had some customers that day. But there were far fewer of them than what I had experienced in Bogalusa and Plank Road.

To make matters worse, my counter attendant decided that she wanted to do some shopping that day and would not come to work as assigned. Nothing like working alone in terrible conditions. I had to fire her which really bothered me. Her parents were very good friends of mine. I really did not want to hurt their feelings. Well, they understood that I had not choice.

I really don't know how close I was to having frost bite in my feet. I was definitely having poor circulation in them for quite some time after coming home at the end of the day. (I left the boiler running on "low" that night!) From then on, if the temperature was in the low to mid 30's at 6 PM or expected to go below 30, the boiler was left on "low".

Flood!

Our sales schedule included a first Monday of the month. It originally was 4 pieces of dry cleaning for \$6.99. By this time it had gone up to \$8.88. This did not include leathers, suedes, furs, nor fancy dresses.

By this time, I had a larger customer base, and they took advantage of this sale. In fact, one third of my monthly sales came in on this sale. One lady regularly brought perhaps 10 orders or more of clothes each first Monday. Then she told me that she would pick them up the middle of the month.

On Monday, April, 2, we had our usual deluge of clothes. Then come Tuesday or Wednesday. We were having a very heavy downpour. In fact, as I looked out on the shopping center parking area (I was in the south part of it), I saw ponds appear over the drains. It had been raining quite hard in points to our north. Water was slowly covering more and more of the parking area with the edge of it heading in our direction. Meanwhile, Susan was at home watching the water advancing up our sloping driveway. When Civil Defense came through with an amphibious vehicle that afternoon, she did not hesitate to get in it taking Kevin and our dog.

They were taken to a Red Cross shelter on the east side of the Comite River. She called me at work to tell me where they were at. After I closed the store, I headed to get them. The bridge that crossed the Comite River had water almost up to the pavement. I was wondering if we were going to be able to cross the river on the way back to the west.

I really did not know what to do, so I called Bro. David Burris telling him what had happened. That is when his family took us in for a few days and found a home for the dog. He and his wife also found an apartment we could move into. They were a great help to us during this time. And to top off that, they took us to the grocery store to stock our refrigerator with more than \$100 of food.

Baton Rouge has a large drainage system that usually handles large rains, but this overwhelmed the system for a while. We were fairly close to the Comite River (east of us) which had also over flowed it banks, and the Winn Dixie grocery store which was between us and the river had standing water up to the top shelves. At the height of the flood, anyone traveling toward our home would run into water a mile before reaching the house.

I know about the problems Winn Dixie had because a TV station had sent a boat out to its location with a film crew. Then it was shown later on the news.

When Susan and Kevin left, the power company had not yet turned off to the area where our apartment was. Other people were insisting that they were going to remain in their apartments. However, by evening, the remaining people were told that the power was being turned off right the. Strange thing: quite a few of them jumped on the amphibious vehicle to get out of the flood area.

Then the water disappeared as quickly as it had come. On Saturday (four or five days later), I had driven by where the water had ended (on the street where I had lived) while going to buy something. An hour later as I drove back by, there was no water to be seen! We were able to drive to our apartment by the next day without any problems.

Much of what we had in our apartment was waterlogged by the time the water went down. When we could get back

into the area after the water went down, the walls of our apartment had a water (mud line) line 3 feet off the floor.

One of the deacons of our church lived about 50 feet from the Comite River bank. They basically lost everything because their house was completely underwater. To top this, as the water began to recede, the top of the house caught fire and burned down to the water level which was now down to the clothes racks in the closets. So, all of his suits had their collars burned off. For an elderly couple, this was hard to take.

After we salvaged some of our furniture, I made another blunder. We were told to get rid of any mattresses which had been water soaked. Clearly, ours had been. But I was thinking that they had dried out, so there should not be any harm. To make matters worse, we first slept on the mattresses on the floor. As a result Kevin came down with pneumonia.

I first took him to a doctor who gave him some medicine. (He did not have admission privileges to the local hospital.) As the day progressed, Kevin was getting worse rather than better. So, we headed to the Emergency Room in Zachery, LA. The X-ray showed his middle right lobe to be completely clouded. So, he was put to bed and treated accordingly. I don't remember how long he remained in the hospital; it was several days at least.

Needless to say, Kevin can be rather uncooperative when it comes to making x-rays. So, I had to put on a lead jacket to hold him in place while the technician took them. This was how I got to see the x-ray after it was developed.

Then sometime later, we saw the doctor for a check up on his condition. He required another x-ray, so off we went to get it. Because of Kevin's handicap, I had to help in taking it. Again, I was also able to see the x-ray. (If there was a problem, another would have to be taken.) What I saw was

completely clear. (This was a very sharp contrast to the one taken when he had been admitted to the hospital.) Then we headed back to the doctor's office waiting for the x-ray to be read and a report made to the doctor.

We happened to see the doctor before the report was made, and I told him that there was no evidence of pneumonia in Kevin's lungs. He doubted that I knew what I was talking about. (The x-ray that had been taken this day was clear in all five lobes.) But then he got the call, and he then gave us some more recommendations of what to do. He had been told exactly what I had seen: Kevin did not need any further treatment for this disease.

The other aftermath of the flood was cleaning our clothes. With the help of David's family, we got set up in the apartment in Baker. For many days, Susan was carrying the muddy clothes down the stairs, washing and drying them in the apartment complex wash room, and carrying the clean ones back up the stairs. That had to be hard, but necessary work. I helped in the evenings as well.

What really made things hard was that our apartment was on the second floor. Imagine Susan or I dragging garbage bags full of wet, muddy clothes down the stairs. And then Kevin was walking up and down the stairs as well. Fortunately, we were allowed to move to an apartment on the first floor.

One of the things that was destroyed was the bathroom scales. For the next year, I did not paid that much attention to my weight because of this. Meanwhile my pants were getting tight, so I bought a larger size (34 instead of 32). About a year later, we had visited a lady with whom Susan had become great friends. (This lady had move away from our apartment building earlier.) While there I used her bathroom. While in there I weighed myself: I had gained 10 pounds! So, I reduced my lunch, which I took everyday. I

dropped from two peanut butter and honey sandwiches to one and a half. This worked like a charm! I think I spent some money on a pair of scales shortly after I weighed myself.

One of my customers lived in a trailer that was full of mud because of the flood. As a result, their drapes were caked with dirt after they dried out. They needed to be cleaned, so they were brought in to my store.

I was quite certain that dry cleaning would not do a good job. The dirt needed to be soaked out of the drapes. So this is what I did. I had a container that I could fill with water before placing the drapes in them. I also had a very mild detergent similar to Woolite. This worked like a charm as far as removing the dirt. Then I let the drapes dry by putting them up on the drapery machine. Once they were completely dry, I dry cleaned and finished them on the drapery machine. They looked really nice by the time I finished them.

The drapery machine was really a frame that we could fold and attach the drapes to. It also had a steam wand that we used to run up and down between folds. With the top and bottom of the drapes held by the machine, we could hold the drapes taut. If necessary we could vertically stretch to bring their length to what they originally were.

Back to the effects of the flood on us. I had kept quite a few textbooks from my time at the University of Illinois. They were not really salvageable along with several other things. Well the books were about 20 years old.

Anyway there several things that needed to be replaced including some furniture. Well, we got some help through the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Both gave us a voucher for some of the items which was a great help. I remember going to the store in from of my store to buy some shoes with a voucher.

Parents' visit

They made another visit in late May, 1984. Also, the World's Fair in New Orleans had recently opened. (Mom and Dad bought tickets through AAA for them and my family.)

Kevin's school was having a school event at this same time. So, we all got to see the students doing various activities such as riding tricycles and bicycles, shooting a basketball, etc. Much of this was doing simple things because of their limited mental abilities. Of course this also limited what they could do physically.

There was almost a very big problem. There was no one in Baton Rouge who could run the store while I was on vacation. So, how was I going to take time off to go the the fair or the school event with my parents?

Sometime earlier, I had interviewed Denise as a counter attendant. But then there was a problem with her polygraph test. There seemed to be a problem with her honesty. In fact, I was told that I could hire her as long as she was not allowed to get near the cash register.

OK, I could teach her how to clean and press clothes during the day, and I would be the counter attendant. This was my thinking. And this worked quite well because she was a fast learner.

Whether I should have done this, I talked to her about the problem that the polygraph tagged as a potential problem. She was quite open with what she thought had caused the problem. Obviously, I felt that I needed to pass this information on to the office.

After a couple of weeks in which there were no financial problems with my reports, the office decided that there was not any real problem that they could see in allowing her to do counter work as well.

So, by the time my parents came down, she could do it all. Well, I could still do things better, but she continued to learn how to do things better. Even so, the things that she could not handle could wait until I got back to the store.

But there was an additional problem: she was a mother with children in school. The pre-opening check list needed to be accomplished by 7 AM. But she had duties at home that prevented her from coming in until 8:30. So, the office suggested a compromise: clock in at 6:30 to do what needed to be done and remain until she could get to the store. Then clock out and enjoy the rest of the day.

You know this really worked! And yet, it seemed so very strange to be clocking out for the day at 8:30 AM. Somehow, I managed.

The biggest problem with the fair was that it was held in New Orleans. Normal highs this time of year are always in the high 80's to mid 90's. Mid afternoon rain was the norm there as well. Result? It was very hot and muggy! In addition, the main attractions of the fair were always filled to capacity with long lines. Was it worth the time and muggy temperatures to see these? We didn't because Susan and Kevin did not need to be in such long line in the hot, muggy air.

We walked around some, viewing various exhibits, most of which were selling things that were expensive. (I did not bring money with me for this.) Speaking of expensive items, the things available for lunch was exactly that. It cost more for the things that the three of ate than the same items in 2017! (I think that this is ridiculous.)

There was a monorail that took us from one part of the fair to another. The rest of the time we had to walk. Well, this was interesting to me anyway. The idea of the cars being held above the rails that we traveled on using electromagnets was fascinating. (I love new technologies!)

There were few exhibits with visual presentations. We found a couple in the afternoon though. Chrysler Corp was one that had this. We saw what they thought the cars would be like by the mid 1990's. They were not all that far off when it comes to the GPS systems. (I don't remember what the other movie was about though. However, the air conditioning was a relief from the heat.)

Then after some more walking, we all headed home. By the time we arrived back in Baton Rouge, it was supper time. There was talk of where we could go to eat. (It was a little late to fix supper.) Across the street from the Plank Road OHM was a shopping center which included a Piccadilly cafeteria. I had eaten there a few times, and the food had always been delicious. So, I recommended we go there. (It was also on our way back to our apartment.)

I should also mention that I had regularly eaten lunch and supper at a Piccadilly cafeteria in Lake Charles while in training. Everywhere I have eaten at one of these cafeterias, I have had a delicious meal at a reasonable price. This evening was no different. The fact that my father insisted that he pay for everyone's meal was nice also.

Adding business

It was Denise that came up with the idea of a "dress uniform." The counter area had the new One Hour Martinizing colors: tan and navy blue. She suggested that we dress to match the colors: tan tops and navy blue pants. She was willing to do this, and I went along with the idea. I had to admit that this certainly gave our store a certain amount of professionalism. This also gave us an attitude of professionalism as well which became apparent with our customers.

This must have gotten out some way to the office because some time later they required similar outfits for

counter attendants in other stores. I really don't know if this ever enforced or not.

In 1984, we did over \$600 in drapes alone. Almost all of it was from October through December, and December sales were half of the total sales. This seemed strange to me. But it turned out to be a pattern.

At the time, I was the only store who cleaned any drapes. Well, the office decided that the other stores should begin offering drape cleaning. They were to farm out the cleaning and folding their drape business to our store. It should certainly increase my sales...

But for some reason, we have very few drapes brought in to be cleaned until the first of October in 1985. Then like my experience the previous year, all of their drape business came in the last three months. Strangely, half of the drapery sales were in December. Total sales: \$1,200 which was also doubled what my store had done in 1984.

What about October to December 1986? By this time I had been transferred to Lake Charles, LA, where I was manager of a dry cleaning/ laundry store.

I wonder now why there was not any advertizing for our stores in Baton Rouge that we offered a drapery service. But then again, it would not be very useful unless it was done during the last three months of the year when the need was greatest.

Machine problems

In writing about my new dry cleaning machine earlier, I mentioned my careful research about how to grease it. I went by the book.

Everything worked fine for a while. Many months later I heard a loud noise in the back of the unit, so I shut it down and called the office to report the problem. The head service man was sent to investigate the situation. Problem: the front

bearing of the fan motor had seized up. It had no grease around it at all.

This was very embarrassing to me especially since Ron Shaw came as well. After all that I had done to make everything run as well as possible, I get a similar breakdown as the first day I was at Bogalusa! So, to convince myself that I had not made an error, I got the manual out and turned to the page with the fan motor. Sure enough, the manual was showing only one place needed to be greased. That one had plenty of grease. So, it really was not my fault. The service man replaced the seized bearing with a sealed bearing that would not need any grease. (See, I knew that I was right!)

This motor turned the fan that blew hot air through the clothes to dry them. When he replaced the bearing, he had to remove the fan to get to the motor. That was when he discovered a much more serious problem: the bolts that held the fan in place had loosen. It would not have been all that long before the fan would have come lose. This would have destroyed that area of the machine. So, one problem requiring a service man resulted in preventing a very expensive problem later. Obviously, I was not in the dog house in this matter.

Did I then make sure that front bearing was greased every week? No I did not. A sealed bearing was used to replace the damaged one. But I continued to grease the back fan bearing regularly.

Odds and ends

During one summer, I was working alone during the day with a counter attendant coming in at 3:30. A partial solar eclipse occurred on this day. (I had seen one in 1964 while in Illinois which covered the sun except for a very, very small crescent of it.

But this one was a little different as the crescent was much larger. It gradually turned darker, but there was something about it. I know what happens on a cloudy day when the clouds let less of the light through. But this was different as the light level was lowered. There were no clouds in the sky. The color of the sun light was different.

And then there was the time when someone reported us to child protective services because of what she could see the window in Kevin's bedroom. He was seen constantly looking out of his bedroom window, and she saw this. As a result she thought that we were forcing him to remain in that room. So the thought was that he was being abused.

In reality, he liked to look at the traffic flowing down the street. Well this was the only window where he could do this. Besides there was not very much going on that he could see from any other window in our apartment.

As results our activities as a family was investigated for a while which was rather embarrassing to say the least. We even had to attend some parenting classes as well. There was some very useful information in them. What good did this do? It really went in one ear and out the other for the most part.

There were also recommendations for us to follow. One of them actually made sense. Because of Kevin's incontinence, there were always urine soaked clothes around. We were just leaving them in an uncovered container until the next time we washed his clothes. (I suppose we just got use to the smell. They said we had to get a covered contain for them which we did. We even continued to do so for as long as he lived.

Speaking of some of Kevin's antics, some of them involved the words that he had learned from Susan over the past 5 years. These were especially true of words of animals. When he happened to be in the living room and

saw a dog, he would point and say, "Dog! Dog!" until he got our attention. The same thing was said about some cats, etc.

This was because Susan would point out these animals when we were in the car going somewhere. It became a game with them, and he would get very excited when he saw one of these animals. It likely was the main reason why he would thoroughly enjoy going anywhere in a vehicle for the rest of his life.

For the most part, we could be quite sure that he had seen a particular animal if he excitedly said that animal's name. Once in a while, we did not see the animal. Did he really see it, or not?

Well one time he was very excited when he thought he saw a dog. We were driving down the highway behind a big semi truck when he insisted that he had seen a dog. But there was no dog anywhere, or so we thought. Finally, I happened to glance down at the truck's mud flaps. The name on them was, Great Dane! And yes, the mud flaps each had the picture of a great dane. He had seen a dog; it was a picture of a dog.

Then there was the state policeman that became one of my customers. We became good friends, always chatting for a while any time he brought in or picked up his uniforms. His shirts had to have military styled creases, and I enjoyed making sure these were done just so.

Well the time came when I was without a counter attendant. In fact I was running the store by myself. This particular day, I needed to buy something from an auto supply store which was in the same shopping center and nearby. Since things were very quiet, I stepped out without closing the store. (This was a very bad move!)

When I got back, I saw him with his pistol in his hand in the back part of my store looking for me. When he walked in

the store, I was nowhere to be seen, and he became very concerned. So, he thought it possible that something had happened to me. Well, it turned out that my store was not a crime scene after all. (I did not do this again!)

Another of my customers was an Amway distributor. OK, I like to talk with my customers when I can. This was no difference. Well, she had gotten a positive thinking book that she thought I needed to read. She even gave it to me. I did, but it did not really make that much sense. I have read it since then, and I like the teachings in the beginning. But the latter part does not seem to agree with the things that are a part of my present life style. Maybe I need to look at it again.

What was the name of the book? *I Will* It began describing the difference between *I can* and *I will*. The first describes what we think is possible; the latter describes what we are going to do. I suppose my problem in reading this book is the steps needed to determine how to do what I say I will do. The book seemed to be rather short in this area.

There was one time when I became very angry with my area manager. He was a smoker, and I did not like for anyone to smoke in the building whether it was in the counter or work area. But he would anyway. Things almost came to a head when he dropped cigarette ashes on some cleaned pants waiting to be pressed! (If he had not been my boss, I would have thrown him out of the building verbally.)

First of all, I had to reclean the pants. Secondly, it was not long before someone complained about a burn hole in a pair of pants. (This was the **only** claim of this type during the three years and a half years that I managed this store.) And I got angry all over again.

So, I had to file a claim and have the area manager sign the paperwork. Then I had to send the claim to the central

office. This is when I got even with my supervisor. The claim was sent with my daily financial report. One the bottom of the report was an area where comments could be made. In it was where I wrote why I was sending the claim listing the things that I thought led up to the damage being caused. Was there any communications between the office and my supervisor? I don't know, but I heard nothing back from him.

Sometime after that Ron Shaw and my supervisor, Wes were in town at the same time. The latter was doing his normal checking for any problems in any of the stores in the Baton Rouge area. Well they had gone out to eat supper together, and he had ordered a dried bean dish.

The next morning they were both to meet at my store before going to the others. Ron came, but he did not. He was still in his motel, very sick. For some time, he had had a partial bowel blockage, and the beans made it a complete one. Ron left to see about him. Wes had to be taken to the hospital where they had to operate to remove the obstruction. It took some time to recuperate, and he was never quite the same again. After a while he had to quit, and we got another area supervisor.

TI-99/4A 16K computer

Denise's husband worked for AT&T and was very interested in electronics and electronic gadgets. A few years before, he had gotten a new computer made by Texas Instruments. Then he wanted something newer and was willing to sell the TI, so I bought it from him. It was my electronic toy so to speak. He gave me the user guide for it, an introductory guide, and about a years worth of magazines on how to use it better. This included some simple programs that could be used with it. Of course there were advertisements for modules which could be plugged into the computer keyboard to expand its capabilities.

All of the electronics were in the keyboard, a TV was used for the monitor, and the storage device was an audio tape recorder which I provided on my own. This was a far cry from what we have today with PC's, and improvements continue to be made in tablets and smaller devices.

The memory in the system was all of 16K. Then I bought a module that had the required programs and additional memory to create a spreadsheet on the TV. With it being plugged in, the total memory (RAM) was all of 72KB! While in Baker, I just played with it in a variety of ways to learn what was possible when using it. Later when I was transferred to Lake Charles, I began to find things that made my report keeping much easier and quicker. It was unbelievably slow compared to today's computers, but it was still much quicker than doing everything at hand.

To give you an idea of what 16K means as far as memory is concern, it takes this much memory to store 16,000 characters. This is approximately 3,200 words. OH, with the spreadsheet application with 72 KB memory? It could hold all the information that was needed to fill out my weekly reports on sales. The nice part was that it could do all of my calculations within a second after I entered the necessary data. All I had to do then was copy the calculations onto my weekly sales form.

This was not my first introduction to computers while in Baker, LA. This came the fall of 1983 several months after I opened the Baker OHM store. My shopping center contained a Radio Shack store perhaps 3 or 4 doors down. I happened to window shopping in that store looking at various electronic items that peaked my interest. One thing that I saw was a credit card sized transistorized clock/calculator. (I bought it, and used it consistently.) Later, Tandy had come out with their first computer. This was perhaps a few months before Texas Instruments came out with their first one.

There were two models then One of them had 8 KB RAM, and the second one had 16 KB for those who wanted to be able to do more things. Yes, I got excited about this, but I still did not know if it was worthwhile...

And while I am at it, I need to mention the book store which was next door to Radio Shack. Over a period of time I became friends of a sales lady there (or was she the manager?). Among other things we discussed health and the use of vitamin pills. But I did not buy any of these things in this store. First of all, I had probably bought the Bible I read every afternoon at work. At some point, I either noticed a pocket sized Bible or asked about one. They had one, and I bought it. This way I could take my Bible to church with me without being obvious.

And now back to the things that happened during the last year I was at Baker OHM: Denise and I developed a very close relationship during the time we worked together. This also included the counter attendant I hired sometime during the last year I was at Baker OHM. The operations of this store became our own personal world. We each knew what the others were capable of doing. If either one of us needed help, we immediately got help from the one who was not busy at the time. This made our time working a great joy. And when the end of our work day ended, we could go home knowing that we had served the customers well.

During the day, it was just Denise and I. Once she had learned all the things that it takes to run the store, she could do most of the things that I did. As time went on, we were really interchangeable. We got to the place that either of us helped the other anytime that it was needed. Usually, nothing had to be said by the other. Help was given naturally.

She had more than one personal world that she shared: she was married, happily so. I was also. I respected her

marriage, and she respected mine. She found the type of love she wanted with her husband, and it never entered her mind to look for this in someone else. Such was the case with Susan and me. We all had what we needed at home.

There is a lesson in this so many years later. I am a widower now. While I know what a good marriage can be and the joys that come with being married, there are very few if any single women my age that I know who are interested in marriage. However, this tells me that we can still develop a deep personal relationship that does not include marriage. It is more about companionship than a physical relationship. In fact, it is all about companionship.

They can now; we can later

There were two older couples in the church at Baton Rouge that had an affect on me and my marriage: Elmo and Leona Watts; and David Burris' parents. Of the two, the latter two seemed to have a little bit more.

Both of them were very loving toward their mates and this was very obvious. I have seen other older couples who seem to put much less loving in their actions. I have visited them in their homes. There I have seen them sitting some distance apart with no sign of love showing between them. It seemed like they were just putting up with each other.

My parents, while I was growing up, were somewhat between the two descriptions. In the evening, they would sit fairly close together each reading their personal Bibles.

And for nearly 20 years I had been enjoying the relationship that Susan and I had created for ourselves. We were still doing things in public that we had from the early part of our marriage. Now these couples were showing me that we could continue our loving relationship even into many more years to come.

What really impressed me was how the Burris' would greet each other at church after he got off from work. Their kisses were tender. He was 17 years older than I was even if he seemed older than this.

Well, I always enjoyed kissing Susan, the thought that we could enjoy tender kisses into our 60's was something that I definitely looked forward to. My thinking: They did it now. Why can't we do it when we get to their ages? The end of this book actually tells how we did this and still enjoyed it!

The Watts had already celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. So while they were more "sedate," clearly romance can exist even after this many years of marriage.

Help other stores

One thing that I noticed was that I was asked to do odd tasks at other stores. Likely, this was because I was not as busy as others. Also, I could do some maintenance work. This freed up their maintenance men and lowered their expenses. I also got more hands on experience as well.

For example, Christmas Eve 1983. The weather turned much lower than predicted as in way below freezing. (It was not suppose to get below 32°F.) This caused water to freeze in the steam traps which are made of heavy metal. But they were not heavy enough to keep the freezing water from busting them.

Steam traps were placed in the return water lines between the equipment and the boiler. Their purpose was to keep the pressure up in the steam lines while allowing water to drain back to the boiler. A broken one meant that pressure could not build up to operating pressures in the steam lines.

Friday evening is when the freeze took place. So many of the stores were not really able to clean clothes on Saturday. This was especially true for Goodwood OHM. Remember that

this was the laundry store for all of our stores in Baton Rouge.

So, I got a call Monday to go to Goodwood to replace a steam trap. They already had one, so it was only a matter of replacing it. So, off I went. Within an hour or two, I had a new one installed. The boiler was started, and I waited until full pressure was restored. No leaks; so I went back to my own store.

I was called to Plank Road one time for a financial matter (or was it paperwork?). Another time I went to another store on the east side of town probably for simple maintenance/repair work. In doing things like this, it was good to get out from my store for a while.

One thing that I notice while at Plank Road this time was the attitude of the manager. I reminded me of my wife when we had to take parenting classes. The manager was not going to listen to anything I had to say. It was in the words she said and the tone she used. She was agreeing me too quickly, and that meant that she was not truly listening. So, what good did it do for me to talk with her? None because she did not pay attention. At least she was given the information. She had to face any consequences that came from her actions from then on.

Training Supervisor

Early 1986, I was offered a position that I could not refuse. The location of the Baker store was not where it should have been, so lots of people did not know where I was located. The assumption was that this affected the sales of the store in a negative way. Besides they wanted to see if they could put my abilities to better use than at a small store as this one turned out to be. (A few years later, it was sold to a competitor which had many dry cleaning stores in the Baton Rouge area.) We would be going to Lake Charles as the manager of a dry cleaning store and the

training supervisor. So, in roughly seven years I had gone from being a trainee to being the trainer.

