

WALK WITH ME



By
HARRY BRILEY

Chapter 12 – Songs of Our Faith

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Chapter 12 - Songs of Our Faith

Closing Years for Anne 2006-2010

Health Decline Summary

Anne began her five-year decline in 2006 with serious health issues. In 8/2006, doctors diagnosed stage 3 cancer of the right breast, requiring a biopsy and partial mastectomy.

She went through seven courses of chemotherapy, collapsing in the parking lot prior to her eighth (and immediately cancelled) session. She drove herself to the full regimen of forty weekly focused radiation treatments to Castro Valley over the East Bay hills.

Even though these treatments beat back the cancer, she succumbed to pernicious anemia, numerous falls, and finally kidney failure in 2010. Her closing story appears in *Anne's Decline* chapter. This chapter tells what else happened during those five years.

Cat Retrospective

Cats seemed to be furry rodents without much payback for the required household cleaning. Anne loved cats since childhood. She won but I still had to clean out the litter pan because of her compromised health in later years.

Anne wrote in her life summary (2008):

When I was in college, I developed an allergy to cats, but since I was away from home, it did not stop my parents from owning a cat. At age 21, I started a course of allergy shots for dust, dander, and pollens but excluded cat dander.

[About 1984,] a feral cat had three kittens below our rosebush. I took the litter, boxed up with a heating pad, and bottle-fed them with replacement dry kitten milk. Two did not make it but the ugliest kitten lived 13 years as a sleek black cat. He and Harry had a mutual non-admiration pact. They did not like each other.

After he died, Harry allowed Pooky to enter our lives. I purposefully wanted to adopt an older cat, so I could evaluate the cat's demeanor. Pooky embraced me at the shelter with that "get me out of here!" urgency. It was love at first sight, but they could not schedule him for adoption until a teeth cleaning. I would visit and always asked, "Is it time yet?" Finally, they said that if I paid the adoption fee, they would hold onto him and call me once releasable. I paid! I paid! The staff called a few days later. They let me take him home early if I promised a vet visit when he was releasable. That occurred 11 years ago.

Pooky was a lover. However, he would not sit on my lap unless he made that decision. He loved brushing, even on his back fully exposing his tummy.

Lawrence Livermore National Lab

Privatization

I enjoyed projects building one-of-a-kind classified database applications. Although I was a group leader, the funding and staff reduction in 2006 had me doing more hands-on work. My role declined to that of supervisor of an ever-shrinking team.

I worried about the change from a public trust to private company. The old model of “lifetime loyalty begets lifetime loyalty from the company” became invalid when we got new owners. Their saying “*There are no guarantees*” unsettled me about prior retirement promises. I did not have another 30 years. The contract winner was decided spring 2007.



Figure 1 – UC/LLNL Service Awards – 10, 15, 20 25, 30, 35 years

During the year to privatize, my internal clients limited their budget, making early 2008 shaky. LLNL expected 500 lost jobs by January and 300 more by March. We were in a state of anxiety for months. We indeed had **two** layoffs in 2008 (after none since 1974).

LLNL newly had to pay taxes yielding a 30% budget cut. Over 2000 people retired, volunteered to leave, or were severed (whom we escorted off site with one hour’s notice). LLNL notified all employees for possible termination but informed no one in particular. It paralyzed the staff as we examined our offices for belongings to take home just in case.

Each severed employee received payment in lieu of two-week’ notice with their banked vacation time but the process humiliated them. We dreaded escorting our staff out the gate as if they had become an insider threat. No one held crucial debriefings and hand-off of work typically done during an employee’s final two weeks. No one was immune. LLNL even terminated the clerical staff processing exit tasks. This separation process embittered the remaining staff. In 2015, courts ordered payment to former employees.

National Enterprise Secure Network – 2008-2010

Paying clients became hard to find. A joint DOE/NNSA facilities team had me edit dozens of operational and installation documents for the national classified Enterprise Secure Network (ESN). My role did not call for as much travel as the key team players. Yet, it still led to four trips to the Las Vegas cyber-security center, twice to Sandia National Lab in Albuquerque, and once to the Kansas City Plant in Missouri. My role kept me in contact weekly with the project administrator in Washington DC.

Since they intended this documentation for use across the county (and with Atomic Weapons Establishment in England), some trips required me to train the network operators against the operational documents.

They never used me in the facilitator role that enabled me to join the team. Instead, the senior managers leveraged the perception of my not being a threat to those who fiercely competed for shrinking funds and project control. The original federated concept among the many contentious DOE facilities soon became a unified grass-roots skunkworks to deliver a working network. The rapid turnover of technical writers in Washington DC, as the original means to insure document uniformity, caused the various authors across the country to rely upon me for bringing their manuscripts into a cohesive whole.

They appreciated that I had the computer background to understand their intent, even if I was no longer a hotshot programmer. Plenty of prima donnas chaffed mightily at the non-technical staff editing their documents, but they innately trusted me with their texts.