Newer car

I had some ideas that I would have loved to try out, but they were not the things that they had in their mind. I wanted to be able to travel some, visiting the various stores of the company doing some on site training. No such luck. But I was in need of a better car anyway. (Here again, I was developing a dream of what I wanted to accomplish when I got to Lake Charles.)

On the fourth weekends we often drove to Gloster, MS, for church. Some after I was offered this job, we drove there once again for services. Elder Williams was the pastor at the time.

This is the same minister that I had visited in his home in Natchez in 1966. Now he had a Chevrolet dealership across the Mississippi River from Natchez. After church we were invited to eat dinner at his sister-in-laws. Of course the Williamsons were invited as well.

While there I mentioned that I was looking for a newer car. Immediately, he said that he had the right car for me: a 1884 Chevy Citation II. When I heard the model name, I told him, "Don't tell Susan this." She will demand to get it." (Or words to that effect)

Even though we did not have the money to buy one, we wanted a newer car the fall of 1980. The new models had just arrived in the dealerships. So we drove to a closed Chevrolet dealership one evening. While there we looked over a couple of cars: Citations. Not this is what we want was the decision we had come to.

While I was talking with Bro. Gerald, Susan was talking with the women. But when she heard about the car, she basically said, "**Sold!!**" You see, I knew my wife. From that

point on, it was a matter of working out the financial situation.

The car had originally been used for driver education, and then his daughter-in-law had been driving it. The nice part about this was that it was well taken care of. I also took good care of it. Perhaps as a result of this, I got better gas mileage from it than what had been advertised, and this included the highway mileage (34 MPG verses sticker value of 30 MPG). It had approximately 9800 miles on it. It lasted for another 12 years.

I got a phone call from Bro. Gerald during the next week or so telling me that he had arranged finances through a bank out of Jackson, MS, which he used all of the time. I think I yelled, "We got the car!" Obviously, I still wanted the car. Then I had to make arrangement to get the car. I must have gotten permission to take a day off. Anyway, we drove to his dealership and exchanged cars.

Preparing to move

As the time approached for us to move, Denise had decided to give me a send off; they bought me a very good meal and wished me well. The counter attendant went in with her. It was really a nice time. I was going to miss them!

There was really more food than I needed to eat, and this is where I made a big boo-boo. What I was suppose to do was to share this meal with Susan. I ate it all instead. (Susan told me about this later. Seems like Denise had told her what had been planned.

Looking back to February, 1979: I had trained at McNeese OHM under Joe Fontenote. He was getting older and had some health issues as well. (My impression) Also, the manager at Hwy 171 OHM had to be removed for some reason. So, the office decided that they could move me from Baker to Lake Charles. I would be given the responsibility for managing the store as well as doing the training. Even so,

this meant that I needed to move rather quickly, as in less than a month.

So, some arrangements needed to be made. The office would take care of the next month's rent (if required by the owner of my apartment. I would be getting money for moving expenses. Since Denise knew how to run the store she would become the new temporary manager. Finally, Frenchy had a trailer parked on the Masonic Lodge property that I could use as my home. I am fairly certain that I was charged a reasonable rent for it.

So, everything began to fall together nicely. And then it came time for my final physical inventory of the orders at the Baker OHM. Somehow, there were a few orders that had disappeared, and these were noticed during this inventory. Total amount was less than \$100 or perhaps even much less than this. Besides the area manager had only had this position for a few weeks (or was that months?). Anyway, he ignored the shortages and stated that the inventory was the amount that the outstanding ticket added up to be. It was time to get out of town.

Bro. David Burris helped us pack the U-Haul which was a great help. This time I know I that I towed my car behind this truck. Well David came by just before we left to make sure the car was securely attached to the car dolly that I was pulling.

Lake Charles

So we headed west. It took about six hours of driving time to get there. Oh, there was one time that I had to stop to get something to eat and a pit stop. Driving the truck with the dolly behind me did pose a slight problem. But it was not as bad as I had thought it might be. So, things went quite well.

When we got into Lake Charles, I turned north on US 171 going by my new store. A little later, I found the road that I needed to take to the trailer, and I took it. Shortly thereafter, I saw the trailer and parked the truck next to it. Then I got the car off of the dolly. After all, I wanted to check in at my store to let them know that I had arrived.

So, we all got into the car and drove there. Upon my arrival, I met and talked with the temporary manager. She had already had this position for a few weeks. So she was really ready to let me have the responsibility for running the store. Unfortunately, this would have to wait for another day as I needed to move my furniture into the trailer. The truck also had to be returned to the local U-Haul place. But within a day or so, all of this was taken care of.

Upon returning to the trailer, I started moving things into it. This took quite a bit of time to do. I may have even got it done before Susan and I went to bed. I do know that I set up both beds before it was time to go to bed.

There were some problem with the trailer. Because he had not been in the trailer for some time prior to our moving in, it was not in good shape. The biggest problem was the floor. In some places it was buckled, and in other areas it had holes in it. In fact, we had some lizards that came through these holes. Susan did not like this at all.

The location was not exactly a good place either. It was on Shriner (part of the Masons) property meaning that there

was no other houses that were close to us. Furthermore, it was close to a bayou which likely had wild animals (alligators perhaps) around it. These are likely the real reasons why Susan did not want to stay there! Then again I did not stop to think about any dangers these animals would pose to Kevin either.

Within a month, she found an apartment that we could move into, and we did. In the meanwhile, Frenchy paid someone to repair the trailer. In this, we really messed up. We should have told him the situation and especially that we had found another place to live. This way he would not have spent the money for the repairs. Anyway, he was not pleased at all as to how we handled this situation. (Fortunately, he got over it.

Another item that was important other than where we lived, there was the matter of a church. Well, I knew where the churches were in Orange and Vidor TX, so I felt very comfortable about this.

171 One Hour Martinizing store

My first day back to work, I arrived at 6:30 AM as usual. The first thing I did was to get the boiler going. This time since I knew that city water was very hard. So, I added the boiler treatment right off the bat. Then I went through the regular pre-opening check list. At 7 AM, the store was ready, and I opened the front door.

In the past, the company only had one laundry store, South Gate OHM, for the nine stores in the area. Perhaps this was putting a strain on that store. So, the decision was made to install a laundry unit at 171 OHM. So, South Gate kept four of the store (including itself), and 171 was given four stores plus itself.

This would certainly allow growth in the laundry business. Then again it could increase the number of employees and their payroll. Frenchy was against it from the beginning, but

he was outvoted. Only time would tell which side of this issue was right.

So I was inheriting an established dry cleaning business and a fairly new laundry business. Well it could be classified as established business as well since we had four stores that we serviced which had established laundry business. But our laundry equipment and employees were fairly new.

I had several employees. Two of them, Mary and Jamie, were my laundry team. One, Elton, drove the truck to pick up and deliver the laundry. He also inspected and touched up the shirts. And when he found a broken button, he would sew a replacement on the shirt. I had a presser for dry cleaning, and three counter attendants. One of these also did the alterations. A second one also spotted clothes and ran the dry cleaning machine during the day. The third one worked from 3:30 until the store closed.

So, the first thing I needed to do was become acquainted with my responsibilities. I knew that I had specific things to do before the store opened. This included everything in the morning check list. Obviously, the equipment had to be greased weekly.

But how should I interact with the employees? What things were I suppose to do during the day? As it turned out, I had a very good team that could and would do everything when the need arose. So, I pretty much filled in where I was needed.

One of those fill in jobs became very obvious when the summer came. Employees do like to take vacations. Well, I can do counter work, spotting, dry cleaning, and pressing. But laundry is another story. I really needed to relearn this whole area. There were going to be Saturdays and Mondays in which the truck driver and I were the only people in the laundry area. I would be pressing all of the shirts **and** bluejeans.

Tuesday through Friday were the busiest days in the laundry. As a result, both ladies in laundry worked those days. Then they would alternate being off on Monday and Saturday. In other words, on a given week, one would work from Monday through Friday while the second would work Tuesday through Saturday. The following week they alternated. So, one week they would have Sunday off, and the next week they would have Saturday through Monday off.

And then there is the year over year report that I had used at previous store. I found the information I needed and filled out the weeks of 1985 plus the weeks of 1986 up to when I arrived.

It was a month or less before I had to make a supply order. As before, I inventoried the spotting chemicals. As usual, I had much more than what I needed. I think I had a gal of the chemical used to help remove plant based stains. (Maybe there was more...) Almost all of these chemicals were sitting on top of the bathroom ceiling. There may have been other supplies up there as well.

The laundry washing machine was rather new, so we put the clothes in, indicted what type of wash it was to be, and turned it on. It added the appropriate chemical as needed. So, I had to learn how much of what needed to be ordered.

Seems like I had learned something during the past 7 years. I asked the people using the supplies how much they needed for the next month. Again, it pays to have a good crew. They told me, and sure enough they were right.

There was a one thing about being at this store verses Goodwood OHM. My supervisor lived in Lake Charles. Anytime I needed help, I had it locally. Joe Fontenote certainly made sure I was adjusting to my new responsibilities. Well, I did have one "major" problem that Frenchy pointed out. He did not like for payroll to be more

that 30% of payroll. For the first few months it was running closer to 34%. I was threatened, and I got it under control. So, it was full speed ahead for a while.

After a while, I brought my computer to work. In my studying of how this worked, it became obvious that it would do some of the calculations for my weekly reports and payroll. It was the payroll that I attempted first.

When I first trained in Lake Charles, Joe had taught me how to add and subtract hours and minutes. And it was so simple. As he taught this, he demonstrated it on a mechanical adding machine complete with a handle. OK, if he could do this on that old thing, I can do it on this new fangled computer.

So, I got out the manuals to learn how to program it. First I learned the format for the steps required. Then I applied freshman high school algebra to the problem. After some trial and errors, I had a program with 42 lines. When I ran it, I had to enter the time clocked in and then out for the entire week. Then I entered the hourly wage of that employee. In less than a second, I had all the information I needed. I had the time worked for each period the employee was on the clock. I also had the total pay due. So, from then on, I did my payroll using my computer.

At some point, I also got some modules that would plug into the computer giving it more abilities. One of them had a spreadsheet application that I used at the store.

Since the spreadsheet had a table layout and so did the weekly report, why not layout the sales data so it was just like the report? It seemed to make sense to me. That was what I did.

Then I had to learn how to tell the spreadsheet to do the calculations that I needed. Again it was strictly freshman algebra, so it was not all that hard. It was a little time consuming though.

Then came the time to save the spreadsheet. So, I got out my audio tape recorder and connected it to the keyboard. Then I pushed the right button on it to save the it. Several minutes later, the data was saved on tape.

Then on the next Tuesday afternoon, I loaded the spreadsheet file from the tape by connecting the recorder again to the keyboard. Again it took several minutes to do the loading. It sure was noisy as in all kinds of squealing noises. Then after the store closed, I entered the data from that day's sales on to the spreadsheet. Then it took several minutes to save the spreadsheet with the new data.

Each afternoon I would load the data. Later I would enter that day's data and save the complete spreadsheet. So, come Monday evening, I had loaded all the data from Tuesday through Saturday. Shortly after closing the shop, I entered Monday's data and had the spreadsheet recalculate the data.

Because some of the calculations relied upon other calculations, I had to type the recalculate button a couple of times. The data entry only took a few minutes. All calculations took only additional seconds.

Every week had to take an inventory of the clothes we had in the store. First we calculated what the inventory should be, and then we added up all of the orders in the store to discover what is actually is. These were suppose to be very close. If not, we had to go back to find out why they were not. Obviously, the computer could do the first thing. We used a printing calculator to determine what the inventory was. At the end of the tape would be the total number of orders and the total amount of them. (This was really two inventories. We had to do one for the dry cleaning and one for the laundry.)

These inventories were part of my weekly report, so they were also part of the spreadsheet. So, when I loaded the

data Monday afternoon, I had the two inventory amounts from the previous week on the spreadsheet. Also part of the data for Saturday was what the inventory amounts should be as of the close on Saturday. All I had to do was enter the data for Monday and do the appropriate number of recalculation. The cells for the inventory totals contained data I needed for my report. All I needed to do this was to take the inventory so see if it matched what the computer said they should be.

For the first seven years, all of the stores had weekly sales for Tuesday through Thursday. But outside of the Lake Charles area, the other stores had a special first Monday of the month sale. (Why this one area did not, I really did not ever hear.) But Sometime after I arrived in Lake Charles, Mr. Lowenthau decided the Lake Charles area should have it as well.

This is when some complaining began. Huge amount of clothes were coming in as in \$500 to over \$1,000 were brought in. In many cases, these were brought during the last couple of hours. This meant that there were clothes all over the place. It took quite sometime to enter the amounts that had come in on the daily sales. It might be a hour after the store closed before this part was done.

And then there was the inventory that had to be done... With all the extra orders that had come in this day, it would take a much longer time to add up the amounts on all of the orders!

Of course, this meant that someone was on the clock longer because of this situation. Higher expenses did get the attention of the office. So a compromise was made. If the store had more than \$700 in sales that day, no inventory had to be taken that night. It was very, very seldom that we did not exceed that amount by hundreds of dollars.

We had a form we used to keep track of our incoming sales. When an order was written up, its amount was written on this form. It was designed to have the subtotals for every 10 orders. (One of these were for dry cleaning and the other for laundry.) There was room for each column total. The form's total was put at the bottom right corner. When a counter attendant was not too busy and many orders had come in, these totals were calculated and entered on the form.

We had a similar system for outgoing sales. Periodically, one of the counter attendants would use the printing calculator to add up a stack of tickets that had been picked up. This tape included the total sales and the number of tickets at the bottom. The tape was stapled together with the tickets. So by the end of the day, we would have a bunch of stapled stacks with subtotals. It was not difficult to calculate the totals from them.

So, within 10 minutes of closing the front door, I had the data that I needed to enter into the spreadsheet. The form(s) of incoming sales were added to get their totals. The forms would also be checked to see the number of sales for the day. The printing calculator was then used to total the outgoing sales on one tape and the total number of tickets.

Well, I had already loaded the spreadsheet with the previous six days of data. It was only a matter of entering the latest. And again, if the day's total dry cleaning was over \$700, my helper for inventory could go home. I would write out my bank deposit, take it to the bank, and go home.

Every Monday evening, Joe would call to find out what what the store had done in sales for the week. Well, I would know quite a few minutes before he called because of my computer. The first Monday of the month was when his call would be a little later, but I got him trained after a while.

On the first Monday, he would first ask what we had done that day. (The other weeks, he was only concerned with the week.) So I would tell him. Then with a certain amount of smugness, I would ask him if he wanted to also know about my weekly totals. Of course he did. He got to the place that he would call about 6:15 to 6:20. It probably still amazed him that I would have all of this information this quick!

My aching feet!

Apparently I was on my feet much more than I had been in the past because they began to hurt much more. In fact, hard areas were forming on the bottoms of them on the pads of my feet. (I think these are called stone bruises.) Well, I had heard of Dr. Shole's foot pads. So, I got a pair. While this did not help very much, my feet did feel a little better. So, I started putting two of these pads in each shoe. This helped more, but this did nothing for the hard spots. Then again, I had heard that nothing would help them.

This time I found help in an Amway catalog. They sold sole insert that contained a gel. Counting shipping, a pair of these must have cost about \$10. But what a relief! My feet did not ache anymore! These stone bruises? After a while, they disappeared never to return. I wore them for several years and still think that I had gotten a very good bargain.

Training new managers

I had been an instructor in the Air Force, well not very good at all. The same could be said about my teaching experience in Mississippi with one one except of one year as a fourth grade teacher. But all of these had one thing in common: lesson plans. These laid out what would be taught and in what order.

Did Joe Fontenot have these, or had he done this for so long that they had become second nature? I don't know because I never asked him. This now seems to be very strange since he would have been an excellent source of

information. There was a large number of questions in this regard that I should have asked him. But, I did not do so...

What did I remember about my training seven years earlier? We arrived before 6:30 AM and had hands on experiences from then until 6 PM when the store was closed. This was followed by one to two hours in which he taught us about fabrics and other topics every night. So, supper was always late in the evening.

But I really did not pay that much attention to as far as training was concerned. I had a store to run which took much of my time for 12 hours a day. Then I was suppose to train people on time of this? That is 13-14 hours per day six days a week? My salary was \$300 per week. Anyway you want to look at it, I was being underpaid by a great deal.

Actually, I had thought about this some. What I wanted them to do is to let me be the training supervisor and hire someone else to be the manager. They did not see it that way. To them, my putting this many hours in every day was what was expected of me.

Since I began my career as a dry cleaner, I had received monthly packages of information about dry cleaning from IFI. (International Fabrics Institute) At some point, I got a large 3 ring binder, probably from this organization. It contained dividers for each area of information. As each package came in, I would place the pages of information in their proper areas. This had become part of my continuing education.

This information became part of my training. They were shown my store's binder and were told to read the pages in it. When they got to their store, they were to look for this binder. If they could not find it, they were to buy a binder. Then each month they were to separate what they received into subjects. It was to be kept up to date, and they were to study its content periodically.

There was also other information in my monthly IFI package. I made it my business to see what else was going on as far as dry cleaning is concerned. As a result, I was able to learn a little here and a little there. It proved to be well worth the time doing this.

This is where I tried to use my computer as well. One day, I enter the information from one of items in my notebook. I had one student read this while I did something that needed to be done in the store. The only problem was that he did not know how to "turn the pages". (He was not as computer literate as I was. It took typing two keys at the same time.) What they got to see is how a computer can help with doing the weekly paperwork.

Mr. Lowenthau surprised me. He had bought a large TV with a VCR for training purposes. There were tapes which showed how to do particular tasks. For example: a well known lady demonstrated how to press pants. (Her demonstrations at trade shows was always a "must see".) So, from that point on trainees had additional instructions from the very best in the business. I was impressed! I considered this to be a vast improvement over just show and tell on the equipment.

One of my trainees was a flop. She had a bad attitude besides being sure of herself even when she should not be. She did not want to follow directions which included what footwear was acceptable. She did not try to do things the way I had shown her. I really did not want her around.

I mentioned this to Ron Shaw, but he did not see any problem. She was part of it, but the rest was that I did not know how to tell him that she would not work out a manager. Here was a case of my not being decisive. So, I muddled through, teaching her as best as I could.

After spending three weeks in Lake Charles, she headed back to Baton Rouge to what I thing was a new store. She

immediately began having problems. She was not taking care of the equipment. She was rude to her customers. Then again she did not listen to her supervisor either who came to the conclusion that he did not want her as a manager. He fired her.

This got back to us in Lake Charles, and Joe Fontenot discussed this with me. He asked me if I would be want her to be working in my store, and my answer was a very quick and emphatic **NO!** Joe didn't want her as a manager either.

One of the people I trained fairly quickly became a supervisor for Baton Rouge, LaFayette, and points south of it. She was a very nice lady. (I was "clean shaven" at the time.) Then she sent another lady for managerial training, but between times, I had grown a mustache and goatee. So, when she came to the door and saw my beard, she said, "Dan?" with a rise in her voice. I assured her that I was. Before we got started with the training, I got caught up with what her supervisor was doing.

It was when I was training another manager that Mr. Lowenthau jumped down my throat. I always made sure that the equipment was well greased. As a result, there was a certain amount of grease build up within the equipment cabinets. He came into the store demanding that all this grease be cleaned up within a rather short period of time or I could say good-bye to my job. (I found it rather strange that I had not heard anything about doing something like the more than seven years I had worked for the company.)

With all of the work that I had to do, I did not see how I could clean all the grease out of all of the equipment cabinet! I just about fell to pieces on the spot. The trainee told me that he would see what he could do to remove the dried grease. This was a partial relief. He did spend part of a night working in some of the equipment.

Ron Shaw came by the store one evening around this same time. That is when I told him what had happened. As I did so, I broke down and cried right in front of him: it had affected me that much. He managed to calm me down which also helped. I understand that he and Mr. Lowenthau had a talk about this episode afterward. Obviously, Ron was not as concerned with his job as I was mine. (Something similar happened later similar to this more than a year later: the results were quite different.)

One of my trainees was opening a new dry cleaning store in Shreveport, LA. C & L Supply (sister company to Supervisory Services) was installing the equipment. It turned out that he already had a fairly good idea about dry cleaning so this was at best a refresher course.

His cleaning equipment included the dry cleaning machine (cleans and dries), a spotting board, and a filter system to keep the perc clean. He was getting what I considered to be the best spotting board available: the one that had been put into the Baker OHM store. (I truly loved it. Then again I was able to get stains out using this board than I had using the steam board which I had until Baker OHM.) But there was something missing in the set up.

I quickly noticed the potential problem when he described his equipment. Most if not all of them were new, and this included a filter system to keep the perc clean. But there was a down side to this system as well. (This filter is very similar to a oil filter for a car only more of them and both larger and longer.)

When dry cleaning stores were using a "washer/dryer" pair earlier, the filtration system used dichotomous earth and a perc cooker. The latter distilled the perc which was reused. As a result, the dichotomous earth **and** fatty acids were removed from the perc. A filter system has limited ability to remove fatty acids.

As more stores went to one machine to do both cleaning and drying, they also went to a filter system. Fatty acids began to build up in the perc, and the clothes began to smell. Customers began to complain.

IFI has a service for its member stores. If they are having problem with an item they had cleaned, they can sent the garment to IFI to get a professional opinion of what the problem had been. Well, they started to get many garments with the same problem: bad odors in them.

When they get garments like these, the first thing they do is to dry clean them. Surprising enough, this quickly eliminated the problem without doing anything more. Then they did a little more testing with some of the garments. They identified fatty acids as the reason for the odor.

So, one of my monthly packets from IFI carried this recommendation: If you have a filter system and do **not** have a cooker for the perc, get one and install it. This will eliminate the possibility of odor because of high fatty acid content in the perc.

While I was working in Baton Rouge, the Government store had this very problem. I remember Wes, the area manager there, had just changed the filters at this store because of high fatty acid. After making the change, he remeasured the fatty acid level. It had dropped from way to high to borderline high. (Personal opinion: they should have been changed again right then.)

So, I told the trainee that he needed a cooker to go along with the filters and why. So, he went to Mr. Lowenthau telling him that a cooked had to be included. (I have no doubt that he was very adamant about this. This was how he handled his training.)

Then Mr. Lowenthau came to me rather angry. I was not suppose to be interfering with what a customer was sold

equipment wise. It seems as if he did not think that I knew what I was talking about.

I did take a somewhat submissive stance with him. However, I did point out what I had read in the IFI bulletin about this topic and left it be. For a while I was wondering if I had endangered my job by being so bold with the trainee.

If it cost him some of the profits of the sale, I can understand that. However, I was certain that I was on solid foundation as to the advice I had given. He may not have liked it then, but he may have made up for this cost by the amount of supplies that store used. After all, a happy customer certainly buys more items; an unhappy customer goes somewhere else to buy things. I may well have saved him a lot more money than he thought he had lost.

What about Government OHM in Baton Rouge who had the fatty acid problem? I heard that cooker had been installed within a few months since Mr. Lowenthau's angry outburst toward me. (Joe Fontenot told me.) So, that solved an existing problem. And I was vindicated in the advice I had given. Additional point: by reading the literature that IFI sent, I learned new things and could do a better job of cleaning.

What about Baker OHM? I do not know whether it had a perc cooker or not. Considering this conflict in Lake Charles, it might not have had one.

My training was not working out like they wanted it. Then again, they wanted me to spend more hours with the trainees after the store closed at 6 PM. Susan was growing a little weaker because of her muscular dystrophy. I really could not afford to be away from her and Kevin until 8 PM each night. Besides that is entirely too many regular hours for anyone to work. In the end, they returned the training to Joe Fontenot. How long did I train new managers? Probably more than a year.

Another accident

Was I jinxed? this store had plate glass windows across the entire width of the building with the door to the customer lobby on the right (as seen from the inside). These panes went from floor to ceiling which seemed like 10 feet.

This time the driver was listening to the car's radio when he started to drive off. The only problem was that the car was in Drive, but he thought it was in Reverse. I was with a trainee in my office (behind the customer lobby) when I heard the car hit the door. (The trainee used some language that I refuse to write and would not anyway.)

We first made sure that no one was hurt including the driver. Then once we got calmed down a little bit, it was back to going through the red tape as I had already done two times before. This was the last time I had to go through this which was very nice indeed.

Building the business

The year prior to my arrival the store had done about \$120,000 (yes I was still keeping year to year records). Three years later when I had to quit because of Kevin, we were on track to do \$180,000 for that year.

The top two stores in monthly sales were traditionally McNeese because it was across from the college campus, and the South Gate.(This was the main laundry store.) One month, our sales was greater than one of the two of these. Why? Probably because of hard work.

One of our stores in LaFayette, LA, had the reputation of being an excellent store that did over 600 shirts a day. With two people working in tandem, they were putting out a shirt every 30 seconds. So,I was sent over the summer of 1987 to see how this was done to see if I could improve what we had in Lake Charles.

On the assigned day I drove to Lafayette and checked into the motel. My room contained a refrigerator and perhaps a microwave oven, maybe some other items other than the usual beds and bath. I did not think anything about this until I talked to Susan after I got back.

Somehow she got the idea from Ron that I would be taking her and Kevin with me. Well, there were things in the motel room that would have allowed it. However, I am not sure that things would have worked out very well for them if they had gone on this trip.

I think once I checked in the motel that I drove to the laundry store. Why? First of all, I would know where I would be going the next morning. Secondly, this would give me a chance to introduce myself to the manager.

I already knew that there was more to laundering shirts than the pressing. Such was the case this store. When I got there, the manager was washing the dirty shirts that had been brought back from the other stores. So, while she was doing this, we got acquainted. One thing that impressed me was the huge number of shirts she was washing. All of these were placed in baskets and covered to keep them damp. Once this was done, it was time to head back to the motel.

The next morning, I arrived at the store at the usual time, 6:30. The boiler was already going, building up steam pressure. It was not long before the laundry people came in. Of course, the presses had to be cleaned before they could be used. With the amount of shirts they pressed each day, there was some starch buildup on the presses. Unless this was removed, brown spots would appear on the newly pressed shirts. This is a definitely a no-no! (Marry and Jamie were already doing this every day already.)

Then the pressing began. Two women worked with the shirts, and one pressed the bluejeans. This was different than what I was use to. In Baton Rouge and Lake Charles,

two people did the laundry: one for the shirts and the other for the bluejeans.

This store had the same presses that I did and in the same layout. There was one press which did the body of the shirts. Across from it was the other two presses. The first one pressed the shirt sleeves. The second one pressed the collars, shoulders, and cuffs.

The order of pressing shirts was the sleeves, the collars, and then the body. One person was responsible for doing the first two, and the other did the the last one. When the shirt came out of the body press, the second person put the shirt upon a hanger.

Doing this is more involved than just putting a hanger in it. The collar has to be buttoned and the collar folded down. This is done on a solid wooden cone. (A cone would have a point on the end, but this one had that point cut off.) First the collar button is fastened and placed over the cone. Then the collar is folded along the bottom of it. Then pressure is applied to the collar with the hands to create a crease between the collar and shoulder areas. Then the shirt is taken off this cone and placed upon a hanger.

The next step for the shirt is inspection it. Buttons can be broken during the pressing process, and these need to be replaced. After all, people do not like to put on a freshly pressed shirt before going some where nice and find that a button is missing. So, this is where broken ones are replaced. Yes, we had a machine that did this and an assortment of button sizes as well.

There was one more item that needed to be done during inspections: touch up anything that did not looked pressed well enough. For that we had a steam iron. Instead of having to add water to the iron to make steam, a small pipe from the store's boiler provide the steam. The steam was definitely hotter than that of a normal steam iron!

The obvious next step was to bag the shirts into their individual orders. When all of this was done, it was time to load the laundry into the delivery truck. Off the driver would go to deliver the laundry to the other stores. It was also time for the laundry people to go home for the day.

OK, I knew the things that needed to be done using these presses. But I had no idea of how much faster this operation could be when two people work in tandem on these three pieces of equipment! There were two different things that I paid close attention to. The first thing was how they worked together. Each press had a timer that controlled how long the shirt would be on it. This also controlled to a certain extent how long it took to press a given shirt.

To begin the process, a shirt was placed into the shirt press. When it came back out, it was placed onto the collar and cuff press. As soon as this was done, another shirt was placed in the sleeve press. Then as soon as possible a shirt was placed onto the collar and cuff press. Then for as long as there were clean, wet shirts; the person would alternate between feeding these two presses. The quicker the person can move the shirts from press to press, the quicker the shirts will be pressed.

The second person also has two things to do: pressing the bodies of shirts, and placing the shirts on hangers. These also are obviously done alternately.

What really amazed me was the speed that they were able to generate. Many times during the day I would time the length of time it took from placing one shirt on a hanger and the next one (30 seconds). Even so, I watch carefully to see how they were able to work this fast.

While I did not match them exactly, our time per shirt improved to 37 seconds per shirts. This meant that we had all of the shirts pressed, placed upon the truck, and it left by 2 PM daily. So, the shirts were in the stores before the

people came in to get them. We saw an increase in the number of shirts we did as a result of this. There was a general increase in sales for the store also. Over the period of a year or so, the maximum number of shirts we did went from about 120 to over 220 for a day during a laundered shirt sale.

This meant that I had to spend my time in the laundry area every day from 8 until 2 with the exception of a 30 minute lunch break helping to press the shirts. I handled the first two presses which pressed the sleeves and collar (in this order), and Mary ran the body press. She also ran the washer, and these two items kept her quite busy too. The truck driver would check for any broken buttons, touch up shirts that needed it, and put the laundry back into their proper orders. Jamie was responsible for pressing the jeans.

On Mondays and Saturdays, these two ladies took turns taking a day off. So on these days, it was just the two of us doing the laundry pressing. Then during the summer when one of them was on vacation, I would be doing the washing and pressing all by myself. (All in a day's work.)

Why actions speak louder than words

Someone had discovered how to take better care of the boilers in hard water areas. So all of the managers were told what they needed to do. After we were suppose to be doing this, one of the managers mentioned at a manager's meeting about how she could already see the difference. She lied.

One of the preventative measures that the company maintenance men did was to inspect the inside of the boiler annually. To do this, hand holes in the sides of the boiler were opened. With the previous method for removing rust and scale from the boiler, mine was always developing some scale on the inside in spite of what I did. So some

internal cleaning had to be done during each annual inspection. This was common for all the boilers.

Then it came time for the next inspection. I knew when it was to be because the boiler needed to be shut down as soon as possible after all the cleaning and pressing was done.

I did what I was suppose to do, and he came in on schedule. He had been in the boiler room for a while when he came to get me: he wanted to show me something. Well, I had seen open hand holes in the boiler before. I had also seen the inside of the boiler through these holes and the scale and rust inside. So, what did he want? Well, seeing is believing. When he told me that there was not any scale inside the boiler, I really did not believe him! Then he used his flashlight to let me see for myself. Sure enough, the inside was clean. Yes, there was absolutely nothing sticking to the inside of the boiler. It had not been this clean any time since it was installed.

He really did not have much to do at all. He had drained the boiler and opened the hand holes. One look inside told him that he did not have any scaling to do. All he had left to do was to replace the hand holds using new gaskets and turn the boiler's water pump back on. Other than the paperwork, he was finished at my store. (The man who did this inspection was the head mechanic.)

I wonder if the others had been as diligent in blowing down the boiler each day as I had. If not, then mine was an example of how clean a boiler could be kept when following the steps we were given.

Well, I would find out, at least whether one of the managers had been doing this. But first a comment about her attitude. She was making comments about how nice this new boiler blow down was working. In fact, she repeated this more than one time. But then it came her turn to have

her boiler inspected perhaps around 8-10 AM... The same mechanic came. (Obviously, she did not have her boiler on yet or perhaps on low.) Anyway, he drained the boiler, and opened the hand holes. What he saw was a far cry from what he had seen in my store. There was a huge build up of scale. The boiler was in danger of blowing up. Well, this was reported to the office, and Mr. Lowenthau personally came to the store to fire her. I really don't think she had any idea of what she had done when she had failed to follow the new steps we had been given. She obviously had not been following them correctly.

Sometime later I learned why this was important. In the southeastern part of the city, someone had not been taking care of the boiler properly, and it exploded! An employee was standing outside the building against a wall between the front door and a window. The explosion blew the glass of the front door out past him some 40+ feet. It also blew out the window about the same distance. The back of the building where the boiler had been was totally destroyed. The boiler looked like it had been torn apart. Had anyone been in the path of this glass, there would have been serious injuries or even death.

Counter lady

Joe Fontenot came to me with a special request from the office. They wanted to place a specific lady as counter attendant in my store. This seemed little strange to me in the beginning. I'm not sure that I was in need of one at the time or not. Yet, it was rather difficult for me to say no even though managers usually get to decide whom they will hire.

In the end, it was who this lady was. She was the daughter of the man who ran C&L Supplies, the sister company to the one I worked for (Supervisory Services). This certainly set me to thinking. Was this nepotism? Yet, if she was qualified, why the special request? And if she was

not, what kind of problems were they saddling me with? How much leeway would I have in working with her? If she could not do the work, would I be able to fire her?

Likely she had a lot of unanswered questions of her own. She knew that she had this job only because of her father. Very likely she also knew that I would know this. But she did not know how much more I knew. How would I react to this? Specifically, would I resent having her work in my store since I had nothing to do with her being hired?

It turned out that she was not qualified for the position. That is, she would not have been hired if she were not the daughter of someone high up in the sister company. In essence, she had some emotional issues that had not been addressed in her family environment.

So, it was agreed that she would begin working daily from 3:30 until closing. Monday evening we would be doing the weekly inventory after closing. This would be her schedule until I quit in August, 2018.

Then came her first day to work. I, of course, still had a lot of unanswered questions in my mind. Then she came in the door and introduced herself. Then it was my turn to teach her all the things she needed to do to become a counter attendant.

There is nothing like work to settle ones nerves. This started with my filling out her time card and having her clock in. For the rest of this day, I spent some time describing some of the things she would be doing. Then as customers came in, I waited upon them. She got to watch what I was doing and how. I probably also talked about my actions as I did them as well. After a while, I let her wait upon some of the customers while I watched. When she ran into a problem, I would gently explain what she should do.

When we had some time between customers, we would talk. Much of it was answering her questions. Some of it was

critics of how she had waited upon a previous customer. Most of this was suggesting better ways she could use the next time she had a customer to work with.

Our conversations branched out in other directions as well. Over a period of time, she began to open up, and I learned more about her. I also learned how she had been thinking in the past. Perhaps, I helped her change some of the ways she was thinking.

OK, she had some issues, but this did not get in the way of her becoming a good counter attendant. So, while she would not have been hired for this position in the beginning, she proved by her actions that she could do a very good job.

When I finally got tired enough of Mr. Lowenthau to quit, she was the one the office chose to make the temporary manager until they could train a permanent one. Then in less than a year, they gave her a small store of her own. She had come a long way.

Death in Susan's family

Carolyn and Percy had a marriage that slowly but surely came apart at the seams. I have already mentioned a couple of times when he would drive up to one of her relatives and leave here there. She did not really know when he would be coming back. This happened periodically for quite some time.

But she was getting older with each passing year. She also had inherited muscular dystrophy from her father (Steiner's disease). This meant that she was not able to do as much as before. So, she also needed to have someone help her. With his actions and attitude, he was not up to doing what she needed.

It finally got so bad that she came home to her mother for good. Uncle Johnny (Ward) gave her enough money to

get a divorce. Now at least she had a place to stay that was clean, the dishes were washed.

But Mildred was also getting older. She had developed problems with arthritis. While she tried to help her daughter as much as possible, Carolyn needed more help than Mildred was able to give. As a result, even between both of them, everything could no longer get done. They both needed help, a lot of it.

Finally, the family doctor recommended that both be put into a nursing home. The one in Newton, MS, had room for both, so that is where they were taken. They were even put into the same room.

This worked for a while, but someone noticed that Carolyn was not getting out and around as much as they thought she should. Oh, she would get out of bed and into a wheelchair, but she would not leave her mother's side. So, they felt they had to separate them.

Over a period of time, both of them gradually became weaker a little bit at a time, Mildred more than Carolyn. Finally came February, 1988. Mildred needed some medical tests run. Since the hospital at Newton had stopped doing everything except for some emergency care, she had to be taken by ambulance to Meridian, MS, to have this done. This happened the latter part of the week.

This trip was very hard on her. In fact, she was so weak that she could no longer think clearly. She could be told something and not remember it a minute or less afterward. She was listless. (I knew this because Rachel and Susan had talked on the phone many a weekend on Saturday...

Then the phone rang Sunday evening, and I answered it; it was Rachel. Immediately, I was thinking that Mildred had died, she had been so weak. Well, I was right about someone having died alright. It was Carolyn! Rachel had to say it again for me to fully grasp the situation. At least I was

able to get some information that we would need for the trip to Newton.

She told me what had happened even though she did not understand why. Carolyn had gotten into her wheelchair and gone to one of the nurse's stations to talk for a while. While there, she suddenly slumped over when she died. Even though the nurses were right there at the time, there was nothing that they could have done to revive her.

While we did not know it at the time, this was exactly the same thing that had happened to her father in 1970. Their specific type of muscular dystrophy can cause the heart to stop beating without warning. I would not know why until a doctor explained it to me when Susan needed a pace maker. (This is mentioned at the later part of this book.)

The first thing I did was to tell Susan and then comfort her as much as possible. OK, she was not the only one in shock at the time. Even so, we muddled through packing the things that we would need.

I took time to call Joe Fontenot to tell him that we had a death in the family. So, I got permission to be absence from work until after the funeral. (I think this took most of the week.)

But there was something else that had to be done this evening that would not wait until in the morning. It was one of the cold nights that Lake Charles is known for in February; the temperature was scheduled to drop below 30°F. I had to get to the store to turn the boiler on low. OK, that was done. Now to get some organization to packing...

We left Monday morning arriving in the afternoon and then checking into the motel in Newton. The three surviving sisters met at the funeral home to plan the funeral on Tuesday morning. Honestly, things that happened the rest of that trip is a blur. We got back home by the end of the week.

One thing that I must mention though: Mildred's reaction to her daughter dying. I was in her room several times this week while others were trying to tell her that Carolyn had recently died. It was quite clear that the words she was hearing meant absolutely nothing to her. I'm not sure that she understood very much of anything that week. So, we had to head home not knowing whether she would ever regain the ability to have a meaningful conversation about anything again. Would she get stronger, or would she become weaker and die also?

Other memories in the laundry department

I mentioned earlier that the washer in the laundry area was rather new. This did not mean that it did not have its problems because it did. Of course, it takes some time to adjust to all the intricacies of a new machine.

The first problem came in the form of the supplies needed to wash the clothes. The various liquid chemicals were fed into the the drum automatically including the amount of each one. Well, if only full loads of clothes were washed in it, this would work fine. But this was not the case. We were also running smaller loads at times as well. This meant that we were using more chemicals at times than were needed. The expense for this added up over a period of time.

So, the decision was made to add these chemicals by hand. So, the containers of liquid chemicals and their feeding system were removed. Instead we had containers of harsh soap, a degreaser (collar grime), all fabric bleach, and starch among other things I may have forgotten.

The complete washer cycle included two wash cycles and two rinse. The first wash cycle is when the the degreaser (when laundering shirts only) and soap was added. This is when we added a larger amount of it. A short rinse cycle rinsed all of the junk off. It basically cleaned the shirts.

During the second wash cycle, we added bleach and an acid to neutralize any caustic soap residue. The second rinse cycle rinsed the clothes. Then began a two stage extraction. The first one ran at a slower speed as the water was drained. It was just fast enough to help remove most of the water from the clothes. Then the drum kicked into high gear. When it stopped, the clothes were still damp but not dripping wet.

At some point, something went wrong with the machine. So, it had to be removed to fix it. During this time, we had to send our laundry to South Gate for washing. Then it was brought back to us for pressing. Obviously, this was not a fun time, but we managed to get through it which was more than a week.

This must have been during the time I was training new managers. Matter of fact, I was training a new supervisor. It was a little before opening time, when I was doing some things near the laundry area. He was going with me, and we were chanting about something as we went. Then he happened to look at the back of the laundry washer for no particular reason. There was a bolt and nut loose, so he asked me about it. Sure enough, we had another problem! It was not safe to run this machine until this was fixed. I think that in the process of checking for additional loose bolts we found some more.

I called the office, and the maintenance department answered the phone. After I explain what I had found. Someone was dispatched to my store to check this out. Conclusion: the machine had to be sent back to the manufacturer for repairs. OK, we muddled through another period of time without a washer.

What had happened to cause this? Most likely some counterfeit bolts had been used unawares. Because they were substandard, some of them broke under the stain

caused by running the machine. As a result, all of the bolts on this machine had to be replaced. (There had been other reports of people selling substandard parts for various machines around that period of time.) So, after waiting for far too long (in my opinion), I got my machine back in working order. **Yes!** This was also the last of the problems we had with it.

Because I worked so close to the two ladies in the laundry, I got to know both of them fairly well. And I use to have some fun with them. Well, my hearing was very good even when the machines were making quite a racket. They would be talking back and forth while working, and I was at least 20 feet away. Suddenly, I would hear one of them speak my name. So, I would walk toward their direction and call out wanting to know if either one of them needed my assistance. Usually they did not, but this did surprise them that I could hear this well.

This was something I learned from the Jamie. She use to be a smoker, but at some point she wanted to quit. Being religious, she began praying earnestly. For several days, nothing seemed to change, but she kept praying. Then she began getting a bad taste in her mouth. It got so bad that she actually brushed her teeth several times a day trying to get rid of the taste. It did not work. It took a couple more days to tie down when this happened: only after she lit a cigarette. Well, this was enough for her to stop doing this. The bad taste went away, and she had not smoked anytime after that. She no longer even wanted to do so.

Sometime later she lost her mother. Anyway, since she was a very good worker and friend, I went to the funeral home. I owed her this. Even so, it was a little strange to be in a black funeral home. Yes, I felt a little uneasy, and some of the people there may have also. I know because I spoke to them. Hopefully, they appreciated my doing this; I know she did.

Mary was the one that I worked with the most. Her work was amazing to me. While I was pressing the sleeves and then collars, she was running the body press machine, folding the collars just so, and adding chemicals to the washer at the proper time. We also had an automatic washer like people have at home. When we had a small load of clothes needing washing left over after filling up the large washer, she would wash them in the small one. More often than not, it would be bluejeans. So, she would be busy with this as well. She was always on the move.

There was something that I did not really understand about the shirts we did. Many of them were either a high percentage of cotton or 100% cotton. OK, that is not all that strange because cotton is quite absorbent. But most of them were long sleeved white shirts! Why wear a long sleeve shirt in warm to hot weather? Yes, I know that air conditioning was already being used in offices. But didn't long sleeve shirts make the people want to keep the temperature in the office at a lower level? Isn't this an extra cost? (Well, at least I would think so.

The presses were hot enough to press the cotton shirts, but such was not the case for bluejean or khaki shirts. They had to be run through the presses twice. More often than not, the sleeve and collar presses would thoroughly do their jobs for these types of shirts, the same could not be said for the body press. It always slowed us down for a little while. Fortunately, we did not have very many of them.

During Mary's two week vacation, Jamie and I did the shirts together during part of the day. She also had the bluejeans to press, so I did some of the shirts by myself. Then during Jamie's two weeks, I helped Mary with the shirts for a while and did the bluejeans.

When Mary and Jamie came in, they began by cleaning their presses. This removed all of the starch that had stuck

on them from the day before. At the same time Mary was running the washer. When she was ready to begin pressing shirts, I headed back to the laundry area to do my part.

It was usually close to noon when we finished pressing the shirts from the night before. Obviously, when we finished depended upon the volume of shirts. Then we would head to the area just behind the counter area where we would all eat our lunches. Conversations between us was the normal. (People sure can draw close to each other in conditions like this: we did.)

Then half an hour later, we clocked back in. It was time to begin working on the laundry that had been picked up that morning. Within 90 minutes, all of this laundry was also done. All of the laundry had been put back into their individual orders, and the laundry going to other stores was already loaded on the truck. So, by 2 PM, Eldon was driving away going to the first stop. By 3 PM, he was back with bags of dirty laundry for the next days work.

I really thing that getting the laundry done this quick had something to do with the increase in sales. The customers could depend upon their laundry being ready by 3 PM Monday through Saturday. Well, I would like to think that we did quality work. And of course, the economy was continuing to get better.

And yet, my monthly sales when I arrived was a little over \$8,000. Two years and a quarter years later, it was over \$12,000. McNeese and South Gate did not have this great of an increase. They use to have much higher sales volumes than any of the stores included mine. I had brought my sales into the same area as theirs. In fact during my last year, I actually was second in sales one month. It had to be the quality of our service. I was part of the reason for this, but my employees were the most part of it. I could never had done this without them!

And then there were the snakes... Well they were not just any snakes: they were pigmy rattle snakes! The back door had been open to keep things cool, and a couple of them just slithered inside. This really got my employees worked up. But they were quickly killed, and we all went back to working. Well, likely there were nervous glances periodically that was looking for any more snakes that might had also come inside...

Then again Lake Charles is known for its rainy weather. This was obvious from the nightly spring to fall forecast of rain fall. The city was only large enough to support one TV station. So nightly, we heard the following forecast. "The probability of rain for tomorrow will be 30%. I don't mean that there is that in any given area there is a 30% of rain. 30% of the area will have rain. (I must mention that this began as soon as the normal high temperature for the day got up to 90.)

In fact, the temperatures given on the 5 and 6 PM weather forecast would contain several 75's scattered throughout the area. The rest of the temperatures were in the high 80's to mid 90's.

Lake Charles is located 45 miles of the Gulf of Mexico. With southerly breezes most of the time, our humidity was rather high throughout the warmer part of the year. As the temperature rose into the 90's, the air destabilized resulting in afternoon thunderstorms. The weatherman called them nature's air conditioning. During the storm, the temperature would drop into the mid 70's and remain there until sometime the next day. And yes we averaged an afternoon rain in one out of every 3 to 4 days.

Well, afternoons were not always times for rain. One morning, a heavy rain storm drifted north from the Gulf. (Well we *only* had 4" from the rain.) As a result, there was

quite a bit of water in the store's parking lot. Not knowing what else to do, I reported this to the office.

We actually had a drain which should have allowed the water to drain off. But over a long time, the gravel in that area had moved around enough to make drainage almost impossible. In fact, no one seemed to know the exact location of the drain anymore.

It turned out that the drain was at the edge of the driveway. So, it was the cars which had moved the gravel over the drain over a period of time.

So, Frenchy came out on his tractor to see what he could do. (He had a blade on the back of it with which he could move the gravel around.) It did not take him very long to find the drain, and then he graded the gravel back to where it belonged. Needless to say, the water disappeared very quickly after that.

And then there was one late fall day (late November or December... A lady, who worked at the other end of the street my store was on, appeared after she got off work. Next thing I knew she was bringing in a number of large potted plants. The temperature was finally beginning to turn cooler. She said that she did not have room in her home for all of these, and she did not want them to be killed during the short time we had freezing temperatures. This was fine with me because it did give the counter area a very nice appearance.

February is the one month that we would have those cold temperatures. Even so, the only parts that I noticed was how nice the plants looked and whether they needed more water or not.

But one of my customers was much more observant. This is because he had one of these plants at his home. It was the middle of February when he came in. One of the first things that he did was to look at one of the plants in almost

total unbelief. It was beginning to bloom! Well, he had never gotten his similar plant to bloom even in the middle of the "hot" summer. He also knew that such a plant seldom blooms for anyone in the area.

What had happened? The heat generated by the steam we used kept the air warm enough to bring the plant's flower to begin to bloom. Unfortunately, the temperature would also go down at night, so the bloom never completely formed a flower. It only came close.

Church problems

This was not as good of a move church wise as I had thought. The closest church was at Orange, TX, about 35 miles away. There were a couple of churches about 60 miles north of us, one of which I had attended when I was in training earlier. While at this church we meet a couple who also lived in West Lake, and Susan talked to the wife on the phone quite a bit. She mentioned that there was a church in West Lake and told us where it was located. So, we went.

I was rather curious about this one, so the next time I was in Orange, I asked the pastor, Elder Gerald Reid, about this group. I really wanted to know what the situation was.

He, I, and a deacon from his home church were discussing this out on the church yard. Both of them insisted that they knew nothing about this church saying that they would have to do some investigation to see what they could learn. That was nice of them. So, I decided to wait until they could find out what I wanted to know.

Meanwhile we had learned the location of the church in Westlake and the fact that there were services there every Sunday. So, in July (probably 1986), we went there for services. This was likely the first weekend.

After church, we got acquainted with the people there. The Minister was Elder Mike Tyson, and his wife was Sister Becky. There were several young people in attendance

which was something somewhat different from what I had known at other churches. But that was the only difference that I noticed.

Background: Elder Tyson had been raised in West Lake, and his wife grew up around Roanoke, AL. They met somewhere and married, and then they moved to Roanoke. While there he was ordained as an elder, and then he moved his family back to West Lake. His testimony was that he felt called to serve the people where he had grown up. So the church gave him their blessings, and his family moved back to West Lake.

Then it was time to find a local church which they did. It turned out to be the one west of DeRidder, LA. (This was the one where I had been asked to speak by Elder Woody Wilson the fourth Sunday night in 1979.) Anyway, Bro. Tyson and his family ask for membership in this church bringing their church letters. They were accepted by unanimous votes.

Still desiring to have a Primitive Baptist Church in West Lake, Bro. Tyson asked that an arm be extended to West Lake so he could conduct services there. This was granted.

Becky was corresponding with her relatives during this time. (She was a sister-in-law to the pastor, Elder Kenneth Perry, at Zion's Rest Church at Roanoke.) So this church kept abreast of the efforts for forming a church that the Tyson family were exerting.

The members at Zion's Rest were also very close to the member at Prattville Primitive Baptist Church in Prattville, AL. (Elder Jerry Abernathy was its pastor.) As a result, both churches did what they could to help the Tysons any way they could. The minister visited West Lake and preached while they were there. They also helped financially at times.

Finally, the decision was made to organize a church at West Lake in the latter part of 1985. This is when some problems arose. Generally speaking, a group needs three

documents that the future membership agree upon before it can be organized into a church. They are articles of faith, church covenant, and rules of decorum. The people in south east Texas have very strict ideas as to what these documents must contain.

Well, Bro. Mike insisted that the only guide we need to use is the Bible. It contains all of the rules we need to direct our actions. The Primitive Baptist ministers of that area said basically, "**No way!**" They would **not** hear of it.