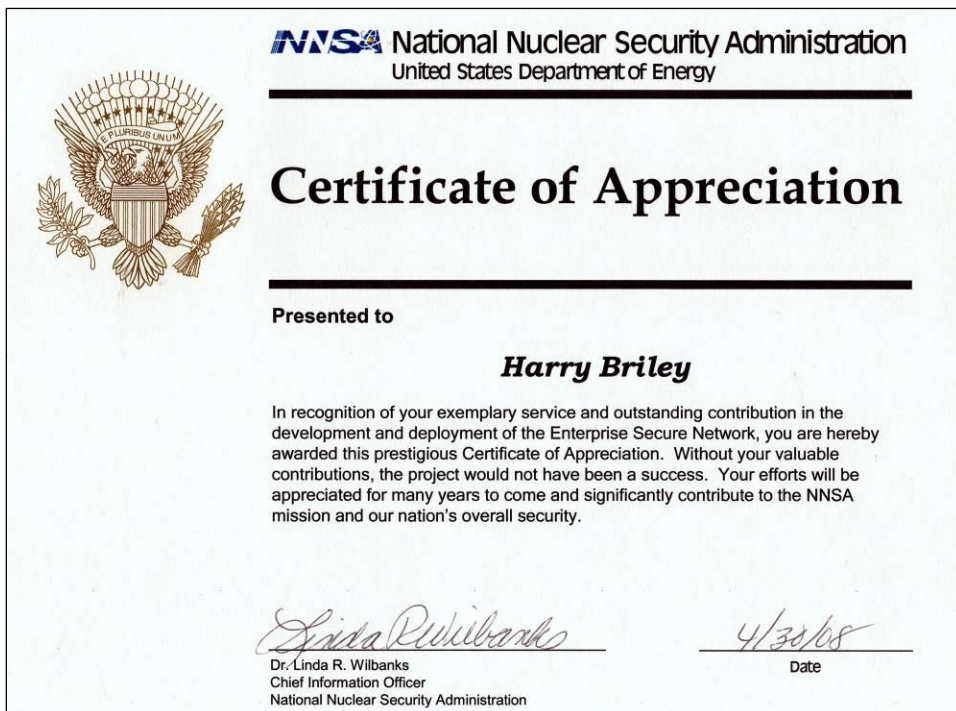


Figure 2- NNSA Deployment Ceremony - 4/30/2008

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Economics affected work funds by 2009 and frankly, nuclear activities were no longer “news”. Retirements and normal attrition took their toll of the corporate memory. It made my editing of their technical documents more significant. Written matter became the only memory left as team members across the complex retired. Two project team members (one local and one from Oak Ridge) thus nominated me in 2009 for a cash award through my home department management.

ESN kept me busy through their eighth formal revision of the network environment. A certificate of appreciation celebrated the July 2012 successful upgrade. That marked the end of my role as the slashed project budget put the vital upgrade at risk that year.

Legacy Skills

LLNL halved the work force from 12,500 employees in 1979 to a bit over 6,500 by 2010.

Trailers and mobile offices, brand new for the huge influx of staff when I joined in 1976, had to be demolished as hazardous dilapidated quarters. After 35 years at LLNL, perhaps I had joined that same dilapidated category. Certainly, my programming skills became archaic. I oversaw the shutdown of the last of my legacy Oracle code only in 2010.

As with all careers, my role transformed. I focused upon systems design requirements, facilitation, process improvement, and project execution. My most valuable role was an advocate for our clients. I acted as a go-between for them with my software team.



Figure 3 – Final DOE/LLNL Badge - Church Portrait (8/2010)

Bicycle

With Anne's medical retinue, my health went lax and I put on weight. LLNL offered a 30-year award in 2009 to those past due. I had no need for jewelry or another clock. A gifted bicycle might do if I cycled to work. That first commute in 2009 of six miles left me exhausted. I walked several times during those early rides. As a "desk potato", my muscle tone was terrible. A higher seat and higher handlebars helped significantly.

I bicycled two or three times a week during 2010 as a wonderful change of habits. Exercise was a dirty word. Cycling as a commute made the idea palatable. My six-mile route took 35 minutes to get to work slightly upslope and 25 minutes flying home.

My pants fit when I biked (and did not when I stopped). When I told my doctor, he remarked in mock shock that he had never heard that, and needed to write it down!

Bible Study Groups at LLNL

My major goal with the BSG for 2006 was succession planning. We badly needed leader development. I introduced a Board concept a few years prior and removed myself from event planning. Quarterly board meetings yielded a structure that matched professional societies. I turned over the keys at the end of 2006, while they elected chairs for 2007, 2008, and 2009. Specifically, Anne's failing health gave me little time to lead suitably.

I attended an unusual BSG discussion group in 2007 covering the Public Television 'Question of God' videos comparing Sigmund Freud with C.S. Lewis. Freud, with a Jewish upbringing, became a hardened atheist toughing out his pitiful death. Lewis was an atheist who reluctantly became a believer after years of intellectual war against what he considered an inadequate philosophy. The series juxtaposed their beliefs at their desks and homes. The BSG re-presented this 10-week series four times in succeeding years.