Finally, a meeting was held in West Lake with Elder Reid and some if not all of the deacons. (All of these were members of the church where the Tyson's membership was at the time.) The day? It was Thursday, December 25, 1985. The meeting was heated with no one giving one inch. And then the meeting ended.

On the fourth Sunday in January, the church issued letters to the Tyson family and anyone he had baptized since the arm was granted. The letters were granted for the purpose of forming a new church, Beulah Primitive Baptist Church. At this point, full fellowship was declared to exist between the mother and daughter churches.

Shortly thereafter, Beulah Church was organized. Elder Kenneth Perry, Elder Jerry Abernathy, and some other ministers from the Montgomery, AL, area formed the presbytery for the organization service.

I did not know about any of this when I first arrived in the area. Some of the information I learned by listening to parties from both sides. Some of it I learned by reading the minutes and correspondence of Beulah Church. (I was the clerk of this church for a period of time.)

The whole matter came to a head when Susan wanted her letter at Orange to be sent to the West Lake church. The first thing they did was to table the matter until the next business meeting. Meanwhile the church west of

DeRidder declared non fellowship with the West Lake church. So, at the next business meeting at Orange, a motion was made to exclude Susan on fellowship grounds. This more than disturbed me: it made me angry because I could see no reason for the letter of non fellowship nor the exclusion of my wife. She did not know about their dirty laundry!

The church rule stated that for such a motion to pass, everyone voting must vote for it. For more than 2 hours I refused to do this. They even threatened me with exclusion for not voting their way. When I saw that there was no way that they would listen to reason, I finally withdrew my "No" vote and left. I also left the key to the church that I had been given.

I expected a church to follow the Bible in their actions. They had lied to me deliberately which God considers to be an abomination. They had granted the Tyson's their letters when they should have excluded them for their beliefs if that was the problem. Instead, they made their decisions based upon what seemed right in their own eyes. Seems to me that King Saul lost his right to be king for doing something like this.

So, I decided to switch sides so to speak and informed the church at Orange of this action. So first Susan received her letter of exclusion, and later I received mine. Even so, I did not understand what the problem was. Why couldn't something be done to work out this problem?

West Lake vs Everyone else

By this time I had began to exercise my preaching gift at Beulah. Then as time past this fall, Bro. Mike decided that he and his family needed to move back to Roanoke for a while. He had gotten the feeling that I was suppose to take his place at Beulah. I might be able to straighten things out. So, off they went.

I did do some visiting of other churches in that area to find out all that I could. I even asked them to let me see their articles of faith, rules of decorum, and church covenant. Some refused which was rather confusing to me. These should have been public records that anyone should have access to. (This is my opinion of course.)

I began writing articles of faith that I thought would be agreeable to both sides: they were quotes from the Bible. I even got Bro. Mike to agree to what I was doing. I also included a church covenant and rules of decorum.

Finally, in December, I went to Beulah's mother church with these documents and handed them to Elder Reid before their church service.

There were two things that I remember well at that evening service. In Elder Reid's sermon, his text was 2 Tim 3:16, 17. He said that he believed this now, but he had not believed it in the past. He used to think that there were some things that we should determine what should be done. It was as if the Bible did not give us all of the rules that we needed to live by. (I thought that thinking this was what had gotten men in trouble down through the ages.) I don't remember him saying when he had changed his mind. With my prejudices, I was thinking that his change of mind had been recently.

The second one had to do with an announcement after church. There was going to be a Christmas hay ride. He said that he had a strong feeling that Santa was going to make an appearance along with Mrs. Clause. He further instructed the parents to bring a present with them for their children.

I had a big problem with the last part of this. Well I have a big problem with people asking children what Santa Claus is going to bring them for Christmas. Why? Because this is not the truth. The Bible is very adamant about lies being an

abomination. Beside, what does this mythical being have to do with the birth of Christ?

I got word sometime early in January that the other side was willing to meet with us at Orange Church on a Saturday night. Besides, Bro. Mike had returned to West Lake with his family.

Likely he knew something after they had not treated him very well in his dealing with them earlier that I did not... So, he insisted that we take different vehicles to the meeting. It turned out that he was absolutely right. (I had forgotten how I had been treated the last time I had been in this building. Perhaps I was just too hopeful of a good outcome.)

The meeting was organized with the election of a moderator. The suggestion was that Bro. Woody take this position. Him being the oldest minister and a lawyer, surely he would keep things going without being bias. At least that is what I thought. I was wrong. He was very biased as he would later show.

There were limitations placed upon those in attendance. No one was to take notes, and no recordings were to be made. So, what lies below is based upon my memory.

The discussion began with the articles of faith that I had written. The preamble was perfectly acceptable to them. The problem came with the Bible quotations. It was not the quotations themselves as they never offered a more suitable quotation. They wanted us to write down what we thought the quotes meant. In other words, it seemed that what we might write meant more than what the Bible contains.

Finally, I heard Elder Reid admit that he and the deacons from his church had met in Bro. Mike's home discussing the issues about the organization of Beulah Church. He really did know about this church the first time I asked him about

it. Now, I had heard from his own lips that he had lied to me, deliberately.

Finally, Bro. Mike asked to speak. (He had had enough.) He asked if we were to do certain things would that please the other brethren. The answer was yes. Then he left.

This ended the meeting basically. Bro. Woody told everyone the meeting was over. The meeting never happened; this was what we were to tell anyone who may have asked about it.

Sorry, but the meeting had happened. There is a record of it whether he liked it or not. This record is thorough and complete, but it is not mine. God is the One who has the record. Surely, Bro. Woody should have know that. Why did he tell us to lie? He had to know that God does not condone such actions.

The meeting had begun with prayer, but that seemed to be the only thing godly about it from the beginning. Once again, they were doing what was right in their own eyes. This is a dangerous thing to do before our God.

Why the anger and venom? They thought that Bro. Tyson was the one who had come up with the things we had brought to the meeting, and that I did not really have anything to do with any of it. This was clear by the way they treated me after the meeting. (Bro. Mike had left immediately.) So, they were again showing their nature, and it was not very pretty!

When I got home, Bro. Mike was still very angry. His description was that the meeting was an inquisition. It was! But with time he got over it, but feelings were very stained to say the least.

So, now you know why I was excluded and was later ordained by the other side. I have never attempted to contact any of them after this. There have been times that I

would like to have done so, but by then too much time would have passed that no one would know what the original problems were. Also since that time the Church at West Lake went out of existence.

Retirement

I really enjoyed my job except when the owner would get nasty. He actually drove me away from his company. Why he periodically got the idea that his managers needed to be threatened to produce good results I don't know. He would become very picky about the smallest things.

One of the truck drivers for C&L Supply had either quit or been let go. Eldon had done a very good job driving our laundry truck. So, he was asked if he wanted to change jobs. This would require him driving to other cities delivering supplies. But the advantages were that it would pay better and include more hours. It did not take him very long to say, "Yes!" So, until I found another truck driver, I would be delivering the laundry.

Shortly after that, Mr. Lowenthau did it again. I was driving the laundry truck and had almost gotten back to my store. He met me at Moss Bluff OHM complaining about the dirty shirt presses claiming that we had not cleaned them in days. (The first thing we did each morning was clean them. I still have the scars to prove it.)

That is when I said I would like to see the problem. So he met me at my store. It seem like it took him 30 minutes to find a very small speck! (It certainly seemed that long to me even though it was a shorter period of time.) It wasn't much bigger than the point (not the head) of a pin. The first time he had verbally abused me I broke down. This time I got very angry. I said nothing that afternoon.

About this same time I noticed that Susan was no longer able to control Kevin's actions who was beginning to physically abuse her. I needed to be with her to stop this activity. So, the morning after Mr. Lowenthau's tirade, I told some of the other managers as I picked up their dirty laundry that I was planning to quit. I was still seething!

The word got back to the office, and I got a phone call from Sandra Bullock (the office manager) telling me that I needed turn in a written resignation letter which I did the next time I was in the office.

This was in late July, and Joe Fontenot was on vacation. I would have loved to have quit within a few day, but I did not think this was fair to him. He need the vacation time. I could wait until he got back. My beef was with the owner.

Yet, I still owed the company my best work until I clocked out for the last time. And in that line, I set my last day as a Monday. This way, the inventory taken that evening would be my final one and the first one for whoever took over from me.

So, I was in the office during my last day because something needed to be taken care of that day. I can sincerely say that I really enjoyed what I did and missed not doing it after I quit. I just had no positive feelings toward Mr. Lowenthau.

And yet, after I quit, I began to miss all of the pleasures I had had as a dry cleaning manager. I was actually thinking about asking to come back! Fortunately I did not do so. The problems with Kevin was still there, and Susan's muscles were gradually getting a little bit weaker. Point blank: I was needed at home regardless of what I missed about no longer working as a manager.

General thoughts

Housing

This was sometime in 1987 after we began going to church at Beulah. It continues on to the first of July, 1989.

The church at Westlake had the church building and two residences. Mike and his family lived in one, and the other was vacant. I decided that my family could help out the

financial conditions for the church by moving from the apartment where we were to the second residence. It did help some. Of course we were giving up something because the only A/C unit was in the kitchen/living area. Even so, I had the rent money that I could use to help the financial situation with the church.

Temperatures would get rather hot during the summer, but we also had a lot of rains to cool things down. In fact, during the summer through September, the 6 PM weather report would list three to four places with temperatures in the mid 70's. In fact, the two all time high temperatures occurred in successive days: 100 and 101. Most often, when the temperature was increasing into the upper 90's, a thunderstorm would occur dropping it to the mid 70's where it would stay for the rest of the day. Normal night time temperatures were in the low to mid 70's as well.

There were a few things we did to help with the temperatures. First of all, we got two water beds: a single for Kevin, and a king size for us. We also got a couple of revolving fans. Running these plus the water beds kept us cool enough that we needed a light blanket to not get too cool. We also placed a ceiling fan in the kitchen/living area. Finally, we put an exhaust fan in the roof which also helped.

Not long after we moved onto the property, the Tyson moved back to Roanoke, AL, for a while. He thought that perhaps his time was up in Westlake with me arriving. While they were gone, I took care of their chickens and rabbits for them.

During the next few years we and the Mike Tyson family had many enjoyable times out in the backyard between our two houses. Church attendance seemed to fall off over the months until it was basically his family and mine.

Bro. Mike went to work for a company who cut down trees in the city that needed to be removed. From

somewhere he got a wood splitter. Some of the trees were brought to our back yard. The limbs were cut up into usable lengths, split and stacked. I think he sold them for firewood. Then the part that could not be used were burned out in the middle of the yard. It was around the fire that we often conversed about a variety of topics.

Ordination

It was during this time that I was asked to take an active part in the services. This resulted in my ordination the afternoon of October 29, 1988. The presbytery consisted of four ministers: two from Prattville, AL, (Elders Jerry Abernathy and Michael McGready) one from Roanoke, AL, (Elder Kenneth Perry) and Bro. Tyson.

Since some of them had never heard me, we had a service that morning in which I did the preaching. (Bro Michael told me that he would not have been part of my ordination if he had not heard me preach first. My text was "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." That morning I well understood how Noah must have felt. While my ordination was the very thing that I wanted, I still did not feel worthy of it. I too had found grace in God's eye, and this was very humbling to me.

Kevin was known to throw fits in church, and this was no exception. Susan could not handle him, but God did. Kevin got away from her and went to the front bench where the four ministers were. He sat down next to Elder Michael McGrady and was soon fast asleep. (The first time Kevin had seen Bro. Michael was that morning when the three out of town ministers arrived.)

Getting SSI for Kevin and Susan

The company had a pension plan from which I was able to withdraw my funds because I was fully vested. (I had worked an equivalent of 10 years in 9.5 years, and employees who had worked 10 years got full access to the

entire amount.) So we had an income source to last for a while.

Also, Kevin was now 20, (April, 1989) and we applied for SSI for him. With his severe mental retardation, he had qualified for this as soon as he turned 18 which was two years earlier. It was only a matter of getting the paperwork done. In 1989, we were in the Social Security office about something involving Kevin, and Susan mentioned having problems getting up and down and demonstrated what she meant. I think she may have wondered if she would qualify for SSI also. The man we talked with took down some information and began the process to certify her as well. Watching her trying to get up convinced him that she would likely qualify for disability payments.

We soon got a letter to see a neurologist in Alexandria, LA. So, we drove up there to see him. His tests confirmed that Susan had a form of muscular dystrophy and qualified. I think this was some time in May. The first of July we got a check for her that covered 2 months. We moved shortly thereafter to Delta, LA which is across the river from Vicksburg.

Vicksburg

This would be a time in my life that I wonder if I should have really moved here or not. I did not want to remain in West Lake because the church there had become just the Tysons and my family. We had some good times, yet something did not seem just right for some reason.

I had managed to get an appointment at the church at Vicksburg. (How I managed this, I do not remember.) It may have something to do with Elder Earl Smith from Forest, MS, who had preached there a couple of times by appointment since the church was looking for a pastor.

He had warned me not to preach a sermon containing duty as the main portion. So, I did anyway. Then on top of this, I moved to the area and joined the church. They kept looking for a pastor anyway. They never asked me to take any part in services again. Was this year of my life worthwhile or not? I don't think that I could really say.

Working the 1990 Census

During the spring of 1990, I decided to try my hand at being a temporary census worker. It paid well considering the \$0.50 a mile I got for delivering the census pamphlets to the houses in the eastern rural half of the parish (LA).

It was enjoyable work for the few weeks that it took to deliver them considering the attitude that I had toward this work. To me, it was important that each person get the pamphlet, and I did all that I could to make sure this happened. Secondly, I did not need to waste a lot of time doing it. So, I would complete the work given to me, turn it in, and repeat the process all over again. I traveled several hundred miles in those few weeks.

On one occasion, I had placed them at some rather dilapidated houses. Soon thereafter, I met a farmer at his home, and I asked him about these houses. He told me that they would be housing some of his temporary workers, so I told him what needed to be done as far as the census was concerned. Whether he did this or not, I have no idea. I had done my part by leaving the pamphlets where they should be and left the necessary instructions.

There was one very frustrating thing about this job. My address was on my list, so I filled the pamphlet out and mailed it at the post office in Delta which had one employee. Then a few weeks later one of the ladies that I had worked with in distributing the pamphlets appeared at my door informing me that mine had not reached the Dallas office of the Census Bureau. So, together we had to fill it out

once again. Hopefully, it got to the right place the second time. This may have been the year that a large mail basket of census reports were "accidentally" destroyed. (I don't remember what the reason was.)

By 2010 when I worked for the Census Bureau again, return of the pamphlets was handled much better. I remember seeing large sections of addresses whose owners or renters' pamphlets had been returned. This makes the job of those who go out to get the information much easier: they have far fewer house calls to make.

One of my encounters in Delta was with a German shepherd that everyone was afraid of. I knew the owner personally and had heard the stories told about this dog.

I was in the process of delivering the pamphlets in that area... It first made its presence known by its growl while I was attaching a pamphlet to the door of the trailer next door. Then I headed to the house that it was protecting. More growling and barking. I did not let any of this stop me. Instead I slowly walked toward the house while constantly facing the dog. It remained very agitated while still backing up. Finally, I reached the door and placed the pamphlet on it with a rubber band. Then I left continuing to make sure that I was constantly facing the dog. This time I was backing up. No one else that I know of would or could have done what I did.

Some math tutoring

I managed to get a job of tutoring a junior college student, but this did not really last all that long. The parents desperately wanted their son to learn the math basics, but this was the farthest from what he wanted. So, I had to be honest with them: they were wasting their money. Learning requires the student wanting to do so: it has to be important to him or her.

Unfortunately, a person's attitude can lead to so many problems when it comes to learning. It can lead to very serious situations as every doctor can describe over, and over again. Kevin's condition is an excellent example of this. While he would have been mentally retarded even if he had been given the proper nutrition during the first years of his life, there is much more that he could have accomplished if he had been fed properly. Karen might well have lived had I taken Susan directly to the University Hospital in Jackson when the doctor in Meridian told me to do so. Susan should not have had to exist halfway between life and death during that summer.

Another example involves Susan while we were in Delta. For what ever reason, she insisted watching wrestling on TV with all of its shouting and anger. Remember that Kevin is known for doing what he sees being done. This applies to this TV show as well. So, she had to suffer physically because of it. He would act out in anger just like what he had seen.

Susan's Mom died

At least one time, Susan took a bus from Vicksburg to Meridian to visit with her sister, Rachel. We also made a trip as a family as well to visit with Mildred in the nursing home.

As we were leaving, I let Susan and Kevin go ahead of me as I spoke to her Mom alone. Just before going out the door, I said, "I love you." (I felt that I needed to say this.) I understand that this really got to her. She told one of her aide's what I had said, and the latter replied, "You know he loves you." Her reply was, "Yes, but he never said it." (I had made her day!) So, sometimes saying things to others as to how we feel can do wonders for them and help our feelings as well.

Many months later, we got word by phone that her mother was not doing well at all. So, we prepared to make a

visit to see her. But before we could pack and leave, word came that she had died.

By this time Rachel had remarried and was living north of New Orleans (Slidell). Joan was living in Little Rock with her boyfriend. So we were the first ones to get there. The three sisters made the final arrangements for their mother and disposition of her possessions. It was a sad time for all of them.

To make matters worse, Rachel's first husband, Sonny Gray, had also remarried. He had been taking care of the family finances since Bro. Ward died in 1970. But it was the new wife that would handle the distribution of the funds due to each of the daughters. She dragged her feet quite a bit. (We had SSI coming in the first of every month, so the waiting did not matter all that much to us. However, the funeral home wanted the money for their services, and that was another matter.) It would be about a year before the money was distributed.

Susan's cataracts

Susan was having some problems seeing and was sent to an ophthalmologist. Both of her eyes needed surgery, and he picked what he thought was the worst of the two eyes for the first surgery. This went quite well, and a week or so after that we were in his office for a checkup.

He also checked the second eye during this office visit. What he found surprised even him. Within that short period of time, the second eye had become almost completely clouded! So, the second eye had surgery fairly quickly thereafter. At least, after the second surgery she could see better while the second eye was covered than before the first surgery.

What surprised me was how she got around at all during the first several days when her first eye was covered, but

somehow she did. She was a real trooper during this whole time.

Searching for a home

I was become very disappointed with my life at Vicksburg so, I began to look around seeking where we could go. Joan was living in Little Rock with her boy friend. We decided to head that way to see what might be possible. Unfortunately, the church problems at Orange, TX, followed me. So, that was one avenue that was not open.

Marshall, Joan's boyfriend, was hoping that we would move to Little Rock. But when the church situation did not pan out, I would not consider it at all. Meanwhile, he had bought a electronic bulletin board hoping that I would be there to help him run it.

Now a electronic bulletin board allows those who belong to it to be able to post messages for others to read and reply. I suppose it is similar to a message board.

Trip home

It was the beginning of school in Edwardsville when we made a trip to that area. I knew that Mom and Dad were getting older and might not live all that much longer. I also wanted to be there when they died. It was also where I had grown up.

Why the trip at this time? It was the time that Tom was ordained as a deacon at Little Flock. At the time, Dad was the only deacon for the church and getting older. (Bro. Bob Baker was no longer living in the area.) He asked the church for help thinking that there needed to be some younger men to take on the responsibilities of taking care of the church's business. Two younger men had been chosen: Tom Lewis and Paul Reynolds.

While there,I checked into potential places to live, but nothing seemed that likely. But I was persistent. I think we

may have visited half a dozen apartment complexes. We also took time to look at the facilities available for Kevin.

I talked with Elder Harris about the situation at the request of Mom and did not like what I was hearing. Susan did not like it at all. (She got somewhat angry, but Elder Harris remained calm throughout this discussion, and I would later apologize for what Susan had said.) He had basically told me that I would not be permitted to sit in Tom's ordination. My feelings were that I am an ordained minister. He mentioned that he had been to ordinations before at which he was not asked to take part. But this seemed to be a different situation to me: this was my brother being ordained.

The second thing that he told me was that if we did move to Edwardsville, I could bring my letter as a layman but my ordination would not be acknowledged. (I did not read between the lines as to why.)

Now for the reality of the entire situation: The schooling that would be available for Kevin was not exactly what I would have liked. But the most important part involved the winter temperatures. With both Kevin and Susan having a form of muscular dystrophy, neither could stand the cold winter weather that occurs around Edwardsville. (This would have greatly reduced their life expectancy.) It was bad enough while living in the south. So, the very thought of living there to be near my parents in their last years was really out of the question regardless of what I may have wanted.

Nevertheless, I left Edwardsville knowing that this was not the place for me and my family. Again, given the winter weather conditions, it definitely would have been the wrong place to which to move. But to where should we move? Vicksburg was no longer a good place.

Trip to Prattville and Roanoke

When I returned, I asked a minister from Jackson, MS, about the problem. His suggestion was that I talk with the group that had ordained me. So, I did. This led to a phone call to Elder Jerry Abernathy (Prattville) and then to Elder Kenneth Perry (Roanoke). During them, we made arrangement to visit both places for a few days each, one after the other.

It was now the fifth of October as we drove to Prattville. We headed east on I-20 until we got to Meridian, MS. Here we took US-80 east toward Montgomery, AL. When we got to Selma, AL, we took AL-14 which took us directly to Prattville.

Then we found the Abernathy's home and drove into their driveway. Alice, was the only one home when we arrived. Then we made a mistake. We should have taken Kevin to the bathroom upon arrival but we did not. Well, we had to mop up the liquid. This was embarrassing to say the least. So, then we needed to put some dry clothes on him. Having done this, we chatted with Alice for a while.

After a while Pam arrived and then Jerry came in after work. I really do not when Lila appeared. But by supper time, the whole family was present. I thoroughly enjoyed being with them.

They had a bedroom with connecting bathroom on the first floor which they let us use. Susan and I used the double bed, and we had brought an air mattress for Kevin (and bedding).

They had been renting out this bedroom to a man named Mike Marshall who worked in state government. He used it during the week and went home to North Alabama for the weekends. Obviously, since we arrived on Friday, he went home right after work this time.

Saturday morning, they treated us to a trip to the zoo. It was quite enjoyable and lasted into the early afternoon. So

while more concerned with possible places to which we could move, we really did not go into much of that during this day.

We did have some discussions about becoming part of the church. This included the importance of following the pattern the members were taking: not interfere in the lives of others.

Of course, I do and did have some opinions of mine own. So, this was a point that needed to be made. It would be easy for me to forget the importance of treating others as we would have them treat us.

Come Sunday, we went to church in the morning and came back after lunch. Then as was their custom, we all rested during the afternoon. There may have been an evening service as well, but I really don't remember.

We got up on Monday and had breakfast. Then we visited a little more leaving for Roanoke around 10 AM. We had directions of how to get to Bro. Kenneth's home which were very good. As a result, we got there around noon time.

You might say that where they were living was Perryville. Bro. Kenneth's home was the center of it all. One side of this house was a trailer where Patsy and her husband lived. On the other side, there was a house. I just don't remember who lived there. And behind this was a trailer where Danny and Doris lived. Almost if not all of these attended Zion's Rest Church. In fact, Danny and Patsy's husband were deacons of that church.

These homes shared the same well, but I don't know about sanitary facilities. There was regular interactions between the people in these homes. also.

Patsy and Betty Jo were finishing up cleaning for our arrival. So we may have arrived a little earlier than they had

expected. But with time we got settled in fairly well. Later, Bro. Kenneth came home for lunch.

This part of our trip was very much into looking for a place to stay and schooling for Kevin. So, Tuesday morning we headed out to find out what we could. I think the Perry's may have taken time to locate housing. Anyway, they helped us to find a two bed apartment in Rock Falls 5 miles east of Roanoke. It would be available for rent the first of November. So this was our first stop. The Randolph County Learning Center was the second stop.

But first we had to fill out the paperwork to apply for the apartment. After we did that, we got down to brass tacks, so to speak. Well, my apartment in Delta, LA, was as good of a source to verify why type of people we were if anything.

Anyway, A call was made to Delta. In a way, this would help our situation there as well. The people in Roanoke would find out that we were good tenants, and I could tell the people in Delta that we would be moving. (Well, this all depended upon the report the lady at Delta would give.) It all went well. We got a very good report from Delta. So, we could rent the apartment. Then again, we also gave our notice and had been given permission to move out on November 1. The comment by the lady at Delta was, "We sure hate to loose them." (Enough said.)

Now we could check about Kevin at the Learning Center. Robin, the Center Director, interviewed us. There was a lot of paperwork to fill out once again. There had to be some paperwork that would have to be gotten. But it looked like he did qualify for this service. At this point, I thought this meant he would be starting sometime in November after we returned. Anyway, things were definitely looking up.

There was not much to do on Wednesday, so we did not. But come that evening, we all went with the Perry's to Concord Church west of Roanoke where Bro. Kenneth held a

service every Wednesday evening. This church was without a pastor at the time, so he was helping out when he could. Anyway, we got to meet the membership that evening.

Come Thursday morning, we headed back to Delta, but we did not have time to relax very much. Clothes had to be washed, dried, and pressed. (Well shirts and pants did.) Also the Bethany Association began the next day. How much of this meeting we attended, I don't know, but it was likely much of it.

We had what could have been a very big problem on the way back home Sunday afternoon. The front wheels began to vibrate badly and made a horrible noise. I was driving on I-20 at the speed limit. Well, I immediately let off the gas. (I remember in a similar situation, my Dad instructed the driver to keep off of the brake pedal.) So, I followed this advice now. The car began to slow down even as the vibrations seemed worse. Then the treads of the right front tire began to break off of the tire. The vibrations stopped, and I got the car stopped. I now had a bald tire so to speak.

The first thing I did when I got out of the car was to feel how hot the tire was. (I had noticed before that a flat tire tends to become quite hot.) But it was not hot at all. The baldness was a problem, but I did not want to change the tire if I did not have to do so.

I had steel belted tires on the car, and no visible damage had been done to the belts. So, I decided to see if I could drive the car the way it was. There did not seem to be any problem when I was driving at 55 MPH, so this is what I did the rest of the trip. I did get the problem fixed the first of the week though.

The apartment had to be cleaned thoroughly which is what we did. In fact, I I rented a rug shampooer to clean the carpets. We always kept the apartment in very good

condition, but I wanted to make sure it was exactly what the office wanted. We almost did...

We were suppose to make sure nothing was in the refrigerator, it was turned off, and its door left open. I forgot to do all three of these. Well I had only left one item in it. But at least it was cleaned well. They knew what day we were leaving, so someone came in to check things that day after we left. The item was removed, the fridge was turned off, and the door was left open. They did mention this to us, but there were no hard feeling. The rest of the apartment was just the way they wanted it.

Roanoke AL

We got everything together and headed east on I-20 early in the morning of November 1, 1990, driving a U-Haul and pulling a trailer with our car. By early afternoon, we were at the east side of Alabama heading south. This area is rather rocky, hilly, covered with trees, and near the tallest point in Alabama. All of the trees were in their most beautiful fall colors! It was breath taking to say the least.

It was mid afternoon by the time we arrived. Where did we park everything? Good question. Anyway, I got the car off of the trailer and drove to the Perry's. Then it was time to unload the truck. Bro. Kenneth, his son Dwayne, and his nephew Billy helped to do this. With the four of us, it did not take all that long to move everything into the apartment. Then we let them go back home. We first took the U-Haul truck to a local dealership. After squaring things financially, we went back to our new apartment.

After doing some important initial unpacking, we were invited to the Perry's for supper which was very nice of them. Sister Betty Jo said that we probably would not have felt like cooking a meal after all that we had done this day.

That is why she volunteered to fix a meal for us. She was absolutely right: we really did not!

While there Elder Perry got a phone called from a deacon, Tim Bennett of Concord Church that was wondering whether I might be available to preach for them that weekend. Bro. Perry said, "He is right here. Why don't you ask him yourself?" So, he handed me the phone, and I answered yes, I would.

After our arrival, we check in with the Randolph County Learning Center. That is when it actually dawned on me that Kevin could not become a client until the proper documentation was done and the school's fiscal year began. So, we would have to take care of him at home until then. Their fiscal year began April 1st.

We had some other things to do as well. We needed electricity and a phone. (The apartment was all electric.) We also needed a local bank account as well. These could be done in Roanoke. Then there was an Alabama driver's license and Health and Human Services. These two things required a trip to Wedowee, the county seat.

US-431 was the north south highway while AL 22 ran east and west sort of. Rock Mills also lay along hwy 22, so we used it to get to Roanoke for most of our needs. For county services, we took 431 north to Wedowee and the courthouse.

Many years before, 431 ran through the town on Main Street. This brought a lot of heavy traffic downtown. So, the state built a bypass on the east side of town. Of course the business decided that they needed to move to the bypass as well. Then subdivisions were built farther eastward as well.

Anyway, there were a couple of shopping centers at the corner of hwy 22 and the bypass. In the southern shopping

center, there was a bank branch (South Trust), a Winn Dixie Supermarket, and several other stores.

This branch was our first stop on Friday, November 2. There we got our checking account set up. Now we had a starter kit of checks. We were in business!

From there we got on Main Street arriving at Alabama Power next. There we applied for services. Of course this required the use of our first check. They did want a deposit after all.

I had learned the benefit of setting up a debit for paying the monthly electrical bills. It would be paid after the SSI payments hit the bank. So, this was one less thing to worry about. (As a result, I never missed a payment to Alabama Power for the approximately seventeen years that we lived in Roanoke.)

Then we went further up Main Street to the downtown area. Then we entered the Roanoke Phone Company office. Time to get a phone for sure, and there was more red tape as well. Another check was written for the deposit. And yes, I had this bill put on a monthly debit as well. (As a result, I got a letter of credit stating that I had always paid my phone bill on time and correct amount from November 1991 until March 2008.)

Come Sunday morning, we drove to Concord Church for services. It was the first time I had preached since my ill fated sermon at Vicksburg a year or so earlier. How well did I do? (You expect me to remember that long ago?)

Well I do remember having lunch with the Tim Bennett family afterward. His mother, Faye Bennett came across the street to eat with us and visit for a while.

Come Monday morning, we needed to go to Wedowee. We started at the courthouse. Going in the front door, we went to the second office on the right. There I could get an

Alabama license plate for my citation. At that point I was also told where and when I could apply for a driver's license. Well, I also thought that I should get the rules for the road for Alabama. This just might help me pass the exam. (It did.)

Then we needed to find out where the Health and Human Services office was located. So I got directions. (I'm a man, and I asked for directions???) Anyway, it was not hard to locate once I knew where to go.

Well we walked in and received a shock. There waiting to service us was the secretary, Dovie Tobin. She was the church clerk for Concord Church! This was definitely a very small world. We explained what we needed and she arraigned for someone to help us. Ah yes, there was more red tape to fill out.

One of the questions wanted reference, someone who knew us and our financial situation. Well, I really did not know many people yet. But there was Dovie sitting out front. Why not use her? This way even a phone call was not needed. (I probably listed the Perry's as well.) We were approved. Then there the forms for SSI. In this case, the records at Washington Parrish would establish the family situation. So, we got all of these things done in one place.

It was sometime later that Dovie invited us to supper on evening. This was nice, but there was a *slight* problem. I ran out of gas on the way there.

We had just gotten inside the city limits when the engine sputtered and then quit. So, I got out of our car to try to find a home with a phone. The first one I came to had a German Sheppard guarding the house...

Well, I did the same thing that I had done in Delta when I was working for the 1990 Census. As a result, I backed the dog back to the back door. Of course, the owner opened the door to find out why the dog was barking at the back door. Was he surprised when he saw me on his back porch! But I

explained why I was there. Then he graciously called the Roanoke police and asked them to help me get to some gas for my car. They did and we were on our way again.

While we waited for the police to come I had a chat with the man. He really wanted to know how I was able to get as far as his back porch. No one else had done so. Perhaps as vicious as the dog seemed to be, no one thought it wise to even try. I just told him about my experience with the dog at Delta, LA, the previous spring.

The rest of the evening was very enjoyable. Dovie's husband, Vernon, had a dry sense of humor like I do, so we got along quite well. Of course, Susan was use to mine, so she gave a good as she got.

What about a church home in this area? Zion's Rest met ever Sunday, and they had been a great help in getting us moved to the Roanoke area. There was also a church in Rock Mills which met once a month, and another met once a month a few miles south of Roanoke on 431. Of course there was Concord which met weekly as well. Besides there were a few more churches west of Concord.

So, we decided to visit most of the churches just to see what we could learn about them. So, each Sunday when we got up, we decided where we would go that day. (After a while, this decision got to become more than a little old.)

There were some very wonderful members that I met during this initial time in Roanoke, Bro. Thomas Futral for example. I considered him to be a very close friend indeed. Maybe this was because he "turned my head" by complementing my preaching when he heard me.

There was one thing that seemed very strange then. Inevitably, each of these church meetings would often have close to half a dozen ministers in attendance. There were several times that there were as many ministers as lay people at the meeting. So, often only some of the preachers

were asked to speak during services. So yes, I wonder why there were so many ministers. Why weren't they at different churches so more people could hear what the Bible teaches? (In reality, each of the churches had a very small membership. So, there were there was really an over supply of ministers in that area.)

Finally, we moved our church membership from Vicksburg to Zion's Rest church. While I would take part in services most but not all Sundays, nothing seemed to open up to me. Why? I think it has to do with what is expected and what is known. There is a proper way to say things, and there are many ways to say things that the congregation might not like.

How should a new minister act before a congregation? I doubt that I could properly tell people even today. A gift needs to be developed. Did I listen to what I was told? Or, for that matter did older ministers tell me what I needed to hear in a way that I would not only pay attention but also do these things? I simply do not remember. Seemingly, it is not enough to be very familiar with what is contained in the Bible. It requires being able to get the attention and respect of those to whom the minister is sent. But then again, if the people do not recognize what they have in their own midst, they have to answer to God for anything that is truthfully taught in the name of the LORD.

By December, we had gotten our refund check from the power company for the apartment at Delta which was \$100. Well, we had an Amway Catalog, and on the front page was a faux fur full length coat for \$99.99 (plus tax and shipping, of course). This was a special; suggested retail price was about \$198. So, I showed this to Susan. She certainly wanted it! I should also mention that I was selling Amway at the time, so I paid Amway's wholesale price plus, shipping

plus tax. This amounted to about the amount of the refund check.

April was almost here. We were told that Kevin would be starting at the Learning Center on Mon, April 2. Sherri would be picking him up in a van at 7:15 AM.

So, we got Kevin up, dressed, etc. Then we waited, and waited... Well it seemed like it, but she arrived when we were told she would.



The Learning Center serviced the entire county. So it had four nine passenger vans which they used to pick up clients. Some parents dropped off a one or more clients as well.



It certainly was different without Kevin being at home. He had been there for four months. Now it was time to readjust to him being elsewhere during the day.

The center served lunch and a mid morning snack which included a soda, juice, or water. Susan was adamant that he have a soda every day, which we paid for. Given my viewpoint about drinking soda that often, I did not like the idea very much. She put her foot down. Anyway, he began to gain weight. In his case, it was 30 pounds more in a three month period of time. (After Susan's death in 2003, it became obvious why he had gained so much.)

As April drew to a close, Susan decided to have a birthday party for Kevin. It was his 22nd birthday. The Perry's were invited and perhaps some others.

I really was not up to this celebration. For some reason, I was feeling very sickly. It might have been the flu; I don't know. I just remember that everyone else had a lot more fun than I did. I was dragging around the entire time.

Then in the middle of May, the center held their annual fund raising drive. Of course, Susan just had to get involved in this! Actually, the drive to get pledges began in April, so she was busy with this from shortly after Kevin began attending the center.

The main part was a Bike/Hike. Clients, a parent, and individuals living in the area had sheets on which pledges were listed. Totals were calculated to see how much was raised for each client (or individual who were participating using their own names).

One client, Jessie, was somewhat mentally retarded, and everyone in Roanoke knew him. Such was also the case in Wadley where he lived. So, he always got the largest number (and in amount) of pledges. He was a very special person.

How well did Susan do for Kevin? Second place! She did quite well for the approximately 12 years. This picture shows how well. These are the trophies that Kevin received because of her.



New house

How soon did Susan get tired of hearing the first graders chant the days of the week and counting numbers? I'm not sure, but it was long before the school year ended. So she became resourceful. She contacted a real estate agent. They were the ones who referred us to the Farmer's Home Administration in Wedowee. So, off we went. Yup, more paperwork. But then again, we had already been through this one time before. We knew what had to be done.

Everything looked fine until they ran a credit check on us. There were a couple of outstanding debts that had to be taken care of. I had forgotten about one of them, and I truly thought the other one had been taken care of. In any case, I immediately sent a check to both of them. (This was perhaps July.)

Once these had been taken care of, we qualified for a home loan. Now why we had to switch real estate agents at this point I don't know. It might have to do with this one also had someone who would actually build the house. This was now into August.

Now we were getting into uncharted territory. We had never had to pick out a house plan before. But we managed this part. To which we had to determine the color of the siding and trim.

But there was still a problem: we did not have a plot of land on which to build the house. So, the agent drove us around showing available plots. We saw perhaps three or more, but one of them stood out. "That's the one we want," we said. So, they bought the land.

Actually construction began around Susan's birthday and was nearly finished around mine. In fact, I took Dwayne and Chasity through the house the middle of December.



(This picture of our home was taken after Mom died. Originally, the carport had not been closed in and the shrubby in the front was not this nice yet either. The canopy was added in 1999 as well. The tree on the left is a live oak, and the one in the top right is a black walnut on the corner of our property.)

The housing authority had been told that we would be moving, why, and approximately when. So, we were also told what we needed to do before we returned our keys. So, now we had some work to do. It was time to begin packing things so they could be moved. The phone company and Alabama Power had to be notified when the move would occur. Well, the bank needed to know as well.

The mortgage was signed Friday, January 3, 1992, and we began moving everything to our new home. First we set up the furniture in the rooms where we wanted them. Boxes were put in what room we thought they should go, but they would not be opened until the more important things were done.

So by Friday night, we had our beds up so that we could sleep in them. Kevin was fine, but Susan and I were tired. Such would be the case for several days afterward.

Come Monday morning, we had another driver because Kevin was no longer on Sherri's route; he was on Melisa's. This meant he was picked up at 7:30 instead of 7:15. This sure was alright with us.



Shortly after Kevin was gone, I headed to our old apartment with a carpet shampooer. Then I spent the next hour or two making sure the carpet was clean. In the end, the apartment was in as good conditions as expected, and we would get back our deposit. (Gee, we will have some more money for a change.)

There were probably other things that we did this week, but everything came to a standstill this weekend. It was Saturday morning when I got up with nothing particular to do for a change. Kevin did not have to be getting ready for school.

For some reason, it seemed much brighter than usual given the time of the day according to what was displayed on our alarm clock. So, I became curious and looked through the closed drapes. It had snowed over night, and I do not mean just a light dusting. There was 6" on the front porch! This was much more than I had seen since I was in college in Illinois.

One thing that I was missing was a snow shovel. How was I going to remove all of the snow off the driveway? Well I improvised. Left over from the construction of our house was a piece of plywood perhaps a foot wide and four feet long. So I angled the plywood down into the snow and used it to push the snow off the driveway. At first I was starting in

middle of the driveway at the top pushing the snow straight sideways off the edge. Then I decided that it might be easier to push the snow somewhat downhill as well as sideways. I was thinking that this would be using the effects of gravity to help me.

Given the amount of snow, I took my time. After all, I remembered that some people who died from shoveling snow. After all I had just turned 50. And it certainly helped to be wearing warm clothing as well.

Once that was done, there was not much that could be done outside after the driveway was cleared. We definitely could not go anywhere for a while. We were in a valley. While there were three different ways that we could drive from the house, but all of them went up hill as in having to go up at least 20 feet. I did not like the idea of having to do this with this much snow on the ground.

So, we stayed put for several days; no church for us this weekend. The buses could not run for the learning center, so Kevin was home until late in the week. We ventured out for the first time late in the week to get groceries.

The Learning Center

Perhaps I need to mention who were a part of this. I have mentioned at various points, Robin, Sherri a bus driver, and Melissa another bus drivers.

Robin was the center director. With all of the decisions that she had to make, she did an excellent job of it. She was soft spoken, but she also had a way of getting her own way. Oh, she would listen very carefully before saying how something had to be.

Once a year, Kevin's mental condition had to be re-certified. Goals had to be set for him to be accomplished for the following year. And yes, during our conference for this, we were told what they had been able to accomplish the

previous year. Robin was the one that we met with to do this.



The center had a secretary to help with the business side of the center. This was the one who answered the phone when we called with a problem or needed some information. I don't remember who held this position in the beginning, but Cindy was hired at some point. She was the one I dealt with for the 16 years Kevin attended the center.

She was always very talkative which was nice. Yet I wonder how she really got everything done. When she picked up the phone, I knew that we were going to be on the phone for a while. And yet, she did get things done. Besides it was refreshing to chat for a while. I always looked forward to these.



The center needed a cook, and Anne fulfilled this function. She certainly was a very good one! She too was very easy to talk with. She was also the mother of a mentally retarded daughter. When she had time, she would help with her. Otherwise when not cooking, she would be working with other clients along with the other teachers.

During the later part of our stay in Roanoke, Anne had a heart attach. For a while, we were wondering whether she could continue or not. She did. It was several months before this happened though.

Another concern was her daughter. Others made sure that she was well taken care of. Her training during the day went on as usual. But what about after the other clients left for the day? Someone not driving but, perhaps Cindy(?) looked after her. (The people at the center are known for doing things this way.)



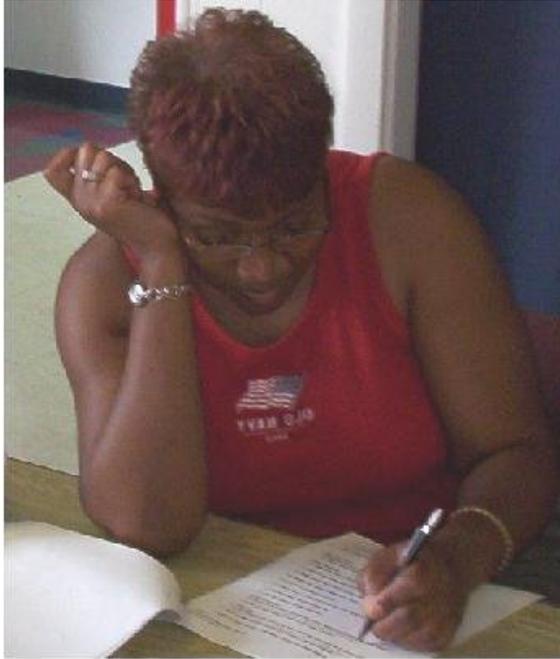
Pat was another one of the driver/teachers at the center. She had lost her husband during the mid 1990's which was a sad event for all of us. She remarried and seemed to be quite happy which is good.

What can I say about her? She was just as wonderful as all of the rest of them. A lot of this has to do with the training she had had. And yet, she was sincere in helping the clients as much as she could possibly be.



Last but not least of the teacher/drivers at the center at the center was Burdette. I remember her most because of all of the teasing she sent my way. This does tend to keep one from not letting anything becoming too serious. Truly a person that is a joy to have known.

So, the center included four bus divers/teachers, one director, one clerk, and one cook. This was an amazing group of ladies!



Deficient housing

One of the things required for a mortgage was insurance. Home owner's insurance by State Farm fulfilled the requirements, so I had applied for this coverage. As a result, my agent had to pay us a visit to verify that the house met the requirements State Farm had. Most of the things did meet them. But there was one problem: the front porch did not have railings! When a person came out the front door, there was the floor of the porch and then steps. The white railing in the picture of the house above was not there in the beginning. This would not do!

It was time to go back the real estate agent to correct this problem. In the next week or so, someone came out built the required railings. And then they were painted. So, now State Farm was satisfied.

Church life

At This point, I had been studying my Bible (King James Version) on a regular basis having read through it more than ten times. I also had the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

which I used to look up the meaning of the words in which I was interested. This can become tedious. But I was beginning to understand much more than I had in the past.

There were also gatherings at the Perry's where I and other ministers would discuss the Bible. Likely, most of the things said then would be based upon traditions from the past. All of us had grown up under Primitive Baptist ministers. We advocate what we had heard.

And yet, my wife would tell me that one of the other ministers did not even understand what I had said. Why? I was using words that he had not heard before. Probably, I had repeated something that I had studied; I was using the meanings I had found in Strong's. Even so, did I have the correct meaning for the Scriptures under consideration? God knows.

There are at least two ways to study a subject. One is to seek to discover what is written. Another is to look for what we want it to mean. More likely than not, these two methods will not produce the same results.

When I began studying the Bible, I chose to use the first method. Why? Because, that is how I had learned to study while working for Combined Insurance Co. Also, a reading course I took while teaching fourth grade had taught the same method. (As something was studied, questions needed to be asked and then answered about the topic being studied.

Well, I had my own questions that I used. What does this really mean? What do people say it means? Is their meaning the correct one? If so, then why is it? If not, why isn't it? As a result of answering these questions, I came up with some different opinions of what a given Scripture means than others. I had a different insight than others.

As I have continued to read the Bible from cover to cover, I periodically have what seems like a new thought pop up,

and I wonder why I had not noticed this thought before. Also when someone mentions some verses of Scriptures I rather quickly call to mind some of the things that surrounds these verses. Sometimes I can tell whether they are quoting them correctly as well.

A second benefit for reading the Bible so thoroughly is that sometimes as I read a passage I can hear the voices of the people in the verses. When this happens, there is a narrator describing the setting. When the verses includes people talking, I hear the voices including their emotions. For example: the interaction between Job and his three "miserable comforters". I can hear their voices get louder and more angry as I continue through this book. I even hear God questioning Job about the things the latter had said earlier. I suppose I could say that this has become a living experience of the things written in the Bible.

I really needed to be careful about how I said things about Bible topics. Many times I would know of other Scriptures that shed light on the topic that others might not know. Then again, they may only know what they have heard a minister said. If the latter had truly sought out the truth about the Scripture in question, it might not matter. But if the minister was only repeating what he had heard, what was said may not be true. It is so easy to get into an argument rather than truly discussing the topic with an open mind. But since when is having an open mind an easy thing to do?

I was learning so much from my studies. And as I reread the Bible, I continued to find even more applications to what I should do. So, I developed an attitude based upon this. Surely, every one should be doing what I have done. Clearly, I was right when I began reading the whole Bible. (Well, some of it is very tedious to read, especially the chapters

containing genealogy.) So, I had made a statement in a sermon that everyone should read it all. Not a good idea.

I was surprised when the pastor of this church made the comment that he did not know whether he had done this or not. He had his own method of reading the Bible. Well, if he had actually read it all using his method, that is alright. But if he had not, what had he missed? What lesson had he not learned?

(Case in point: Paul wrote, "[And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.](#)" [Ephesians 6:4])

Yet I have seen parents provoking their children to wrath because of how they discipline them. Unfortunately, even some of our ministers are guilty of this.

Just as important, children need to be taught how to become adults. This includes teaching their children why they believe what they do and the reasons for their practices. In fact, there multiple places where fathers were told to explain why they did what they did in their religious services.

Kevin was a problem as well. Some hymns would greatly upset him, and he would become rather violent. He would thrash around and make loud noises. It was a problem that we had had at Westlake as well. There, Bro. Mike would stop the singing, and we would sing another song as well.

But Roanoke was not Westlake. Basically, I was suppose to keep control of him regardless of what hymn was selected. Well, this was rather hard to do. So, the only solution that I found was to take him outside during the time any of these were sung.

This did cause a conflict in me. What was the appropriate thing to do? Should certain hymns not be sung in Kevin's presence to keep him from becoming agitated? Or, should

he be removed from the church so that those songs could be sung without the interruption that he would cause? Which is the *right* way? Is there one?

There were times when I was asked to hold church services by myself that someone would request a hymn that bothered Kevin. Since I was leading the singing, I could not lead that hymn and take care of Kevin at the same time. It was at these times that I ask the person to request another song and said why. The congregation seems to understand why this was necessary.

Precious

It was perhaps late March when we were shopping for groceries at Winn Dixie. As we were being checkout, the cashier mentioned that she had some puppies that she was trying to get rid of. We had had several pets over the years of our marriage, and Susan still wanted one. In fact, she had been rather emphatic at this already. Me? I wanted to wait a while before getting another one. We needed to pay more attention to our new home first. Yes, I lost this battle also. Well, I did get it put off for a week or two anyway.

We knew that the mother was a cocker spaniel, but nothing was said about the father assuming that this was even know.

So, on the appointed day, the cashier brought a puppy to our house. We had a fenced in yard (chain link), so I thought that should keep the puppy in the yard. We would be having it inside the house quite a bit as well. And we had gotten some Puppy Chow for the puppy to eat. By this time Susan had decided to call our female puppy, Precious. (Years earlier, we had had a female cat with the same name.)

Precious was rather small, and this created quite a problem. She was small enough that she could crawl under the fence! While she spent nights in the house, she was allowed out during the day. Then there was one day that we

could not find her. Evening came and still no puppy. In fact, she did not show up until the next day. She had walked across the street and spent the night in a garage. The owner found her and brought her back to us. Another time, some children had her claiming that she belonged to them.

I guess after a while, I got a little smarter. I bought her a collar and put it on her. I needed something that I could tie her to. I bought something that would do this. It was basically a metal rod with a corkscrew on one end and a handle on the other. The rod had a ring that it went through. Now all I had to do was to attach one end of a leash to the ring and the other to her collar. This allowed her to run around and around the rod without wrapping the leash around the rod.

Possibly near the same time I found a dog house at Ace Hardware which had been built by someone there. So, now she had a shelter outside when needed.

Young puppies need to have their shots the same as young children. So, it was time to find a vet (Late April). He was a young man who was just opening a new clinic. So, he got our business from the get go. Now there were two sets of shots that Precious needed.

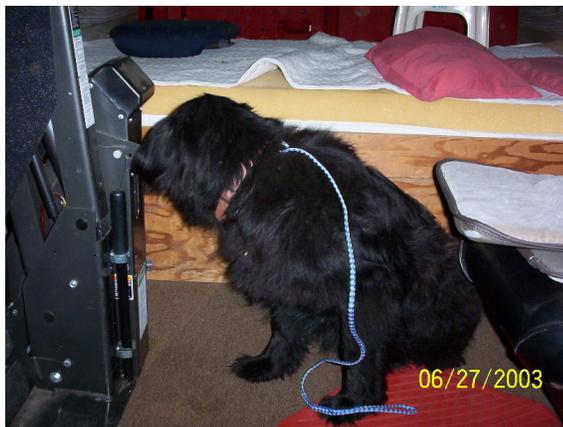
So, she got weighed first. 10 lbs. Then he checked her out. Everything looked good. And now for the shots. This went well also. Not knowing who the father was, I asked about her potential weight when she was full grown. His reply was about twice her present weight. OK, 20+ lbs would be a nice size. He wanted to see her in two weeks for the second series of shots.