When I retired in 2013, the BSG celebrated forty-six years of employee-initiated groups focused on studying books of the Bible, contemporaneous prayer, and faith topics.

Early Retirement versus Care Costs

When Anne declined in health, I considered early retirement during the 2008 layoffs. The severance package inducement attracted me since such inducements rarely occurred and I had no confidence that a similar tempting offer would recur in the near future.

Pastor/friend Roger Lewis strongly suggested that I needed the daily structure of the work world, especially during Anne's ill health. I counted the cost for long-term skilled nursing care. Retirement was not really feasibility, especially since my investment retirement funds had tanked with the economic depression in those years.

When Anne died in late 2010, Roger wisely told me to make as few changes as possible during the first year. I liked my daily work, and I now understand how my mother decided to work long after my father died. Work kept her young. Therefore, I likewise stayed young and bicycle-fit with continued work until retirement at almost 60 in 2013.

Travels

While our various trips were family matters, they improved my photographer eye. I listed these trips in the memoir as a way to color the other activities during this five-year segment of ill health. We used available travel opportunities to stay outward focused.

32nd Anniversary

We took anniversary wheelchairs trips in May 2007 to Half Moon Bay (ocean views on the bike path), Lodi (Micke Grove Zoo, Japanese garden, and history museum) and Old Town Sacramento (various museums). Anne was in good spirits. Her hair had grown back a quarter-inch after her chemotherapy ended. Her head felt like a bristle brush.



Figure 4- Japanese Garden, Micke's Grove, Lodi – 5/2007

I pushed the wheelchair everywhere a ramp enabled us. We unknowingly arrived ten minutes before the annual Jazz Festival parade in Old Town. It was a pleasant treat to crash their party all day long with museums and many free street concerts!



Figure 5 - Half-Moon Bay - Old Town Sacramento - 5/2007

By our anniversary only a year later in 2008, Anne was not faring well. Even so, it was a pleasant spring day in May and she seemed amenable for a repeat trip to Micke Grove.

We started out with an intended lunch at a picnic table at the Japanese gardens there but she tumbled out of the wheelchair trying to negotiate a curb into the park. I was horrified but it became clear she was in deeper trouble. With much effort, I lifted her back into her wheelchair. We safely and immediately returned home to let her recover.

Sequoia National Forest

We had an overnighiter in 9/2007 and our first time in the Sequoias. I pushed the wheelchair but, even when paved, the steep terrain wore me out. We could not imagine the immensity of the redwoods before walking among them. It surprised us how the far-away northern Sacramento forest fires polluted the southern Fresno basin.



Figure 6 - Big Trees Meadow, bark a foot thick – 9/2007



Figure 7 - Sequoia National Forest, Fresno - 9/2007

Kansas City / Independence

A full ESN team meeting in 9/2008 occurred at the DOE Kansas City Plant in Missouri. With added vacation days, during a heavy rain, I visited the Federal Reserve and the nearby underground National World War I Museum (the only national museum for World War I). Initially second-choices, both museums are on my visit-again list.

Swope Park to the southeast was a huge wooded reserve. It seemed similar to San Francisco Golden Gate Park. I caught this lovely bridge at the east exit at sunset.

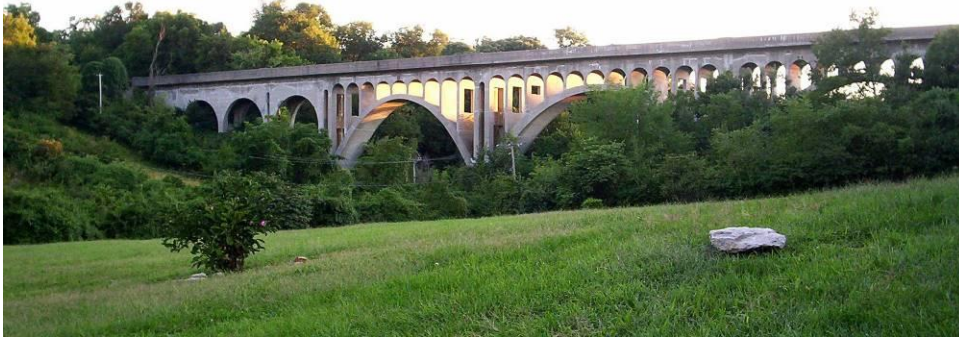


Figure 8 - Swope Park Bridge, Kansas City - 9/2008

Independence, Missouri hosts the National Trails Museum (The Santa Fe, Oregon, Utah, and California trails each started there). A refurbished Chicago and Alton 1879 Railroad Depot sat on the grounds. Due to a light drizzle and the only visitor, I had a private detailed tour of the Depot part of the museum.



Figure 9 – National Trails Museum Grounds - 9/2008

I visited several other museums in the historic district, the Truman Courthouse Memorial, and the excellent Harry Truman Presidential Library. He was president when I was born. The library museum superbly portrayed my parent's generation values and worries.