During the next two weeks, we had a surprise that appeared right in front of our eyes. She had grown quite a bit. In fact, she had become too big to crawl under the chain link fence!

It was almost mid May when we returned to the Vet's clinic. He may have been a little surprised as to how much weight she had gained but even more so for how much larger she had gotten. She had weighed in at 20 lbs! So, I asked him again about her potential weight when full grown. His new guess was 40+ lbs. OK, I guess I can deal with this. With this visit, she had gotten all of her shots which meant that she also got a tag for her rabies vaccination which was attached to her collar.

There seemed to be general consensus that she should be spade at 6 months, so we had this done in August. By this time, she was up to 45 lbs. So, teasingly, I asked the vet, "How big?" Actually, he still did not know for sure. He did know that she was going to be much bigger than he originally thought. That being the case, she would be close to two years old before she was full mature size wise as well as internal organs. So, only time would tell.

I wanted to make sure she had the proper nutrition while she was growing, so I fed her Puppy Chow until she was at least 21 months old. By this time she was up to about 55 lbs, and she remained there for the rest of her life.



This picture was taken inside Rosie sometime in the late 1990's.

Our property measured 100' by 100' with the fence in portion being 100' wide by 50' front to back. So, even with her size, she had plenty of room to run. Boy, she could really run! When she saw any dogs walking along the street in front of our house, she would bark and run from side to side. It only took her 3 seconds to do this. This is a little over 20 MPH. Not bad for a dog whose mother is a cocker spaniel.

One time we took her on a trip to Ward Hill (just south of Newton, MS). She did not make that trip very well. So, the rest of the trips we made were done without her. She spent the time in the kennels at our vet's clinic. It was sort of costly, but it had to be done.

Kevin's partial plate

Somewhere early in 1989, we had Kevin evaluated for dental care through child welfare while in Lake Charles. We got more than we had expected. A pediatrician decided that his tongue was too big and certain dental work needed to be done.

Susan wanted them to replace the missing teeth, but that was refused. Their reasoning was that he was non-verbal and would always be that. His lack in ability to speak even in small sentences is what made him non-verbal. He did not need a bridge to be able to speak clearly; he could speak anyway.

This did not set well with Susan. She was more concerned with his looks than his lack of being able to talk. She was determined to find someone who would put a bridge in for him. It became an obsession.

Someone mentioned that the University of Alabama at Birmingham had a dental school. They might be able to help us. So, we called and got an appointment.

On the given day, we drove a little over 100 miles. This put us in the southern part of downtown Birmingham. Even

though we had directions, it took us a while getting to the proper street let alone finding a parking spot.

We had left early enough to make sure that we would not be late; so we were early. This meant we had to wait for a while. And like many medical appointments, we did not get to talk to anyone until some time after the scheduled appointment. (Yes, it was another case of hurry up and wait.)

My biggest problems while waiting were the temperature and Kevin's restlessness. Why the temp needed to be in the low 70's, I will never know, but my body does not like temperatures that low.

Keeping Kevin satisfied was not easy either. We had not brought enough things for him to do. Well, I did walk around the inside of the building with him, but this began to get old as well.

Finally, we got to talk to someone, but they were not encouraging at all. They would not perform what we wanted to be done. This looked like a dead end. They seemed to be our last hope.

So, after a two hour drive there and waiting for an hour to see someone, we were heading back home again. We had only got to talk about it for perhaps 15 minutes. What a waste of time and money!

But this did not stop Susan at all. She began checking with local dentists. The first one was at the north end of Wedowee. But he was no more help than the people at Birmingham. This was another wasted trip. At least we only traveled 26 miles this time. The Birmingham trip was about 220 miles round trip.

Then we checked with Dr. Jackson in Roanoke. After checking Kevin's mouth thoroughly, he said that he would try to do it. At this point, he thought a bridge would be the

best possible solution. Even so, he cautioned us that it might not work at all. He would do his best.

Given the things that had to be done to make a bridge, Kevin would have to be asleep while doing them. This meant the use of the operating room at the hospital. We were looking at \$1500 between the hospital and the dentist. This did not matter to Susan. She was determined to do this regardless of what it took! This was in May in the early 1990's. Fourteen months later we had the necessary money even though we were living on two SSI checks (approximately \$600 per month total between the two checks. Well the mortgage payment through Farmer's Home Administration was something like \$120 a month, so this helped some as well.

Saving the money

How did we do this? Perseverance was the key along with a plan. At the end of each month, we looked at the balances of the checking accounts. (Susan had one and Kevin had one). Since their SSI checks were directly deposited on the last day of the month, we moved these balances from these accounts to a joint savings account on the first or second day of the next month.

Also every financial purchase was automatically questioned as to whether it was necessary. If not, it was not made. So, some purchases were put off until a later date as in months later. This also increased the amount we saved.

Well, this was how it was suppose to work. One time during this effort, I saw a computer that I really, really had to have. I even tried to partially pay for it and borrow the rest. When the store would not approve the loan, my desire got shot down.

What did Susan think about my actions? She was against it all of the way! She was even happy when the loan was

disapproved. I got a lot of flack from her and remained in the dog house for a rather long time.

Fitted with partial

Now that the money was available, we got with Dr. Jackson to schedule the work. Our family doctor, Dr. Homes agreed to be in the operating room while it was done (probono) to make sure that everything was done right.

But there was an unforeseen problem. When Kevin was in the hospital at 22 months, they had to put a breathing tube in his throat to help him breath. This created some scar tissue in his throat that he had for the rest of his life.

This scar prevented the dentist from doing some of the procedures required for making the bridge. Dr. Homes noticed this and mentioned it to Dr. Jackson. Perhaps the latter had noticed it as well. Anyway, both agreed that a bridge could not be put in Kevin's mouth. Fortunately, Dr. Jackson had a plan B in mind.

Instead, he took impressions for a partial plate. He had no idea given Kevin's mental abilities whether he would actually wear a partial or not. But it was the only choice that was left. What he told us was what he found, why that prevented making a bridge for Kevin, and what he had done then. We were left hoping that the partial plate might work; we did not really did not want to think about it not working.

Visiting Bro. Kenneth in the hospital

Two weeks later, Kevin had an appointment to get his new partial plate. In the meanwhile, Bro. Kenneth was having some medical problems and was in the hospital at Anniston, AL. So, we decided to get the partial plate and then go to visit him, about 45-50 miles north of us.

Sure enough, Kevin did not like the feel of the partial in his mouth. We were fighting him to put it back in repeatedly as we drove out of town. But after stopping a couple of

times, we managed to get him to leave it in his mouth for at least a short time. By this time we were traveling through the country, and Kevin forgot that he had anything in his mouth! He always loved to travel in a vehicle that much. The rest of the trip, he was amazed by what he was seeing outside as we drove along. We were in Bro. Kenneth's room before he noticed something was in his mouth, and out it came immediately!

On the way back home, we were having the same problems all over again. But once we were back in the country, we got him to put it in long enough to watch the country side, he left it in again.

Somewhere along the way, we decided to stop at the local Pizza Hut for supper. It was not until we were sitting in a booth that he realized he something in his mouth and immediately took it out. But within a few days, he became so accustomed to it that we had to take it out of his mouth before he went to bed. Otherwise, he would sleep with it in his mouth, and this happened many a time during his lifetime.

After this, Kevin saw the dentist every three months until his teeth were thoroughly cleaned. This was somewhat of a battle and it took three or four of us to hold Kevin down. The cleaning schedule was gradually lengthened to every four months. He also became less of a problem. The dentist did the cleaning himself clearing the schedule for himself and a couple of employees to do this. He was a real jewel!

One afternoon, Susan had a cleaning done after Kevin had come home from the Learning Center, and Kevin and I waited for her in the waiting room. That is when a severe thunderstorm came though the area. Well, the dentist brought us into the office area as a safety precaution. For a little while, I lost track of Kevin, and I don't know why. Finally I found him: he was asleep in one of the dental chairs! So,

clearly he was not afraid of the chair. (I made sure that the dentist saw him sleeping. We were all amazed.)

Susan's premonition

This something that seemed to be very strange at the time. It was somewhere around September of 1992. Susan kept saying that she felt there was something wrong with Dad. She insisted that we needed to make a visit. As usual, she got her way. Nothing seemed out of the way while we were there, so I decided that she had just wanted to visit them: there was nothing to her feelings.

Because Dad had injured an area above his left knee, he had to have a artery graft. This required that he take a blood thinner for the rest of his life. And this requires clot time tests on regular basis.

It was at one of these that something had gone very wrong. His blood was suppose to clot within a certain length of time, but it took far longer than that. He was in danger of spontaneous internal bleeding at any time.

It was time to take him to the hospital. While Mom was allowed to drive him there, she was told emphatically that she was to take him directly to the hospital first. Admit him, and only then should she even think about going home to get anything that he might need in the hospital. It was that serious!

Within three or four days, his clot time came back up to where it should be. During this time, the doctor wanted to know what had caused this problem. So a lot of questions were asked, and tests were run. The answer to one of these questions pointed to the gastrointestinal track. So, they ran a tube down his throat into the small intestine. First they noticed something wrong with the first part of the intestinal lining. Then they wanted to go into the ducts leading to the liver and pancreas. One of them was blocked.

Then they wanted to put another tube down his throat, but Dad balked at this. So, the decision was made to do exploratory surgery instead. This was scheduled for the following week. Meanwhile, he could go home for a while as soon as the clot time was within acceptable limits.

Once Dad got home, he called Etta and I. (Tom and Webb were told about the same time.) I was the one to answer the phone, so I got to talk to him. It was a shock to me, yet I did not think that it was too serious. After all, he told me that he was feeling fine. They were only going to do surgery to discover why the duct was blocked. Possibly he thought that when they found it, they would unblock it. The fact that something serious was causing the blockage did not seem to occur to him.

So Dad went back to the hospital the next week. Now whether Dad was involved with the surgical discussions or not, Mom was. The surgeon laid out as several of the possibilities that could cause the blockage. He also mentioned what would be required to solve the blockage (if there was one).

One of the possibilities involved removing an extensive portion of the gastrointestinal track. It was this that bothered Mom. In fact, she wanted more information about it. She even insisted that the surgeon tell her more before the surgery. Either he ignored the request or did not get it, but he did not talk to her until after the surgery was completed. To say that this made her very angry is putting it very mildly!

Dad was her husband. He had been her soul mate for more than 55 years. Some of the things the surgeon had first told her was very serious things. Given the possible shock from what she heard, she did not understand what he was saying. She wanted to know more.

After the surgery was over, the surgeon had to drop a bomb shell on Mom. Dad had pancreatic cancer. Rather than being in the interior, it was outside of the pancreas. The cancer had progressed too far. (Such is often the case with this cancer.)

So now the family had to be notified. Again, Webb and Tom were likely at the hospital for the operation. So they would already know. Etta and I would have to be called. Well, I was not at all prepared for this news! I felt numb and helpless. But I managed to tell Susan. Then we both were very upset.

This brought me back to a little more than a month before. How did she get this feeling that something was wrong with my parents? She did not know; she just felt it. Sometimes she got feelings like this, but she was not always right. This time she was.

Early computer use

Every since I wanted the computer I had seen while saving money for Kevin's teeth, I still wanted one. Well, there were times when we would travel to Prattville for church. (It was about 200 miles round trip, but there was some visitation between Zion's Rest and Prattville.) One of the latter's members (Roger) was involved with computers, and he had built some computers for members of that church.

Well finances were in better shape, so I asked him to do this for me as well. We agreed on \$200. So by the time, I got the call about Dad, I had a computer with a dial-up modem.

Obviously, this was a fairly primitive unit although it was far ahead of the Texas Instrument 99/4A that I had been using. It was a 286 with 1 MB of RAM. I also had a keyboard, mouse, and monitor. The modem was very slow sending out perhaps 75 characters per second.

There were a few companies which would connect a person to the internet through a phone line. The most widely know one was AOL. I however chose to use another company. Price wise, there was not a lot of difference in costs. There was a monthly charge plus \$6 per hour of connection time, so I limited the amount of time I was online. Again, because of the speed of the modem, I was severely limited in the amount of information that I could receive.

I don't remember what I did online for the most part, but when we got the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, I researched this topic having to use a search engine (Yahoo and Google did not exist yet.) The information was the same on different sites: 3-4 months for most people if not treated, up to 18 months even with treatment. They also mentioned an operation that helped some people, but the disease had to have been caught in an early stage. So, things looked rather grim for Dad. (A Supreme Court Justice seems to have beaten this cancer though.)

With all the things that I later did with the Internet, these early things seemed to have faded into the background. When I first wrote about Dad's cancer, I knew that I had gotten the information from somewhere, and I thought I had gotten it online. But it would be a few years before the local telephone company offered this service. So, at first I thought I had to be mistaken about getting this information online.

When I talked to Webb about the prognosis, he said, "What prognosis? It's incurable. There is no prognosis." So this is was what we had to go on. Dad was going to die.

It was early November when Mom made the first phone call with his diagnosis. We were told that a decision would be made as to whether Dad would be getting any

treatments or not. But time was passing, and we were not hearing what that decision might be.

I began to get antsy. Remember that many died within 4 months without any treatments. Well December had come and gone with no word. Finally, in early January, we learned that he would be getting radiation. I think this began in early February.

I was wondering why it was taking so long. Time was ticking away. I would have thought that a decision would have been made much earlier. After all, the longer the wait, the more cancer cells would have formed. So, in my logic, the sooner treatment begins, the few cancer cells there would be that had to be killed. See, I was still thinking of a cure instead of him dying at some point regardless of what was done.

Dad began treatments sometime before Valentine's Day. Before each treatment the nurse would put dots on his body as to where the radiation was to be aimed. He said that on this day she drew valentines instead. Then it was back to regular dots for the rest of the treatments which he completed.

During the early part of 1993, my thoughts turned to the weather for some reason. Well, it was quite different from what I had remembered for my many years in the south. Winter weather usually consisted of alternating periods of cold and warm temperatures. But it was not so this time. The temperatures were consistently close to the normal temps that the weather bureau put out each day. The low for each day was about 5 degrees below the normal low. The high for each day was about 5 degrees below the normal high. So, we were having a cooler than normal winter. We just did not get any abnormally warm nor cold temperatures. Yet, the number of heating days were actually

higher than quite a few years with much colder weather at times.

This weather pattern continued without any likelihood of a change. So, people began talking about this unusual weather. In fact, Bro. Thomas Futral said, "If we don't get any cold weather, we will not have had a winter at all." Again, he was partially right and partially wrong from my viewpoint.

Then came the second weekend of March. The weather people began to predict a nasty snow storm coming the middle of the month. At first they said that this was a possibility when it first appeared on the computer models. Then as the days passed, the likelihood of this happening appeared to be much more certain. (It never disappeared from the computer models at all. A low pressure system was to form in the Gulf of Mexico which should come ashore along the MS - AL coast heading northeast. Several inches of snow was expected to fall over all of AL.

Then came Friday, the day it was suppose to hit. Well, the low pressure system had formed and was deepening as predicted. By afternoon it was beginning to come ashore.

I became somewhat emotionally involved with this, so I followed the progress of the storm during the evening. Well, it was strong enough that it was news worthy. So, the TV stations were following its progress as well.

I had a weather station (barometer, temperature, and relative humidity) that I looked at periodically as the evening progressed. As the evening progressed the snow began falling, and the wind began to howl. Before going to bed that night around midnight, I checked the air pressure. It had dropped to 29.66".

Saturday morning arrived, and I saw lots of snow. Later measurements showed it 6" in one area. (Officially, the city got 7.5" of snow.) Other people in town had more snow than

us. Even so, I checked the air pressure again: 30.66"! The pressure had risen one inch in less than 8 hours.

The heat pump was not working very well. It would run for a while and then shut off. Perhaps 20-30 minutes later, it would come back on for maybe 3-4 minutes. This was enough to keep us from getting cold, but I would have preferred to have it run longer. Likely the problem was that everyone was using a lot more electricity is my guess as to why this happened. (It had to be the circuit breakers in the heat pump that kept kicking in and out while trying to protect the heat pump.) But then again it was rather cold for a change (down to 17 degrees).

I listened to the radio for a while. There I heard that the storm had done a lot of damage in Georgia as something like 400,000 customers were without power in that state alone. The highways heading north from Atlanta were closed if not very treacherous. Hundreds of truck were stranded. Then there were some people out in the storm in north Georgia... (camping perhaps?) There was some concern about them because they expected the temperature Saturday night to fall to single digits.

I was also watching a TV station from Birmingham throughout the day. That city had had 11" of snow. This made it impossible to get around in the city. (Well, some were unwise enough to try.) There were a lot of homes without electricity because the snow was very wet making it relatively heavy and easy to stick to tree limbs and power lines. This heavy snow took down a lot of these.

I still did not have a snow shovel (not even a shovel of any kind). So, I got out the same piece of plywood to move the snow off of the driveway. Like the snow a year earlier, I waited until the snow melted by the end of the week to drive anywhere. I really did not think that I should do

anything else. After all, from my home, I would have to drive up a hill to get anywhere regardless of which way I went.

There was a lot of power outage in our area as well. Elder Mike Tyson was living north of us about 12 miles. He did not have power from Friday night until sometime Monday. I think other church members had power throughout the storm though.

The temperature rebounded rather quickly. By Monday afternoon, it was in the 70's and would continue to be this warm and warming up through the rest of the winter. (Well, Monday was March 14, so it was time for the temperature to warm up some.) But this did not melt the snow very fast. It was a very wet snow in our area as well as in Georgia. I needed to head north on the highway about a month after the snow storm, and that is when I saw snow patches still lying along side of the road. Since we live in a very hilly area, one would think this would be possible on the north side of the hills. Yet, the snow I saw was on the south side that got sunshine all day! (Go figure...)

Visit Home in 1993

As the year progressed, Dad was getting better, or at least seemed to be. We could not be sure until his first CAT scan which was due during May.

There were several things going on in Edwardsville over the last of May to the first of June. Marianne had gotten her Associate Degree in the middle of the month. Then a niece (Angela) and a nephew (Jeff) were graduating from high school on May 29. In the midst of this, Little Flock Church was having their annual meeting May 28-30. The following Saturday, June 5th Marianne was marrying Paul Lindsey.

As a result, we came up a week before the meeting and remained for two weeks. This way we could take time to purchase two graduation and one wedding presents. The

first two were personally delivered, and the last one was taken to the church for the wedding.

Marianne insisted that the attention should be upon the high school graduates rather than on her upcoming wedding. She felt they had a right to have their time in the sun. (15 minutes of fame?) So that is the way it became. Come the first weekend of June, it was now her time to be center stage.

Annual Meeting & Graduation

Then came Friday and the beginning of the annual meeting. There were three sermons delivered that evening. I certainly enjoyed myself then. Kevin was behaving himself as well.

During the early part of the Saturday morning service, Dad mentioned his latest medical report. When a CAT scan was run, there was no evidence of cancer in his body which I thought was wonderful. Those who knew him well rejoiced that things were going so well.

Saturday afternoon, most of the Lewis' attending the meeting left to attend the high school graduation ceremony; only Dad remained at church. Sometime during the lunch hour, I was informed that I would be one of the ministers speaking after lunch. My subject matter was the trees in the midst of the garden of Eden. My main point was that if we are facing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we have to also turn our backs on Christ (the tree of Life). When we face the tree of Life, we must also turn our backs on sin which comes from the knowledge of good and evil. I enjoyed the liberty that God gave me that afternoon. I was also happy that my father had finally gotten the chance to hear me preach.

(While he was an active deacon, he always made sure that I got some money each time I attended Little Flock while visiting the family. This meant a lot to me.)

Marianne and Paul's Wedding

Etta did not come, but the rest of my siblings were there. Patrick even came up from New Orleans with his fiancé. So it was almost a family reunion including three generations with my parents being the oldest one. So, we all got a chance to chat some after the wedding.

Such was not the case for Paul though. His father had been in an accident recently and was not physically able to travel at all. So, a video tape was made of the wedding for him. I don't remember how many of his relatives made the trip, but there were several I think.

Normally, taking a video of a wedding in this church would not have been permitted, but under the circumstances an exception was made. So Paul's parents did get to see their son get married.

Last Trip Together

During the next couple of months, Mom and Dad planned to make another trip to see people. Mom felt that this would be the last time that they would be able to do this as a couple since she already was certain that Dad's time was running out.

In August they made their last long trip together into Minnesota, Idaho, California, and other states. Mom was already sure of Dad's coming death, and this bothered Dad. His letters emphasized that he was felling well... But the first CAT scan after their return revealed the cancer had come back. Dad had no desire to go through more radiation nor chemotherapy. His life was coming to an end, and it was his decision.

This left my family in limbo until his death. Mom had told or wrote me that she did not want us to come while he was living. The fear was that Kevin would cause too much of a problem. Whether this would have happened or not, I did

not nor do I now know whether this would have been the case or not. Mom apologized later for what she had said which I appreciated. But I have never held that against her. What mattered most was what was best for Mom and Dad.

For that matter at least one of the grandchildren could not handle seeing his grandfather gradually getting worse. After a while, he had to be banned from Mom and Dad's home because of his actions. So with Kevin's mental problems and sometimes outbursts, Mom's decision would be considered the proper thing to do.

As I write and edit my life's story, I have seen how God has provided me with the things that I needed. While Kevin could have very easily created havoc in my ordination, he sat down beside a minister he did not know and was shortly asleep. God has control over things in ways we do not understand fully. But remember, this was something that God was quite capable of doing. We will never know whether he would have done so or not.

As the time passed that fall, I made a list of the things that we would need for the trip to Illinois for the funeral. Now, I could think clearly as to what we would need; after his death, I doubted my ability to think clearly. Rather than putting this on paper, I used my computer to generate the list.

We began packing things perhaps in November (or earlier). Anytime something was cleaned and would not be used again for a while was set aside. So, gradually we accumulated many of the things we would need. There would be only a few things that needed to be packed when the call came. This was also part of my plan. You know? It really worked very well!

A few days before Dad died, I had heard of some of the things that were happening in his body. They were things that I did not like at all: he should not have to suffer like

this. So, I prayed very hard for God to take his life; "Let him go, LORD."

It was the afternoon of December 30th that I got the call from my Mom. He had died this morning, but there are several things that had to be done right away. Calls would have to wait.

I was in a certain amount of shock, so I did not act very fast doing anything. I called my pastor to tell him that we would not be at church for a while and why.

I was certainly glad that we had the packing list and had been packing gradually for a while. Then we began gathering the rest of the things on the computer list. Most of the rest of the list were packed. There were only a few things like toiletries that would have to wait until Friday morning. Everything already packed were put into the trunk of the car. Things on hangers were hung in the back seat on the driver's side. It seemed like everything was ready, so we went to bed around 10 PM which is our usual bedtime.

Then about 5 AM, we got back up, and ate breakfast. While Susan was getting Kevin up and fed, I was getting the last things on the packing list together and packing them. Then when everyone was ready, we headed north.

This was the time when I was glad that we had gotten the SSI checks to be directly deposited. I had enough money to get to Illinois, but I did not have enough to get back home. With direct deposit, I did not have to. They were both deposited on Dec 30th. The money was there when I needed it. Otherwise, I might not have been able to go to my father's funeral.

Dad's Funeral

We arrived in Edwardsville in the afternoon driving by my parents' home. I saw Mom at the door as we went by. She had sort of a blank look on her face. I probably should have

stopped, but didn't since I was told not to do this. Now I wonder about this.

As a minister, I am supposed to console people. (Perhaps those making the request didn't think of me as being one.) Maybe one of these days I will stop thinking about what others think and think more about what God thinks.

The temperature on arrival at Tom & Elaine's was 20 degrees and dropping. The temperature never got up to 20 during the time we were there.

This was certainly hard on both Susan and Kevin. Susan had the fake fur coat I bought her two years before, but I am not certain about Kevin. Well this was hard on our car as well. First I had a headlight go out on me, and it was not very much fun changing it with the temperature around zero (or was it lower?). The windshield developed a crack along and near the bottom it. As a result, it did not interfere with my ability to see where I was going. It was replaced early in the next year. I paid the Comprehensive deductible, and State Farm paid the rest.

New Years Day was Sunday, and Little Flock had been regularly having a service beginning in the late evening lasting until midnight. The decision was made to hold one this Sunday night as well.

Church services that Sunday morning was a special experience for me. I was asked to introduce services which I did. I almost broke down as I spoke, but just as I did, I felt a calm over me that I knew had come from God, Himself. I was able to continue speaking with no further problems.

Dad's visitation was Sunday evening. The family were all there by 6 PM as scheduled. Then we took turns going to Tom & Elaine's where there was food for our suppers. Obviously, I had my hands full with Kevin with the number of people coming and going. For the most part, he remained near the

front door watching cars drive by the funeral home. This meant that I was on my feet almost all of the time. Once in a while we would go downstairs for a short time including bathroom breaks. Even so, I did not meet very many people that I knew other than church people.

The grave was dug Monday morning, and Webb took some of us out to the site in his 9 passenger van. I'm not sure why now. But at least it gave Kevin a chance to ride for a while.