Alviso Adobe Opening Day

On 10/25/2008, the grand opening of a new Alviso Adobe Historical Park in Pleasanton included the grandkids who visited that day. I danced with a woman folkloric guitarist for three Mexican era dances without incriminating photos of my lack of skill.

The Park renovated the milking barn used by the old Meadowlark Dairy since the western part of our valley was a significant cattle grazing and dairy farm area.



Figure 10 – Grand Opening, Meadowlark Dairy, Alviso Adobe - 10/2008

We visited Karen and her then steady boyfriend for a happy Christmas 2008. They moved into their first house in Elk Grove (90 minutes away instead of 3 hours). Anne shocked us all by climbing the stairway to their second story one careful step at a time. Previously, the three steps into our Livermore front door were difficult for her.



Figure 11- Christmas in Elk Grove – 12/2008
L-R: Alexis, Anne, Harry, Karen

34th Anniversary

While Anne loved at a board and care home in Livermore through 8/2009, I took her on her final day-trip and our last non-bedbound wedding anniversary.

We rode the short Niles Canyon Railway steam train round-trip from Sunol to Niles in May 2009. A wheelchair hoist lifted her into the open viewing rail car. Parking the wheelchair there, I settled her into the rearmost seat of the nearby passenger railcar.



Figure 12 - Niles Canyon Railway, Sunol - 5/2009

The following day, we saw the newly opened Academy of Sciences museum, the ocean beach, and one of the two working windmills in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

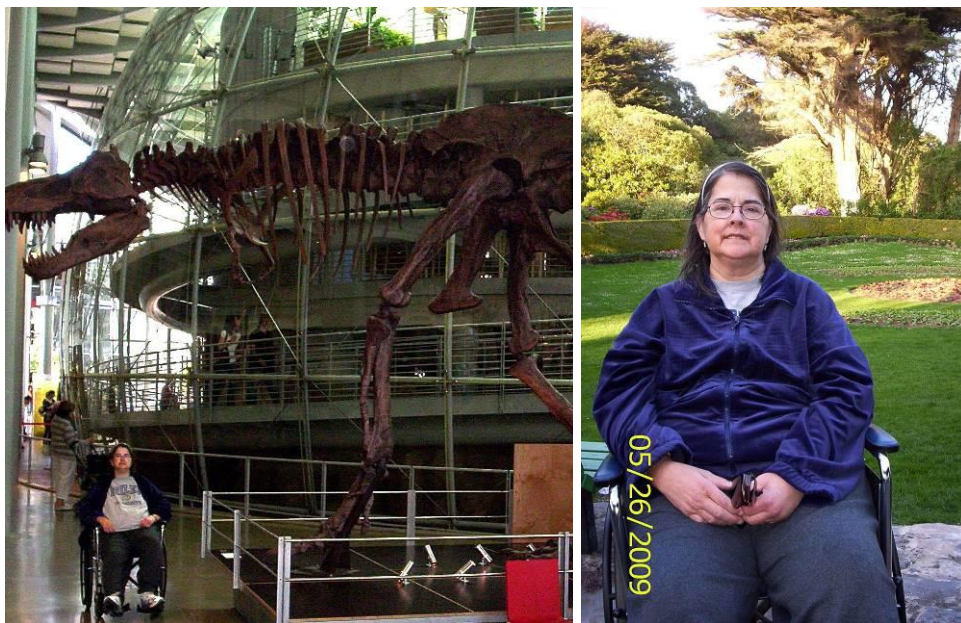


Figure 13 - Golden Gate Park, San Francisco - 5/2009

San Diego

I attended a weeklong ESN class for the SUN Operating Systems in San Diego in 1/2010 and padded the trip with some badly needed weekend time between rainstorms. It rained all week during my class, but only overcast all weekend at Point Loma Historical Lighthouse at Cabrillo National Park and sunny elsewhere.



Figure 14 – Point Loma Lighthouse – Maritime Museum, San Diego - 1/2010

At the Maritime Museum, they outfitted a working replica of the HMS Rose as the HMS Surprise for the awesome 2003 "Master and Commander" movie. The replica canons used for the movie were plastic sewer pipes covered with molded fiberglass. While replicas, the working brass canons sat on the dock and soon replaced the movie props.

Two submarines at the museum included a Soviet-era Foxtrot attack submarine, crudely welded together construction, but functional and deadly ... and, the USS Dolphin research submarine. It was older than the Soviet sub but quality crafted and roomier.

The well-done Birch Aquarium at Scripps Institute for Oceanography in La Jolla sat high up the sea cliff. It was not a large facility and focused upon seahorses



Figure 15 - Cuttlefish, Birch Aquarium, La Jolla - 1/2010

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An oddly placed rock caught my attention in the Point Loma tide area at Cabrillo National Park. At low tide, we could walk along this sandstone ledge but the area was unsafe during storms and high tide. I doubt the rock would remain after the next storm.



Figure 16 – Point Loma Tide, Cabrillo National Park - 1/2010

The USS Midway (Carrier), while similar to the USS Hornet in Oakland, was enough different to warrant multiple visits. The USS Midway removed the chapel stained glass windows when decommissioned. When the Navy decommissioned the recipient second ship, they returned the windows. This small room was the sole chapel for this floating town of 4200 people and for all ships in the carrier formation.