Then came the funeral later in the day. During it several ministers took a part. I was asked to lead the hymn, "What a friend we have in Jesus," which I did. Later in the service, Susan leaned over to me as she look at Dad's open casket and said, "What a friend indeed." This meant so much to me that I later inscribed it on the monument for our family grave site.

This was not a good time for Angela. Her birthday was the day we buried her grandfather.

Come Tuesday, we packed our car with all but the last items. Then Wednesday morning, we headed home. We were going to where it was warmer!

Over the next five years the relationship between Mom and me changed. at first she was very sorry that she had not let me see my father after his cancer had come back. I had not gotten a chance to say goodbye, and this bothered her tremendously at first. But this changed with time.

I know that when I was growing up that Mom had worked out their plan for how they handled their finances. So, She was not faced with a new situation exactly. Yet, there was a difference: she no longer had Dad to discuss these things. Well, she did seek advice from Webb, but I don't know how helpful that was. To him, she was seeking to depend upon him in making financial decisions. He wanted her to stand

on her own feet. The advice he gave was designed to help her do this.

I became her Spiritual advisor so to speak. She would write letters with questions, and I would reply after doing some serious thinking. I had been reading my Bible daily for the previous 15 years, so I did have a lot of information at my fingertips from it. The most important part was that she got solace from our correspondence.

It seems like we visited with her two times during the five year period between Dad's death and hers. The first one was when we stayed for at least a week. This created a problem for her. While she enjoyed the visit, she really missed us when we left. The house was once more empty except for her. Loneliness would set in.

Because of this we stayed less than a week the second time. Well, when we got back home, I was lonely myself. I really wanted to be close to my Mom much more than a few days.

Snow

We had two years in a row with a 6+ inch snow. Was this the usual? Not by any chance. The usual snowfall for a year was one snow of an inch or less which would melt before the day was over. It got to the place that when I saw a snow anytime in the winter that I knew we would not have another one. Such was the case until I moved to Knoxville in 2008. In fact, one year while I was going to church on October 31st that I saw some snow flakes floating around in the air. None of them reached the ground, and this was our "snow" for that winter!

Susan was having some gastrointestinal problems and was sent to see a specialist about 40 miles away. Perhaps he could help Susan. Then, we had a 4"+ snow that day. So, I call that doctor's office to reschedule for the next day. They

were happy to do so because they did not have enough medical staff that made it into work that day. Even so, there was still more snow on the road than I would have like the day after the snow.

My Office Supply store

This has to be one of my big blunders in life. The owner of it wanted to get rid of it in November in the mid 1990's, and I was gullible to pay for it. We had very little money, and lost even that at times. June 30, 2003, I closed it for good.

I did have a visitor a couple of times that seems like a messenger from God. His message was: Obey God's voice. It was a message that even he did not understand nor know why he felt impressed to tell me this. Other than this, this venture was a complete bust! This is financially speaking only.

I made a lot of friends out of my customers. Computers were fairly new, and many people who had one needed someone to hold their hand as they learned. So, that is what I did. I taught them whatever I could find out by my studies on the subject.

Helping to bring the Internet here

This happened around 1996. Some people were accessing the internet using a couple of Internet providers of which AOL being the more popular one. But all of them required a long distance call which was expensive or \$6.00 per hour for an 800 number. With the dial-up speeds at the time, this was not cheap either. Then there was some talk of bringing the Internet to Roanoke by providing a local phone number to dial.

Getting list of names for Internet service

This has to be one of the few things that I did right while "running" the store. The two possibilities were the local

cable and telephone companies. I decided I was going to help things along. So, I created a form for people to sign if they were interested in Internet service. I also gave out some of these forms to people who also got names as well. When it was clear that the phone company was serious about bringing this to us, I walked into their office with several sheets of names numbering close to 200. (These were enough to make the venture profitable within the first year by themselves.) Within a month or two, dial-up service was available to all who wanted it through the phone company.

Someone came into my store and told me that the phone company were selling 3.5" floppy discs containing a program that would connect people to the Internet. OK, that is what I wanted. Shortly after that, I headed across the street to the phone company office. I had to wait in line to get one. When my turn came, I was prepared to give them \$40. But I did not have to do so. I was given a free copy because of the names I had turned in to them. This was nice, but I was only doing it for myself and everyone else who wanted it. We all got it quicker this way, much quicker. I dare say that the phone company got their investment much quicker than they might have thought was possible in the beginning.

Broadband

During the next three years, things changed rapidly in computers. The 286 computer I got in 1992 had a 1 megabyte RAM chip. (It could store about one million characters.) In 1996, I needed to replace the motherboard in it. The new one was a 386, and it came with 4—4 MB chips (Each of these could store about four million characters.) The central processor (the brain of the system) was much faster, in fact multiple times faster. The next year saw 486 computers coming out that were much faster than the 386. A year or so later saw the introductions of the original

Pentium computers with again much faster speeds than the 486's. And I should add that during this time there were additions to what the computers contained. Hard drives were bigger and faster. CD readers became faster and cheaper. Modems were reaching 56 Kb. This permitted sending and receiving about 7 thousand characters per second. This compares with my first modem transmitting 75 characters per second.

One of the cable channels had a computer show on it daily. (I think it was daily.) Anyway, I watched it every weekday that I was home. It contained everything one would need to know about computers. (Well, it did not really, but it certainly contain a very large amount.) One of the things mentioned was computer bulletin boards that we could connect to. There we could chat with others who were also connected. Different bulletin boards had different topics for discussion. So, here was another chance to learn something.

Some people would get on one of these and then abuse their privileges by doing things that caused problems for others. For example, I was on a general topic bulletin board one evening. One of the other people asked to chat privately with me. He propositioned me. So, I turned in him to one of the people who were supervising this board. That ended that for him unless he signed in with a different user name. But I never heard from him again.

In the late 90's there was talk of broadband coming. It was always on, so the computer did not have to dial-up to connect to the Internet any more. At least this was what was advertized. In reality, the computer was connected to a server all of the time. When it needed to get Internet access, it would sent a signal to the server. The server would then connect the computer to the Internet. This connection only lasted as long as the computer needed to

be connected. Getting a connection took a fraction of a second. Using dial-up took more than 10 seconds.

Another benefit was the speed. The most popular dial-up modem at the time was 56 Kb (about 7 thousand characters per second). Broadband was more than 100,000 characters (100 KB) per second. The rated speed was 1 Mb per second (1,000,000 bits which translates to 125,000 characters). The first number I mentioned is the speed that I uploaded files to the Internet. The download speed is usually a little faster.

The TV program I mentioned introduced me to the concept of broadband, so I had a fair idea of what it was about. So, I really wanted this, as much or more so than the computer I did not get the first part of the 90's.

So, I went to the phone company office to find out what I had to do to get it. They sat me down and explained things including how much it would cost. This would bring our phone bill up near \$100 a month, but *I was sure we needed it*. So, I sign up and was put on the waiting list.

At that time broadband was not available to everyone. One had to be within one mile of the servers that the phone company was running. (I was.)

In a couple of days, I got a call asking me if I still wanted broadband. I replied yes. It was installed the next afternoon. Apparently the person or persons ahead of me on the waiting list had changed their minds. I'll take that!

Commercial web site

With dial-up service, each customer had 5 MB of space on the server for a personal web page. That is nice, now how can I take advantage of this? Obviously, I had some things I had to learn.

So I started looking for how to upload files to the Internet. What program will I need? What was the IP address on the server that I needed to access? What files do I need to

create for my web page? How do I link them together? How can I organize these files to do what I want? These were the beginning of my questions.

I found the answers and applied them as well. As a result, I probably had one of the first web pages on the Internet in Roanoke, but maybe not. However, the first files I uploaded were for Randolph Office Supply. That made this a commercial web site which was a no-no.

After a year or so, someone from the phone company happened to access my web page. I had to take down the files pertaining to Randolph Office Supply. They were willing to rent space in the server to me for the commercial web page, and I agreed. So, for a while I had two web pages: personal and commercial. (The latter was discontinued in 2003 when I closed Randolph Office Supply.)

One thing I forgot to mention was that I needed a domain name to go along with the IP address the phone company had given me. In the beginning, I used *randolphofficesupply.com* as my domain. When I had to remove the commercial content of the web site, I changed the name. It became *elderdanlewis.com*.

My computer and the Internet

But after I got the broadband service, I learned how to run a mail server on my computer. That is when my email address became "Name"@randolphofficesupply.com. I do not remember what names I used in place of "Name" in the email address, but I know that I had several of them. (I could have created as many as I wanted.) To make this work, the phone company routed all of my emails coming into their servers to my IP address.

At some point, I downloaded the Apache web server and installed it. Then I learned how to use it. With time, I developed a website on my hard drive which included the files for Randolph Office Supply. Now that I had a domain

name, I could use my computer as a web server. I no longer needed to rent space on the phone company's servers.

The thing that made it possible for me to make my computer into a web server was the type of connection I had to the phone company servers. The first people getting broadband got a static IP address. Later people getting broadband did not. Each time their computers connected to the company servers, they were issued an available IP address for that connections. The next time their computer connected, it most likely was issued a different IP address. This is known as a dynamic IP address.

This was another thing that the phone company noticed after the fact. Normally, there was a nominal fee for a dedicated line, but they did not insist that I pay it. After all, it was their fault in the first place. Yes, they were very nice about it.

With my web site and email server, I was introduced to the world of computer viruses. There was one time that I noticed I was having trouble accessing web sites all across the World Wide Web. Service was very slow! It was a virus. Since I was using Apache, I was immune to things like this. People running the Windows server were not.

When someone wanted to access some part of my web site, their computer would send a request to my computer for it. If the request was genuine, my computer would send it back. When the request was a virus, I would get a long string of characters that were designed to get access to another part of my computer. Apache was designed to disregard them.

So, when I viewed the logs, I would see these badly formed requests as well as the IP address of who sent it. Often I would access the web and go to IP address listed in my logs. Then I would learn what domain had sent it. Many of them got a personal email from me telling them that a

virus had infected their computer. I got several thank you emails.

But you never can tell what kind of web site it is from the IP address. The home page of one site in the Netherlands had the picture of a nude woman! I sort of closed my web browser. Someone else would have to tell this company that their computers were infected.

I'm thinking that I got a phone call from one person that I had emailed. He had recently bought a new server and installed the needed software. I had spotted this server as the one sending me a virus, and this was less than one day since it had gone online!

Set up religious web site

When I closed the office supply store in 2003, I converted the web site to strictly religious topics. By this time, I was using Linux instead of Windows 98SE. Most of the time, I was running Apache on Linux. This made it immune to even the latest viruses.

But one day I made a big boo-boo. I switched to Windows 98 SE, running Apache on it for a while. That is when I got infected. I did not notice at the time, but it was not long before I got a very nasty note from the phone company accusing me of trying to infect other computers! Well, I knew about this problem, but I had not downloaded the patch that would have prevented this. From then on, I only used Linux as my operating system. I never had another problem.

Positive thinking ezines

I had been exposed to positive thinking by the Combined Insurance Company in their training in December, 1977 and my association with Amway. At first glance, neither of these did me that much good financially speaking. This is because I had not properly applied the principles that both sought to

instill in me. My opinion of myself was not very good nor was it very accurate. I had far more abilities than I was giving myself credit.

The years that I spent as a dry cleaning store manager began the changing of my mind about myself. For the first time in my life, I had a purpose in what I was doing. I had spent time learning through these years and applying it. The financial results from the stores I managed tell what I could accomplish. I also found that I could make decisions for myself that would give me good results. In other words, what I had accomplished built up my self-esteem. None of this was bragging nor being puffed-up. Instead, it was my actions speaking for me.

Once I got on the Internet and was getting emails, I subscribed to a email newsletter by Denis Waitley that taught principles of positive thinking. (I was introduced to him on some cassettes I got through Amway.) He was associated with some others who also sent out this type of emails. So, I subscribed to them as well.

During this time I read quite a bit. I was still reading my Bible through every 11 months and 1 day. This amounted to reading the Bible completely 13 times every 12 years. I was also reading these newsletters when they came in and several times afterward. So, the contents of all of this slowly became part of my thinking and part of my actions. They would play an important part in my life after Kevin's death and my stroke.

When I read these newsletters, I would question what was written just as I did the Bible. I was just as concerned with what was the truth and what was meant by what was written. The messages in the newsletters had to meet the truth standard of the Bible as I understood it. Sometimes they would quote the Bible to make a point. That lesson had to agree with the Bible in general.

Medical problems

Time wise this overlaps the things written before and after it. It really begins with not long after we moved into our new home. Her bladder was falling and had to be surgically stitched into place. The next year, she required another surgery for something. (I was beginning to think she was almost planning for a different surgery each year. But such was not the case.

Susan

In the mid 1990's, she was having some problem that required her to be referred to a specialist for a gastrointestinal problem. This occurred the day we had another snow. (This one was only 4".) He did not really find anything either.

Anyway, since she was on Medicaid, I had to pay a \$1 for the co-pay. This was the time when the federal government was trying (unsuccessfully) to get people to use dollar coins instead of paper dollars. So, I used the dollar coin to pay the bill. I knew it was good, but the person I gave it too did not. (I love to use new things, and this is one time that I did.) One of the other ladies in the doctor's office assured this lady that the coin was indeed worth a dollar.

Susan also began having problems with her heart. She knew something was wrong, but she did not know what nor why. As a result she had several doctor's appointments to find out and even several different doctors. No one could tell her why she hurt the way she did. One doctor even mentioned that there was an abnormality in her EKG, but he had no idea what that meant.

The problem seemed to be getting worse to her, and she insisted that I take her to see the doctor again (Dr. Peterson). Fortunately, he had a cardiac specialist (Dr. Slavich) that was also in his office that morning. He took one look at her latest EKG and knew what the problem was. So,

she was put into the hospital. (I was keeping the office supply store open that day.)

The medical test run in Alexander, LA, to verify Susan's disability gave a general name to her condition: myotonic dystrophy. (There are several different types of this.) This information was important when it came to diagnosing her condition. With her EKG, having this disease requires a procedure while not having it requires nothing be done.

When I came to the hospital, Dr. Slavich took me aside to explain the situation. He had copied out a page of one of his medical books. On that page it listed several possible abnormalities of an EKG. As he went down each of these, he pointed out where they were on her EKG. She had them all. Then came the conclusion stated on the page. If these abnormalities were present in an EKG and the person had myotonic dystrophy, a pacemaker was required. If the patient did not have this disease, nothing was to be done. "It was a no brainer!" said Dr. Slavic. So she was scheduled for surgery in a couple of days.

During the surgery, Kevin was in the Learning Center as he usually was every day during the week. I was at the hospital with her. Then about noon, they took her to the X-ray room to insert the pacemaker. (This requires a fluoroscope to place the pacemaker leads into the heart.) It took less than 30 minutes to do this. Then she was placed back in her room.

For some reason, I thought it would take an hour or more to do it. So, I went downstairs to the cafeteria for lunch. Within 45 minutes, I was back upstairs, but no Susan! Well, I did find out fairly quickly where they had taken her.

When I first saw her in her room, I noticed that something was very different; it was her skin color! Her lips looked like someone had applied lipstick. Her skin had a more natural skin color to it. It had been changing so very slowly that I

had not noticed. Her heart was not pumping enough oxygen through her body.

This problem which had been progressing for some time had caused some problems earlier. The surgeries I mentioned were all done under a general anesthetic. Each time she had to fight to regain consciousness. This was something that she experienced even though she did not say anything to anyone. (Or if she did, no one knew what to do about it.) But with the pacemaker, her cells were again getting the oxygen they needed.

An old minister (80's or 90's) had needed a pacemaker earlier, and I was at the hospital when it was done. Then too, I noticed the marked difference in his skin color after it had been inserted.

Kevin

Not long after she had recuperated from getting her pacemaker, she started talking about getting one for Kevin. As usual, she was very adamant about this. She hated the problems she had had before she got the pacemaker. She was bound and determined that Kevin be spared from the pains she had suffered.

Dr. Slavich did not want to do it, but that did not stop Susan from hounding him about it. (I mean **she really hounded him**. Finally, he and Dr. Peterson agreed that we should go to the outpatient section of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. Our appointment was with a Dr. Richardson, head of the Cardiology Clinic. So, off we went on a 110 mile (one way) trip to see him.

He checked Kevin out and then talked to us. The EKG had indicated that at least one of the nerve bundles going to the ventricles was already blocked. Still he advised against a pacemaker. Whether Kevin's mental state had anything to do with this or not, I do not know. This raised Susan's

temper, and they had quite a discussion. Neither would give an inch. Finally we left for home with Susan very down cast: she had lost. There was nothing more she could do for her son.

It takes a little over 2 hours to drive home. But by the time we got back home, Dr. Richardson had changed his mind. His call to Dr. Slavich told him what he found and the recommendation to install a pacemaker. We either got this news by phone upon arrival at home or we saw Dr. Slavich.

Problems

So, surgery was scheduled for Kevin's pacemaker. It took a little longer to do it for Kevin, but there might have been some precautions Dr. Slavich took because of Kevin's mental state. All seemed to go well for a while.

The pain of healing or perhaps some inching that caused him to play around over the area where the pacemaker was located. As a result, he broke one of the leads. So, this required another pacemaker and surgery. This time Dr. Slavich tied the pacemaker to muscles to make sure it would not move...

It was a nice try, but Kevin somehow managed to twist the pacemaker at least a couple of rotations which pulled the leads out of his heart (about 6"! The leads were still carrying an electrical impulse which caused his body to twitch with each impulse.

Well it was back to the drawing boards with the third pacemaker. His first two had been placed in his shoulder area as had Susan's which was the newer approach. (It gave an easier access to it.) Before that, they were placed in the abdomen which required to open the abdomen up. Really, there was no choice that could be made with Kevin: it had to go into his abdomen. This one worked.

Susan and Kevin

After Susan's surgery, her pacemaker needed to be monitored over the phone. She was given a piece of equipment to do this. It contained two leads which ended with bracelets which were placed on her wrist. The nurse would call, I would connect the leads, and place the phone on the machine. There were a few tests done with each monthly call. After Kevin's surgery, his needed monitoring as well. So, I did both of them at the same time. (Some times the call would come while Kevin was at the Learning Center, so they would have to call back for him after 2:30 PM when he was home.

Every year or so, the pacemakers needed to be checked more thoroughly. This required a doctor's appointment. An electromagnet was connected to a sophisticated machine that would get information stored in the pacemaker. Rather interesting I must say. It was very educational as well.

Hurricane Opal (1995)

This formed in the Gulf of Mexico the latter part of September. As usual, I followed its progress wondering where it might come ashore. Then it became clear that this would be on the Alabama coast which made me rather concerned. (I had been in a couple of hurricanes before.) At this point, Opal was still more than 100 miles south of the coast if not farther.

But things began to go downhill fast! As she headed north, she encountered some very warm water which increased the wind speeds to 180 MPH. Now this really, really scared me! (I knew what Camille had done to Mississippi in 1969, and she was not as strong as Opal appeared to be.)

By the time Opal was within 50 or so miles from the AL coast line, her wind speeds had dropped back down to the 100 - 120 MPH range. So, in my mind Opal had gone from

catastrophic to down to a rather serious hurricane. I still had plenty of worry in my mind though.

As the hurricane came northward, we began to get a very large amount of rain. The ground was becoming saturated. This is not good with high winds due in a short while.

Jesse was one of the clients of the Learning Center who lived in a town about 10 miles west of Roanoke. As the initial rains came north, he had been taken home in one of the school vans. Shortly after he got home, he hitched a ride back to Roanoke in someone's minivan. As they began to go around a couple of curves, the driver lost control of the van (probably because of water on the road which is my thought). It hit a car coming from the opposite direction head on. This killed Jesse and the driver (neither one had been wearing a seat belt).

As the afternoon progressed, the rain intensified as did the winds. This continued into the night. In the end, we would have hurricane force winds for a continuous 6 (or was it more?) hours. It was not a fun time to be in Roanoke.

I knew that the safest place to be in our house was the hall that ran through the middle of the house from the bedrooms to the living room. So, we made beds on the floor in the hall. We had a couple of air mattresses that I blew up, and we put sheets and blankets on them. For some reason Kevin did not really like to do this, but there was no real choice for any one of us.

When we woke up in the morning, rain was still falling, and the wind was still blowing (but not as hard). There was no electricity nor phone service. There did not seem to be any damage to the house nor trees outside for which I was thankful. A lot of leaves and very small limbs were scattered all over the place though.

We checked on our neighbors at some point in time. They were fine with no significant damage. Besides both had

phone service which seemed strange to me. Later we would use our next door neighbor's phone to report our phone problem. Within a day or so after Susan reported it, the phone company found the problem in the line and fixed it. (A tree had fallen across the phone line stretching it far enough to break my line. This stretching also pulled the broken lines from each other.)

It was three days before we got our electricity back. The first thing done was to get the main power lines from the south working. Then they connected the business section. Finally, they worked on the residential areas. So, our store had power before our home had it.

A couple of doors down from our store was a small grocery store. The owner was nice enough to freeze the gallon jugs of water we brought to him for free. This plus our ice chest, we could keep food at least cool.

For cooking and heating water, we still had the camp stove that we had bought for the trip to Etta's ten years earlier. (It finally gave up the ghost about 10 years after this hurricane.) And we also had a kerosene heater that we used to keep the house warm. (Not a whole lot was needed though it was rather cool for early October.)

After a day or so, I decided to take a walk around the block (literally) to see what kind of damage there was. Our house is about six feet above the street, but it was also situated in a valley. (Well the top of our house was about level with the top of the hill to our south.) This is why we did not sustain a lot of damage: the wind basically blew over the top of us.

The street just to our south ran along the top of the hill. Because of this, the houses along this street had some really problems. Several trees were down. One of these trees was at least 5 feet in diameter. The winds had pulled this one up by its roots! This left a hole with a 5' diameter

and a couple of feet deep. There were still lines down, and I made sure that I did not get close to any of them! There was a garage with an apartment above it in which the latter suffered quite a bit of damage. It took some time, but damages were repaired.

On the west side of Roanoke, Clark's Meats sold frozen vegetables and meat. I had gotten a chest type freezer some time in the past and placed it in a room at the south end of the carport. So, when I went to Clark's, I would buy extra amounts of meats and vegetables to put in it.

A couple of weeks before Opal, I had bought about a 100 pounds of beef (special price for quantity, like perhaps \$1.49/lb) and put all the meat in the freezer. (It was stuffed to the lid!) So, I was somewhat concerned with the meat thawing meaning all that meat could have gone bad after no power for 3 days. But when I checked, the meat on top was a little bit soft on the surface, and that was it. The rest of even the top meat was hard. I breathed a sigh of relief, and we ate the meat from the freezer for the next six months or so. Of course we made sure that the meat was well done before eating it. Well we always did this anyway.

Mom's death and funeral

It was late in October or perhaps early November, 1998. Our citation was getting older and acting up more. Gas mileage was gradually decreasing, but it was still in the high 20's. Perhaps the biggest problem was its brakes. They were not working as well any more. The only problem was that I did not have the money to replace them. But something would have to be done sooner or later...

Meanwhile, Mom is having some problems of her own. She had been having problems for years with high blood pressure and diabetes. During this time she had struggled to keep the latter under control without much success. She was constantly trying, but her glucose remained higher than

her doctor wanted it to be regardless of what she did. Even medication did not help.

On this particular Friday morning, she had another appointment to see her doctor. She went, talked to him, had blood drawn for the usual tests, and returned home. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary except for her stomach. Then around 9:30 AM, she vomited. Thinking that something was wrong, she caught it in a large plastic storage bag.

Now she knew something was wrong, so she called either Tom or Webb. When she could not get the first one on the phone, she called the other. One of them came to her home, and not much later, the other came as well. Given that she had just been to the doctor, neither one thought that this was serious. But she was not getting any better. So the decision was made to call an ambulance to take her to the hospital. She left home in it around 12:30. They went to the hospital as well.

Tom later called me after he had gotten the diagnosis for Mom's problem: a bleeding stroke. He said that she might have a complete recovery or she might die at any time. Likely, I was hoping for the best and ignoring the rest just like I did for Dad when he went into remission. I obviously was not thinking very clearly at all.

With Kevin's and Susan's medical problems, I was aware of the consequences of many medical situations. But a bleeding stroke is not one of them; neither had pancreatic cancer. So, I was in a light shock. I was not thinking clearly at all. I was not use to being told the prognosis was very mild to deadly. I really did not comprehend what Tom said.

Now I wonder if either Webb or Tom were acquainted with symptoms of a stroke. Did either one notice a slurring of her speech? Was there a muscle weakness on one side of her body? But again, vomiting is not a symptom that I know of. This would seem to be a symptom of some kind of

gastrointestinal bug. If I had been there, I would have missed any stroke symptoms as well.

But things continued to go down hill. Sometime later in the afternoon, she had gone into a coma. She was still in one Saturday morning. She would remain in it until she died in the afternoon.

A little later, Tom called us, and I again answered the phone. When I heard his voice, I assumed that he was going to give me an update on Mom. Likely he would tell me that she was improving... She was not. It was as much of a shock for me as it had been for him.

Like Dad, it took Susan and I a bit of time in which we tried to deal with our shock and grief. My first thought was that this could not be happening!

Then we called Elder Perry and likely some other people with this horrible news. And at some point, some planning had to be made. Obvious, we were going to have to make a quick trip to Edwardsville, but when? Do we pack real quick and leave Sunday morning? Or, do we go to church as we had planned and then leave on Monday? We decided to do the latter.