Figure 17 - Chapel, USS Midway, San Diego - 1/2010

At the Marine Leathernecks Museum at Miramar Marine Base, a docent in a red jacket gave me a private two-hour tour. He vibrantly made the place come alive with details not found in brochures. Otherwise, it would have been a boring static display. There was an F-18 “dressed up” (painted) as Soviet MIG to play for the “Red Team” in war games.



Figure 18- Storied Docent, Leatherneck Museum, Miramar - 1/2010

I visited Mission San Diego Acala just before closing time and stayed for Sunday evening Mass led by 7th graders. People were in every seat. Most people raised their hands as part of liturgical prayers. I observed smiles, hugs, and a great expository sermon by the priest. This tourist attraction among the California Missions hosts a living community. I could tell by the light in their eyes that God was real here. It was a delight to participate.



Figure 19 - Mission San Diego Acala - 1/2010

Transition Time

In 11/2010, at the mortuary viewing for Anne's body, a group of my co-workers humorously threatened to escort me off-site if I showed up to work. They urged me to take two more vacation days. So after another day of estate paperwork, I drove north to the Mare Island Shipyard Museum, the Benicia former State Capitol building, and the Benicia Armory where my father-in-law, Jack Rittenhouse, was briefly stationed in 1942 (See his *California State Guard* memoir chapter).

Robert Kirby from my New Mexico Tech days drove through Livermore before Thanksgiving and acted that evening as a sounding board for me about Anne's death.



Figure 20 - Benicia Armory - 11/2010

During Thanksgiving week, I took the grandkids to the elegant Sacramento State Capitol building (and museum). We next visited the newly renovated Crocker Art Museum with some 'R' rated art exhibits. Karen was not amused to hear of it. The grandkids took admirable evasive actions. I complimented them and gently compared the holiness of our bodies versus what the so-called art displayed. Gears turned.

The main ceramic western scene was our favorite piece. It looked like a bronze from a distance. Red light bulbs the horse and cow eyes. We found many desert critters molded into the ceramic base.



Figure 21 –Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento - 11/2010

Trinity Baptist Church

Unusual Activities

I participated in visiting homes of visitors on Tuesday evenings. Many homes graciously received us but some chaffed at our follow-up efforts since we arrived unannounced. We hoped to explain the good news about Jesus to recent visitors but many visits focused upon pastoral care of elderly members. The long-lived effort had mixed results.

On rare Sundays, we assembled a small symphonic orchestra to play a special piece in place of the choir and sometimes one hymn with the congregation. Players came from several churches. Even with the platform acting as a sounding board for my String Bass, the director asked me to play full volume to balance out the brass.



Figure 22 - Trinity Baptist Church, Livermore (B. Dane 2010)

Equipping the Saints Class

I co-taught with Barry Jacoby a non-standard Sunday morning class on church history and apologetics. We called it “Equipping the Saints” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

In 2006, we covered the Reformation using GreatCourses.com audiotapes from a secular college. Our class ages ranged from 14 to 76. I moderated the lively discussions in which anyone could yell ‘pause!’ when the material got boot-deep in terms, presumptions, or questions. The phrase “*Pause*” meant we hit the pause button on the cassette player. There were obvious dry spots in an academic course, but it often exposed our modern fuzzy-theology, which got the class discussion roiling.

Trinity wanted adult members active in some other ministry. Among my class, four led in the multi-church AWANA program, four led in the multi-church Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) series, two led a mid-week prayer time, three took part in visiting teams, one left to teach the fourth grade, and three provided care/support pastoral efforts.

The six studious teens in class could have attended an age-level class, but they returned here. Four were AWANA leaders-in-training. One was in my AWANA class. One was on a visiting team. Two were home schooled. Two were public school juniors taking calculus. Four played strings or winds. The youngest played in the college orchestra and

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had me play String Bass for our class quartet. Five were in the rigorous BSF series for years. Each was gracious and kind. We treated them as the adults they were becoming.

In 2007, this fun class kept me on my toes moderating discussions on a new topic about the art of theological analysis in a post-modern age.

The class in 2009 covered links between the Old and New Testaments. I led introduction sessions about why even undertake that ambitious scope. During that summer, I covered the many references to the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

In 2010, our class continued our methodical comparisons of the Old and New Testaments from a theological perspective. This allowed class members who had skills in certain theological areas to present the material. I had a selfish motive in sharing the leadership. It gained me more time to focus on Anne during her last year of life.

In 8/2010, Pastor Jim Meek invited me to present one session on “Evolution and Creation” for his Hot Topic evening service. I forgot not to treat it like my interactive class. What timed as an hour talk, it became material for a fun two-hour romp. I could only present half of it. See the entire paper in my “Letters and Papers” book, and on my personal web site if still available.



Figure 23 - In Hawaiian shirt with Anne at Aloha Party - 9/2006

Loved On by Adult Classes

A new care-giving effort started in 2006 for classes large enough to handle their own deacon-type pastoral care. For nine months, Anne’s Sunday class (called “The Encouragers”) and my own class jointly helped with meals during her hospital stays and the evenings after each chemotherapy session. They visited Anne at critical stages.

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Anne and I tended to defer help. Therefore, they took a bull-by-the-horns approach saying, “*I am coming by on Monday. What foods make you allergic?*” not the escapable clause of “*Do you need a meal?*” The meals and visits helped more than I expected.

In 2008, Anne joined a women’s study covering biblical answers to impatience. Her Sunday class and mine continued with visits, prayers, and meals during the tough times.

AWANA Teens

After two years using the four-year cycle of AWANA materials for teens (www.awana.org/about), I found my niche in 2006 leading a semester in the *Nature of Christ*, and a semester in *Systematic Theology* (much abbreviated). That fall, a skilled college-age teen (home-schooled and in a debating society), and her father (Roger Philpott formerly with AWANA in Pleasanton) joined me as leaders. Each would lead on alternate Sundays.

In 2007, Roger and I jointly taught *Revelations* and *Romans*. In 2008, we jointly taught *Faith on Trial* and the books *Galatians/Ephesians*. In 2009, we led studies on *Biblical Worldview* and *First Corinthians*. This completed the four-year cycle of eight separate workbooks.



This age group had competing distractions but the age when faith becomes their own. Two seniors completed the 10-year materials to earn their Citations (highest award) in 2010. Students we first knew as ninth graders had suddenly grown into young adults!

AWANA asked students to read the Bible in four years. I took the challenge seriously myself. I normally went in-depth on a topic, but a full book reading forced a big-picture view. For me, some nights, several chapters. Some nights, I read no chapters. Mindless mechanical reading felt useless. I sometimes read aloud and talked with the Lord about what I read while reading. This worthwhile behavior properly slowed my reading.

In fall 2010, I started the four-year cycle over again. I thus read books of the Bible that I last read four years prior. This 25% pace for reading fit my scholar mindset. The one-year reading programs felt rushed, mostly just scanning text, without think time. At the slower rate, I found great pleasure reading the NIV footnotes and sidebar rabbit trails.

As these students graduated high school, they invited and I attended their graduation dinners and receptions. I did not fit in with the older members of the congregation when my best friends were all under the age of 18. A couple of moms routinely urged me to use caution in the teen energetic games since I was not a flexible teenager anymore!

Other Faith Ventures

Bri't Ahavah

Anne and I continued our 'erev Shabbat' (Friday eve) meal at home to set a pattern for needed down time. I continued to attend high Holy days with our small local Messianic group called Bri't Ahavah (Covenant of Love) started by Rabbi Kevin Lind.

On 10/13/2007, we held an outdoor International Food Fair and followed it up with a Jewish dance demonstration for the local association of county-area Baptist pastors. This was Kevin's last year before taking a job at Princeton University in New Jersey.

For 7/2008, on the 15th anniversary of the congregation, I produced an hour-long video of their past events (Pesach, Mikvah, Purim, and Hanukkah). For this event, Rabbi Kevin and his wife Yanel returned from the East coast as their last visit to our region.

By 9/2010, the congregation moved into the home of the acting Rabbi, elderly Dr. Arnold DaVigo. I attended there for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.



Figure 24 – Scripture on Yom Kippur – 9/2010

During Sukkot (Feast of Booths in the book of Leviticus) in October, there was a weekly held Kaddish prayer to honor those who had died recently. That was the first time that I remembered the purpose of that routine prayer. Arnold called me the week before Anne's death with a sense of deep urgency to visit her in person. I drove him up to the Walnut Creek nursing home after the next normal Shabbat service. Anne died Wednesday, 11/3/2010. Therefore, at the next ordinary Shabbat service, I was the one participating in that memorial prayer of praise to God.

I attended the service nearest the anniversary of her passing. I lit an all-day Yahrzeit (Yart-Zite) candle in her memory. Making yearly time for this action helped me focus that Anne's passing was a God-thing, not an accidental or sudden death, nor a malicious unfair death. The Lord gently brought her home in her sleep after years of illness.

Messianic

Israeli pastor Max Garkavenko and his wife Tanya visited Livermore twice (2008 and 2009) to supporters at Cornerstone Fellowship Church. While former Ukrainian Jews, they are part of CRU (formerly called Campus Crusade for Christ) and immigrated to southern Israel near the Gaza strip. They watched hundreds of Hamas rockets pelt their town and fields. His Facebook posts gave us first-person accounts of daily rocket attacks, his daughter's two years in the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), and shared posts from his Ukrainian friends reeling from the later Russian invasion of their former country.

I attended a 3/2008 talk at our local black Baptist church (St. Matthew's) where the speaker was Susan Perlman, co-founder of Jews for Jesus. I do not recall her topic but it was an interesting racial juxtaposition. I had since discovered that the Messianic community attracts a percentage of the black community of believers, which I suspect share a kindred role of being on the fringes of secular society.