Needless to say, we did not get a very good night's sleep on Saturday. For that matter, Sunday morning's service was a blur. But, that afternoon, it was time to begin packing in earnest.

One would think that we were not in a very good shape to pack the right things. Well, we were not. But we did not have to be. Five years earlier when Dad had died, I had created a file with a packing list of what we would need for the trip to Dad's funeral. Well, I still had that file! So I accessed it one more time. So, we began packing everything that we would not need Monday morning before we left. Then Sunday evening, we went to bed early trying

once again to get a good night's sleep. We were not really all that successful.

Then early Monday morning, we got up and prepared to leave. Once again, just to be sure, I consulted the packing list. I actually put an X in front of each item in it as that item was packed that morning. I did not want to think I packed it without making sure I had. Then around 6 AM, we headed north.

Tom had taught me a shorter route to travel that involves coming into Edwardsville from the east side of town. This has us driving on East Schwarz St. past my parents' home. It was the route I took on this day.

As I drove by, I saw Mom at the front door looking out. I sensed that she had a blank stare in her eyes. My heart went out to her!

I had been told that I should come straight to Tom and Elaine's home. I definitely should not stop at Mom's to see her. Why? Perhaps it had to do with Kevin. Perhaps she might become too upset if we had stopped.

But what about God? I am an ordained minister. It is my duty to comfort people as much as possible. Regardless of what others thought might happen if I had stopped, God is quite able to control the situation. But once again I listened to people rather than followed my instincts.

I don't remember much about the funeral at all. Well, I remember putting my hand on her folded hands the last time I viewed her body. I suppose it was my way of saying goodbye.

At some point, Webb made it clear that everyone needed to stay for a while because he needed to do the first things to settle the estate that Mom and Dad had built together. So this was going to be an extended stay.

According to Mom's will, Webb was to be the executor of it. Well, when Dad died, he had given all of his possessions to Mom. This was the entire estate could now be settled at one time at her death.

Since Webb was a business man and had college training in financial matters, it made sense for him to fulfill the position that Mom's will had given him. He did it very well.

So at some point after the funeral, all of the siblings gathered at Webb's home to begin going over the details of her will. First item was Rosie, the van Dad had modified for their camping trips. Someone in the family could ask for it, or it could be sold and that amount be added to the assets of the estate. I asked to have it, and no one else did. So, it would be mine.

Of course, I needed to pay for it so that this amount would become part of the estate. When Webb divided up the estates which included some furniture and other items, he also divided up the cash left over after all expenses were paid. That is when I got my share of the price for the van back.

While waiting for the day of the meeting at Webb's, I was seriously thinking about buying another car. Mom and Dad had used a particular salesman who had given them some real good deals. So, I was planning to see him to see what he could do for me. But when I was allowed to purchase Rosie, I did not need to do this. Instead, I visited the dealership just to get the maintenance records for Rosie. This way I would know what had to be done and when.

As far as sleeping arrangements, Etta stayed with Webb, and my family stayed at Tom and Elaine's. While there were some steps there, Webb's home was three stories. This was far too many steps for Susan to say the least. Still, we were treated very well, and there is no way that I can truly say thank you for all the things they did for us.

OK, I now knew I would have transportation back home. What should I do about our car. I did not need it any more. Someone helped me find a "junk yard" which would take my car off my hands and pay me a few dollars (\$50).

As I drove there to get rid of it, the brakes were making all kinds of noises. When I stopped the car there, I thought I heard a noise of something breaking near the right front wheel. It would not surprise me if that brake had finally come apart. I don't remember who came with me to drive me back to Tom's though.

Once again, God had protected my family when we needed it. We could have been seriously injured or worse in an accident because of the mechanical shape of the brakes, but God intervened allowing us to make this one last trip in it.

Then as the days passed, Webb got the paperwork together for all of the certificates of deposit that Mom and Dad had accumulated. Each one of them was for an individual child and had that child's name on the certificate. The day had come to cash all of these and distribute the proceeds.

So the four of us went to multiple banks to do this. (I don't remember how many banks were involved.) We each had to produce a photo ID and sign a bunch of paperwork to get our money. Usually, we got a cashier's check when we finished. At one bank, I had my funds wired to my bank in Roanoke. This way I could safely write a check to the estate for the cost of Rosie. (So, now, the van was officially mine.)

This is when I ran into a problem. It was because I was very insensitive to Jennifer's feelings. She lived at the end of the street where Tom and Elaine also did. Over the years since Dad died, she had become very close to her grandmother. In fact, the two of them had made a trip

together in Rosie. Most likely this was more than once. She was grieving because of this closeness.

As a result, I did not consider how she would react to seeing the van parked in front of her parent's home. It was another reminder that her grandmother was no longer with her. There would be no more trips like they had had. When reminded about this by Tom, I asked where I should put the van and did so.

Webb was finally finished with us. He would later ship us some things of our parents and sent us a final check to complete the estate settlement. Then it was time to head back to Roanoke. Tom and Elaine had put up with us for long enough. They had handled this responsibility long enough.

Adding wheelchair lift to "Rosie"



There was a problem with having Rosie: Susan was having some trouble in getting into the van. We were using a step that was a little lower than the running board. So, Susan could get on the step, then the running board, and finally get into the van. So, when we got back home we began to ask around. I also did some research on the Internet. The real answer came from the owner of the local Chevrolet dealership who told us where to go.

So we drove to the place that put wheelchair lifts in vans, and had that done. After this I could take her everywhere we needed to go with a minimum amount of trouble. In time, Susan needed a motorized wheelchair to get around, and the lift had no problems in getting her and it into and out of the van.

Susan's last couple of years

In the late 1990's Susan was becoming less able to get around. (Getting up Tom and Elaine's front steps was very taxing for her.) By the latter part of 2000, she was not eating very well and becoming gradually weaker. She was having more problems in the winter as well. The cold temperatures made her muscles hard to use at all.

Physical problems

For a while we had a wheelchair, probably before we had the wheelchair lift installed. This made it easier to get around when going to church. (Doctor's appointments were about the only other things she got out for.) After Mom's death, I had enclosed the carport and had a ramp installed inside of it. This way I could wheel her down the ramp through the door to the van. Then I would use the lift to put her into it. Off we would go.

Since she was having a harder time getting up from the couch or stuffed chair, I got her a stuffed chair with a motor in it. This would lift her up to a near standing position. This was a great help for her.

Kevin loves to play with controls like those on this chair. When Susan was not in it, he would sit down and pick up its control. Then he would push and hold the up button or down button for a period of time. He really enjoyed going up and down in the chair.

After Susan died, I unplugged the chair, hiding the control under the chair. If I had not hid it, he would have seen the

plug, plugged it back in, and gone back to playing with it again.

During the late fall of 2000, Susan was having problems swallowing because foam was constantly forming in her mouth as she ate. Finally, she had had enough and went to the doctor about this either in February or March. He put her in the hospital until the end of the week. I think the purpose was to see if he could build her up some physically. Friday, he discharged her and arranged for her to be put in hospice. (Sounds like he did not expect her to live very long.)

This was a shock to me because I knew what this meant based upon Dad last months. It was not what I was expecting. Susan did not really comprehend what was going on very well either.

So on Friday, I took Susan back home. I was in a daze because I was staring Susan's death in the face again. This can not be happening to me! Well, I had faced this before back in the early 70's. That experience had not really prepared me for this any at all.

I was visited by a chaplain from hospice which was out of Ashland, AL. Of course, there was paperwork to be filled out. And there was the discussion of the services that they offered as well. It still did not feel right. I guess you could say that I was in denial. Well, knowing the Bible as well as I did, I really expected him to rely more upon it as a basis going forward.

He did not. Then again, most of the family members he visited with may not have wanted to hear what the Bible says. Or it might be that I was not ready to listen to what he had to say. The whole concept of Susan dying soon seemed so foreign to me.

Somewhere down deep, it was beginning to set in. As a result, I decided it was time for me to visit the local funeral home to begin the process of planning for her funeral. Even

though this seemed so surreal, I also knew this needed to be done. Why put it off?

So, I spent perhaps a couple of hours there making many of the decisions that most people have to make after a person dies. The difference being that I did not have to hurry my decisions knowing that there were many more things that have to be done over the next couple of days.

The funeral home has a form that they use to record the decision. In a sense, this makes it also a checklist. This way nothing gets left out. Even so, there were some things that I did not know and would have to wait until Susan's death. But many of them could be decided then. It was well worth the time spent. The things I decided would be the things I did not really have to think about later.

I mentioned somewhere deep down, it was beginning to set in? Where did this come from? Was this God making His presence known in a way? Was he nudging me in the way I should go? Was it His way of making her death more real?

An email from this period

From the time that the doctor had first placed Susan in Hospice, I began writing a monthly email to explain what was happening in our family. At the time, I thought she might die in the not to distant future. But with the insertion of the food tube, that time was pushed into the future. I continued to send the emails to keep everyone abreast of the situation.

By this time, I had begun getting a monthly magazine on muscular dystrophy. So I included my paraphrase of the article about myotonic dystrophy. (I thought others ought to know this.)

The following is the family email that I sent out the end of June 2002 (This was shortly after they had replaced her first food tub):

"Susan's condition remains about the same. She has gained a little strength in getting from the potty chair to the bed. Almost all of the time she needs help getting from the bed to the potty chair. Since she lost muscle mass as well as fat during the winter of 2000-2001, she will not be able to do much more than what she is right now.

"Her arm is healing. She has had some pain from using her right arm more. She will continue to have some pain as she uses that arm more and more. That seems to be part of the "rehabilitation" process.

"This week she has asked for some peanuts which she has eaten. She has also had some frozen yogurt twice during the last month. Otherwise, her diet consists of a quart of Ensure Plus (360 calories/8 oz) or Nutrilite Plus (a generic equivalent) per day.

"Most of the time she spends in bed sleeping. Once in a while, she gets tired of lying in bed and wants to get up. Then she will spend from 20 minutes to an hour in her recliner in the living room before going back to bed. Yesterday, she wanted to stay in bed but talk for a while. An attendant was here from Home Health when that happened. Most of the time, what she said made sense.

"Kevin is doing fine as usual. Lately he has had some congestion but only occasionally.

"Some of the things Susan has been doing have frustrated me, and I have gotten angry at times because of it. It is not always easy to realize that she may not be able to understand that what she is doing. This may not be for the best. Perhaps that may become the most frustrating."

Home Health

It was a month or more after her last hospitalization that She had an appointment with Dr. Peterson. This is when he talked to her about a feeding tube being put into her

stomach. She did not like the idea at all! But he told it like it was. She had two choices: either have the tube inserted or die. He emphasized that these were the only possible choices. Since she was not ready to die yet, she chose the feeding tube. So, an appointment was set up with the hospital and a surgeon to have this done.

Susan remain in hospice until she entered the hospital to have the food tube inserted. She had someone from hospice to help me with her until then. (While she was with us is likely when I went to the funeral home.)

When Susan got home from the operation, she got an aide from home health once a week. In the beginning, the aide could only sit with her. But by the end of the summer, 2001, house cleaning was added to her duties. Susan also got a bather once a week on Friday. So she had someone twice a week. Later she was getting home health on Tuesday and Thursday with the bather coming on Friday.

I don't remember how Susan was bathed in the beginning, but the time came when she was bathed while in bed. The bather also brought something that allowed her to wash Susan's hair there as well.

What was so important about washing her hair? Well, from the time decades ago when she learned that she was going to have to wash her own hair, she had kept her hair clean. When she could no longer do this, I stepped in to help her. Now we had a bather to keep this tradition going. It meant a lot to me.

September 11, 2001

It was on a Tuesday morning. The home health aide had arrived, and I headed downtown on my bicycle to get a haircut. The barber shop was closed stating that he had to go home for something.

So, I headed back home. The TV was on one of the major networks. The aide told me that an airplane had flown into one of the twin towers in New York City. Then as I watched, I saw another passenger jet hit the second tower. I saw the tower burst into flames where the crash had occurred. I continued to watch spell bound!

Then one of the towers began to collapse beginning near the top of the building. In the beginning, only one floor collapsed at a time. Then this progressed toward the bottom of the building with this process speeding up as it went. In a little while, the second tower collapsed as well.

This was completely surreal! I was watching it, yet it could not be happening! How did I make it through this time? I really don't remember. Like most people I just muddled through.

That afternoon, I was delivering some cash register tapes to a local restaurant. There I saw one of my customers, and I stopped to talk with him for a short while. Now there were large LED TV's all over the restaurant, and every one of them were tuned to the same News program. Of course, it was all about the twin towers. During our conversation, he mentioned that he had some friends who worked in the twin tower. There was a good possibility that they had died that morning. It was certainly a sad time!

Replace implanted food tube

It was around the spring of 2002. I had been giving Susan breakfast, lunch, supper, and 10 PM feedings for a year now. This was having an adverse affects on the feeding tube. So, it needed to be replaced. Was she going to have to go through stomach surgery every year to do this? "I don't know that I like this."

Well it turned out that the tube had to be removed by surgery, but another method would be used to insert another tube through the same home in her abdominal wall.

So, this would be the last time surgery would be needed for a feeding tube. "Good!" So surgery was scheduled.

I was not watching Susan as carefully as I should have. She got out of bed by herself seemingly to go to use the potty chair. She fell in the process. I found her on the floor and managed to get her back on to the bed. (I tried to be more careful later to try to prevent this from happening again. This was a couple of days before her surgery.

While they had her in the operating room, they discovered that she had broken her arm during her fall. So, a splint was placed on that arm. A cast was a very bad idea. Her muscles were atrophying enough as it was. A cast would only have made the situation worse. Physical therapy was out of the question as well.

Anyway, the surgery was successful, and I got to take her home in a few days. Then it was back to feeding her four times a day. I also spent much more of my time sitting in our bedroom.

Some good times

Even though she was gradually getting weaker and having more medical problems, we still got out and attended church once in a while. At first she could still walk some. There was one time that we attended Concord Church. After dinner on the grounds, we were walking outside for a little while. The pastor had his camera and wanted to include us in the pictures he took. We were happy to do so. In it we were standing together with my arm around her. Yes, I still loved her enough that I enjoyed this special pleasure one more time. We both enjoyed very much.

To make her more comfortable at Zion's Rest, we had put a recliner at the back of the church. This was likely right after I had gotten the lift chair for her. The recliner was the one she had been sitting in at home.

Well, we had to make room for it by cutting off the end of the last bench. From then on, Kevin would walk in that last aisle first. I would make sure she got set down in the recliner then I moved past her and Kevin. So he was now between the two of us. This way he could play with his cards showing them to either one of us.

As she got weaker, she found it more difficult to dress herself. So, this was one more thing that I would do. Some of these things were not very hard either physically or mentally.

Of course, one of the harder things for her to do was to put on panty hose. But I learned how to do this for her. Getting it over her feet was not that much of a problem. Neither was pulling them up on her legs. But getting the panty part over her hips was another matter.

By this time we had been married for over 30 years. So, I was very well acquainted with every part of her body. Getting the top of the hose up against her groin area involved working in a very sensitive area for me. Naturally as a man, I had some sexual feelings as I did this. I managed to get past that though.

Gall Bladder surgery

As I mentioned earlier, Kevin had gained 30 pounds within a couple of months after he began attending the Learning Center. I had tried to cut down how much he was eating at home to no avail. Likely, I was feeding him the wrong kinds of foods even though I was feeding him fewer calories.

The following is my opinion: this surgery was caused by the weight gain. Specifically it was because of the soda he drank daily at the Learning Center. (More about this later.)

In any case, he was having stomach problems. The diagnosis was gall bladder problems. So surgery was

scheduled. We took him to the hospital probably on a Sunday night with surgery to be early Monday morning.

He was restless all night, and it continued to get worse. Finally, he was given something around 3 AM that calmed him down. (This was about four hours before the surgery.)

The surgery went well, but they removed a lot of gall stones. In fact, the surgeon said that the gall bladder was stretched tight with stones. That is a lot of stones. It sounds similar to how a surgeon described my grandmother's gall stones when her bladder had been removed.

Then they ran into a problem: they could not get Kevin to wake up. In fact, they felt it necessary to put him on a respirator in the ICU. So, Susan and I spent time with him during the entire week. This meant we were eating many of our meals at the hospital cafeteria instead of at home.

When was he going to finally wake up? This was something that was beginning to bother us. We would find out Friday morning.

I have already mentioned the Kevin had loved to watch Hawaii 50 and The Waltons. Well he loved the daytime show, *The Price Is Right*. It was just coming on the TV. Suddenly, he was wide awake. He was pointing at the screen as he made noises. He was moving around in bed as well.

This was the one time that I know of that someone waking up would do so this way. It is the way it is shown on TV programs and movies, but the waking up takes a much longer time for most unconscious people.

What had caused this to happen? Most likely it was the medication Kevin was given to calm him down early Monday morning. Likely it interacted with what he was given to put him to sleep. I wonder if the person putting him to sleep knew about this medication and did not adjust how much

anesthesia he was given. Or perhaps, this was not known. Well, I still believe that there was a lack of communications that could have caused a very serious situation. He might have remained unconscious permanently.

God's visits

This occurred during June, 2002. I was experiencing periods of loneliness. I was seeing only three people a week: Melissa, Kevin's bus driver; the home health lady; and the bather. It was beginning to get to me. The more I thought about it the worse it got. I was beginning to have a very bad pity party...

Then I had this very strange visit from Him. I heard His voice, yet it was not audible. The words were quite clear, and I had no doubt that He was there. His words? "I'm here, who else do you need?"

Seven simple words, but how powerful those words were! How comforting to me! They changed my life in way that no personal advice from a human being could have. They immediately changed my attitude toward myself and others. With Him near, I did not need to have anyone near. It would be nice to have human contact, but it was not **necessary**.

What I did not know yet was that there were going to be hard times to be faced until her death in early January. Then there would be the transition from being a husband to being a widower and the solely responsible for the care for Kevin. Yet, it was these words that I held on to during all of this time. They helped me to not only to get through them but to also enjoy life as I did it. God walked with me throughout this time.

There have been times since then that I would like to have female companionship. And then I begin to feel somewhat lonely. I would like to have the feelings that I had with Susan once again. Yet, I would like to have this is a very

special way. I want to walk through life hand in hand with our hands squarely in God's hand. It can be no other way.

Seeing the rain storm

This is another experience with God that was very uplifting. It was about 8:30 AM, and I had just opened the drapes on our bedroom windows. The clouds were very thick and dark which caused the street lights to come on. Then a downpour began. As I gazed out at the rain, I could see the individual rain drops (and they were large) as if they were being illuminated by a light source. The black walnut tree was also standing out in silhouette. A calm came over me. It was as if God was giving me another message that I needed. It was another reminder that He was there and would be in any troubles I would have.

Since this time, I have seen stormy weather, but each time I again see the silhouette of trees or similar objects. Once again this is comforting to me. Perhaps the message is that God is there with me even in troubling times.

Laxative she did not need

On Sunday, September 8, 2002, some of the church members at Zion's Rest church came to our house to celebrate our 35th wedding anniversary which was two days later. By this time Susan was becoming less aware of what was going on around her. She had a blank stare on her face as events unfolded around her. So, it did not really mean much to me as it would have if she were not slowing going down hill. We would not share this together in a meaningful way.

Someone in home health became concerned that Susan might be constipated. So, on our anniversary I was told to get a prescription for a laxative to give her. I got it, and gave her one dose of it either Friday or Saturday of that week. Then came a very trying time that really made me **very** angry.

This one dose caused her to have diarrhea that continued over the rest of September! I asked the pharmacist what I needed to do to stop the diarrhea, and he was no help to me at all. I checked the Internet for information with no help there or so it seemed. So, the diarrhea continued several times a day. day after day week after week. This meant washing the sheets several times a day every day.

I was getting more and more frustrated as well as helpless. I even became more and more angry about anyone who was involved in my having to get the prescription. I really had some evil thoughts about the things I would like to subject them to because of their part.

Finally, I happened to go to the British Society of Pharmacists web site. It mentioned the uses of this laxative as well as the need to increase the amount of fiber in the diet. So, after more than two weeks of diarrhea at least a couple of times a day, adding fiber to her diet stopped it. I had to grind the fiber into powder, mix it with Ensure, and feed this to her through the feeding tube. But this was so much better than washing the sheets seemingly everytime I turned around!

Once in a while in the last three months, I would become a little slack on giving her the fiber. The diarrhea would come back. You would have thought that I would have learned my lesson after the first two weeks, but I did not learn completely. Well, I immediately went back to giving her more fiber the second the diarrhea first appeared though. I think I may have forgotten just a couple of times.

Sister Fagan

She was one of the few people who visited us during this time. In November, 2002, she had brought a nice sized painting of a seashore. Then in December she also brought a lamp in the form of a poinsettia. She is a very nice person whose visits these two times really helped me.



Questions

By the first of December, I was certain that she could not last much longer. So, I sent out an email to the family requesting how much lead time they would need between her death and the funeral. I got some replies but not as many as I would have expected.

I did not want to leave all decisions until after her death. In fact, I may have visited the funeral home again to update the information, but I can not be sure. I do remember talking to my insurance agent about her life insurance policy. He promised to have everything ready so that only the last minute details had to be added when she died.

The lift

This may be the wrong word for what we had. She had gotten weak enough that she could no longer get out of bed and onto the potty chair without a lot of help. It was more than what the attendants were suppose to do. So, I got something that I could use to lift her off the bed and onto the potty chair. The only problem was that it was designed for much heavier, larger people than Susan. So, in time I had to take it back. While I was at home, I would get her to the potty. But the attendants would tell her to just do what she had to do on the bed. Such was the case for the last few weeks.

Obviously, I did not like the idea of doing this at all. Now I wonder why they did not have a catheter place in her, or why someone did not suggest this. Then again, most of the times that I was out of the house was to buy groceries (haircut was only once a month). The aides could have been sent to the grocery store with a list of things to get. But then I did not think about this at all. Besides, I really liked getting out of the house a little. I also preferred to pick out my own fresh fruit and vegetables.

Last two weeks

During the weeks of Christmas and New Years, home health likes to give their workers some time off to be with their families. So instead of getting three visits each of these weeks, we only got 1. One week we got the bather and the other week we got the aide who bathed Susan while she was there. Kevin was also home during much of this time as well, so I had both to take care of.

Beginning of respiratory distress

Susan's chest muscles had become so weak that they could no longer help with her breathing. Her diaphragm had to do it all, and it was getting weaker as well. So, her breathing was becoming more labored as well as quicker.

This continued to get worse as the last two weeks progressed.

There was really little that I could do to help her. I could have taken her to the hospital. Then they would only have put her on a breathing machine like Kevin had been. There she would have remained until her heart got so weak that it could no longer beat. Physically she would be alive, but that would have been it (a vegetable). This is something that I really did not want to subject her to.

Last Day, Monday January 6

The holiday period was over. We would be getting back to three visits from home health this week beginning the next day. Even so I was more concerned about Susan. She was weaker and less responsive.

In January, she was to be seen by a home health nurse on a special visit. I called the office the morning of January 6 to get them to send a nurse out that day. They informed me that they had scheduled this for the end of the month. But I insisted that it be that day because she likely would not live that long. One came that afternoon. She confirmed that Susan was in respiratory distress. I think she wanted me to send her to the hospital, but as mentioned above, doing this would not solve anything but only postpone her death in conditions she did not need to suffer from.

It was the week of New Year's day that I wrote my monthly email to the family. The last paragraph tells it all as far as my attitude was concerned. "So this could be the last monthly report that I make on her." In reality, I wrote some more, but they were about how Kevin and I were doing...

She fussed once: I don't want this!

During her evening feeding of the day, she complained that she did not want this feeding. Being stubborn, I finished the feeding anyway. What was her complaint? The Ensure

had been in the refrigerator, so the "coolness" might have bothered her. Her fussing was something unusual for her because this was the first time in a while that she was clearly making her wishes known.

Fed her and laid down

About 10 PM I gave her her fourth feeding for the day. Then I lay down beside her to rest and perhaps sleep. About 10:27 I suddenly woke up and did not hear anything. I checked her pulse, and there was one in her left wrist. Then I got up, looked at the clock, and went around to the other side of the bed. I checked her pulse again (right wrist), and this time there was none. She had peacefully left this world. I had the machine used to check her pacemaker, so I put it on her to make sure that it was still working: it was. Her heart had just stopped

Calling the right people and arrivals of many

I really did not know who to contact, so I called the emergency room at the hospital. They told me to call 911, so I did. All of the police cars on duty that night came to the house with all their lights on which I thought was a little ridiculous. An ambulance then arrived, and later a life-support ambulance arrived. I had a house full of people.

One of the policemen gave me the opportunity to have her resuscitated, and I refused. This was more than 20 minutes after I had determined that her heart had stopped. Between this length of time and the pacemaker still working, resuscitation would have been completely useless.

So, the coroner was called. After he arrived and asked some questions, they took her body to the funeral home. I was given instructions as to what to bring to the funeral home in the morning. After everyone left, I was able to get to bed and get some sleep.

Fortunately for me, Kevin did not wake up during all of this commotion. Thank you LORD!

Susan and I did have some problems that I have chosen not to include. At least one was rather serious considering that I told her over the phone for her not to come back home. I did not really want to see her after she deliberately lied to me about what she was going to do. However, in a few days, she had called me pleading to come home: I let her. Nothing like this ever happened again.

As far as the other problems, we either worked through them or permitted them to happen. So I feel no need to offer specifics about them. I had enough beams in my own eyes.