I twice explained our Messianic Jewish roots in the Christian faith. In 8/2008, I brought and explained my tallit (prayer shawl) and kippot (circular head covering) to my study group in the BSG at LLNL. One August later, Howard Neely (the community Easter sunrise service coordinator for years) invited me to his Presbyterian men's group to introduce Jewish holy days and field many questions. I recommended follow-up with the local Reform Rabbi (who declined as over-scheduled with the fall high holy days).

Pastor/Chaplain Breakfasts

I enjoyed monthly breakfasts with a small group of area evangelical pastors and chaplains. I attended as a volunteer contact for Trinity Church and as secretary for the Bible Study Groups at LLNL. I felt a kinship with those who could present Jesus in such a way that addressed concerns of rational people. Retired pastor Roger Lewis, who mentored me since 1979, organized these gatherings. Since Roger's wife Amy had Parkinson disease, he had special empathy for Anne's medical situations.

Episcopal Ordination

Pastor David Pina, as a newly minted United Methodist pastor, married Anne and me in 1975 in Socorro. He became an Air Force chaplain in 1987 and retired after 20 years.

He and his second wife temporarily lived in Pleasanton while he re-tooled for Episcopal orders at the seminaries in Berkeley. He routinely drove the freeway past my house. During 2007, he discovered the spelling of his grandfather as Pina; instead of the Pena we had known him for over thirty years. He formally changed his last name.

On 8/24/2008, he was ordained at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Tracy. I attended his ordination as a deacon (his third career). He visited my Anne in the hospital the next day as his first pastoral act as an Episcopalian minister. It was poignant for us for him to start our marriage and provide a pastoral visit near its close. Anne linked it to her memories of Father Fish in Albuquerque at St. Mark's on the Mesa Episcopal Church.

Walk With Me – Songs of Our Faith

I relished seeing his 1000-watt smile after a 32-year absence. In the photo below, he wore a red sash as the candidate. Within a year, he returned to Oak Ridge, Tennessee for a role with the US Army for suicide prevention.



Figure 25 - David Pina (red sash) 8/2008 – Dr. James Meek 4/2009

Potpourri

My amateur video of the 2009 community Easter sunrise service aired uncut on the local cable channel during the week. The team took the tape unedited as soon as the event ended. Our pastor wore his Roman centurion uniform. I learned to edit quickly the next two annual services for the required 28-minute broadcast length.

In 2009, aside from Bible texts through AWANA, I nearly stopped reading paper and ink, and focused upon audio books to shorten the long commutes to see Anne in her Walnut Creek nursing home. Our nearly oral and busy society hardly reads books. I covered the span of human history using Teaching Company audio series (GreatCourses.com).

I attended a fun one-day “Walk Thru the Old Testament” event at Valley Community Church in Pleasanton in 2010. The goal was for each person to recite a narration of the entire Hebrew Bible as a historical timeline in ten minutes with hand sign memory aids. I enjoyed the earlier “Walk Thru the New Testament” at Trinity Baptist back when we still attended Asbury UMC. One of our long-term leaders with the Bible Study Groups at LLNL, Ted Saito, helped organize and host the event for his congregation.

Car Miracles

Two unusual events with our car had the Lords' fingerprints. These were over-the-top acts of grace, delivered by busy people as if routine to drop everything to render aid.

In spring 2009, when leaving from a visit to Anne's board and care (B/C) home, the car refused to start, with oil wisps, maybe a cracked header. I called a Bible Study Group friend for a ride who was JUST leaving work (coincidence 1), who offered to drive to Tracy, hitch his flatbed (he had one?!), and drive back to take the car to a shop ... an extra round trip in commute traffic. Upon protest, he insisted as a glad honor, and patched in a co-worker from our study group to help, who himself had JUST arrived home (coincidence 2). We discovered his garage sat behind the B/C backyard (coincidence 3). He offered to bench test the starter and needed my recently received door prize that contained a towrope (coincidence 4). At his home, loaded with mechanic equipment (coincidence 5), he had the starter out in minutes. He rolled from under the car JUST as his wife arrived home (coincidence 6), a mechanic with LLNL's fleet (coincidence 7). Unaware of the problem, she took the greasy starter with the flair of a gourmet smelling a fine wine, sniffed the length of it, gave a thoughtful pause, and pronounced it dead. No test equipment needed when a nose would suffice! All was resolved at the store, which had only one such starter in stock (coincidence 8).

In that November, the setting winter sun blinded me while turning left at an intersection, a total glare-out. I hit the median strip, shredded the front tire, dented the rim, shoved the front panel into the driver's door, hobbled to a stop in the fast lane, set out the emergency triangle (from the same door prize above, coincidence 1), and quickly changed the tire. A father with one of my AWANA teens drove the opposite direction. He recognized me from behind through median bushes hunched over the jack (coincidence 2), made a U-turn and protected me from traffic. That attracted the police who offered to block all three lanes to get us off the road. The engine would not catch. Did I break the front-wheel drive? Police called for a tow to my favorite shop only two blocks away (coincidence 3). The owner was JUST closing (coincidence 4) and stayed until the tow arrived (how many businesses do that?). Hand off of keys, it was a goner. The father invited me to dinner, whose family had wanted to do so for some time (coincidence 5).

Upon repair, this same father drove from another city to LLNL and helped me ferry the car and my bicycle back across town to home. A well-placed block of wood pried the front panel back into place. The engine failed due to a purposeful kill switch for impacts. No body shop, no damaged engine. Only a nonstandard width rim was a concern. The shop found a used rim that next morning (coincidence 6). Allstate waived their original request of an appraisal (coincidence 7) and covered it sight unseen with a shop not on their list (coincidence 8). Any step along the way had potential danger or repair delays.

The servant-hearts and going-beyond actions of these benefactors deeply impressed me.

House and Home

Changes

In 1/2006, an extremely firm new King-size mattress replaced our Queen-size bed. We found an elevated King-size platform with large drawers. I built headboard extensions to our cabinet piers to accommodate the wider platform.

Our utility company activated our brand new solar roof panels in 1/2006, yielding an electric bill of \$6 per month in access fees. We calculated a full payback in 20 years, or less with electric rates rising. Anne got a new sod front lawn that fall as a promised condolence for my splurging on the solar panels in 2005. The lawn installer built a brick circle flush with the lawn around our mature front-yard tree.

Bathrooms Remodel

After 28 years and many hospitalizations, we decided to update our bathrooms in 2008, instead of “waiting for a rainy day”. Since Home Depot completely satisfied us with our kitchen remodel computer-design and cabinetry style, we used them again to model various custom bathroom options for my height that fall. We used the identical cabinet line as our kitchen and chose solid-formed sink units. After installation, we happily discovered the translucent sink units fully transmitted light into the cabinet interiors.



Figure 26 - Remodeled Master Bath - 11/2008

Our general contractor with his plumbing and tile teams tore out our 1959-era bathrooms in November. The 50-year old galvanized pipes had almost rusted closed. One fragile bathtub drainpipe crumbled apart, waiting to dump water under the house. Roots backed up the sewer line during re-construction. We made the master bathroom ADA compliant with heavy-gauge grab bars, replacing the master tub with a low-profile shower pan and shower chair for Anne. I use the grab bars myself as an important safety feature.

Wheelchair Ramp and Windows

Since Anne’s needed access without getting out of the wheelchair, I designed a wrap-around ramp in early 2009. My design adapted a style found in 6/2008 on a local home. I added two six-foot square landings that could accommodate a wheeled ambulance stretcher. Their stretcher previously could not angle into our front door.

We were so happy with our bathroom general contractor; we had him replace all single-pane windows and the recalcitrant sewer line in January. The same contractor then built my ADA-compliant expensive redwood ramp during April. Since the ramp stood alone and not anchored to the house proper, it did not trigger a property tax re-valuation.



Figure 27 – New Windows and Wheelchair Ramp - 4/2009

Lifestyle

3.8 mini-quake and snow in 2009

A single jolt in 10/2009 made the whole house flex. It rained heavily all day as the first heavy rain after summer. This small 3.8 earthquake epicenter was at a depth of 5 miles about six miles away from our house. October seemed to be earthquake month.

We had snow down to the valley in 12/2009 at a dry 25 degrees. It had not snowed this low for 30 years! Though nothing lasted, a few inches stayed on the east end of the city.

Livermore Heritage Guild

The Livermore Heritage Guild hosted a series of talks. These attracted me enough to join even though I had no practical help to offer while I still worked at LLNL. Upon retirement and after Anne died, the time balance shifted in a few years. Titles included:

- WWII Prisoner of War
- 1906 San Francisco Earthquake 100 years later
- Livermore Fire Department
- Old Words from the Past
- USS Potomac in Oakland [President's Franklin Roosevelt's White House Yacht]
- Family travel with the Donner Party [namesake for Donner Pass of Lake Tahoe]
- 1950s Fallout Shelters in Livermore
- Trinity Atomic Test Site history (of LLNL interest)

Theater

On 5/10/2006, our community cable channel interviewed me for a 30-minute segment about Neighborhood Watch and the result of a special clean-up effort we had coordinated with the city. The video producer lived at the end of our street.

Anne and I rarely had time for first-run movies. We were constantly busy. I was a season ticket holder for the Livermore-Amador Symphony concerts. Anne ceased attending when her health declined. However, we attended a live performance on 2/2008 of Hermann Melville's Moby Dick with Anne in her wheelchair.

I attended some few events alone each year:

- Sotto Voce Tuba Quartet (since I played Sousaphone in marching band)
- Cantabella Children's Chorus concert (one of my senior students sang)
- Ben Stein movie: eXpelled,
- a candidate's debate,
- C.S. Lewis 'Shadowlands' (Cedar Grove Church Kings Players),
- Pastor Meek monologue as a Civil War soldier,
- Navy Seal talk,
- a lecture about Handel's Messiah
- yearly Messiah-Sing-Alongs with amazing Valley Concert Chorale soloists

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