

Harry Briley

Newsletter 2021

Where are the Grandchildren?

Aidan, Karen's son, loves multi-player on-line gaming. I attended his surprise graduation party in Elk Grove. Alexis, her adult daughter, rides a mean long-board (skateboard) in Honolulu and looks Hawaiian. Locals say the same thing.

James Anthony and Catherine (of Livermore) got engaged four years ago as a blended family after he cared for the older children for about a year. They visited this June from Washington State to hike up and over the hill to Lake Del Valle. The return hike forced me to pause several times. James gave compassionate coaching, *"You can do it Dad. The bench is only xyz yards away."* By comparison, after playing in the lake, the grandkids scampered back up that steep hill like nimble goats.



Christmas visit in Livermore (J. Briley 12/2021)
Grandkids (L-R): "JT", Naomi, Haley, Jayce

Faith Output

I closed the AWANA Club in Livermore since only the high school portion remained due to COVID lockdown. We met indoors with only four students, two of whom who graduated (socially distanced as a cohort per the County Health department). The club commander had already closed the younger aged clubs last year in May 2020.

My offered reunion Biblical Greek class via Zoom ran out of steam by summer. I could add nothing new for my students who had clearly gone beyond beginner status. I keep checking my YouTube class videos for usefulness. Those videos still fit the vital niche of beginners ready to explore the Bible in Koine' Greek prior to Seminary-level grammar.

I wrote a two-page muse for my web site regarding the unverifiable virgin birth of Jesus, something attested to by Islam more than the New Testament.

While outside of my comfort zone, I continued to hand out pocket New Testaments annually at area schools with the local Gideon Bible crew. The students have already decided before they reach me on the sidewalk whether to take a copy. Most reflexively say 'No' or ignore me but several walk back to ask for a copy. We exclude elementary school students but in December I had a child with his mom in tow ask for a copy. I had said that he first needed to bring his mom or dad, and so he did!

Broken Ribs Hurt!

A bicycle trip to the gym in late August yielded three broken upper-left ribs, five cracked left ribs, and a much-bruised left hip, with maybe a loose bone chip in there. I was not careless, but riding at 8mph on a bike path with two sharp curves. Layers of powdery dry leaves acted like black ice as if someone kicked the rear wheel out from under me.

I could only sleep by sitting up in a sofa cockpit ensconced in pillows, with my feet on the coffee table on a pillow. I thought my first vacation since 2017 (prepaid) was dead. Four weeks later, I could sleep laterally and daytimes became pain free.

I could drive and lift lightweight bags. Therefore, off I went to San Diego for the semi-annual California Republican Convention and then two weeks of tourist/family stuff. Indeed, the next two weeks allowed considerable pain-free walking in the daytimes with only minor pain sleeping holding a pillow close to my chest.

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Southern California Trip

As a new County Republican Central Committee member, I attended the California Fall Convention in San Diego. The prior Spring Convention using ZOOM was much less expensive and preferred.

As a newly assigned delegate, I could not justify expensive travel for the two-day Convention alone. Thus, I added a road trip to visit five southern Spanish missions along the long Camino Del Rey. I had visited several in the north (Solano to Santa Barbara) but had not yet visited the southern series (San Diego to San Fernando).

I reconnected with Alex Funderburk, an AWANA Citation winner from my Livermore Journey club. His Journey Club has 62 high school students and plenty of adult helpers. They voted in Alex as the new Journey director this September. We caught up a bit over dinner. He is competent and has the respect of the students. He carefully crosschecks social media interpretations of Bible passages. I am jealous and dance-happy at the same time.



With Alex Funderburk, San Diego, CA - 9/2021

While October, the flowers felt like spring with unseen hibiscus varieties. I saw unusual specimens at Balboa Park, San Diego Zoo (with Alex), and Huntington Library Gardens.

I visited model railroads at Balboa Park (four layouts), my uncle's entire second story (one layout), and Corona Heritage Park (one layout representing four cities: Corona, Fullerton, Riverside, and Irvine). Most had glass partitions with low lighting, making photographs difficult. The general era for each was the 1940's. The modelers preferred building historically correct bridges, wood buildings, and scenery by hand rather than using plastic kits. Many buildings near the windows contained detailed interiors for viewing.

At San Diego Air and Space Museum, Balboa Park, two animatronic displays caught my eye for realism (Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart) They dressed sharp back in the 1940's. No gear sounds or clicks of levers, eyes moved, eyelids blinked, mouth moved, head turned, at least one arm gestured, shifting of weight from foot to foot, twisting at the torso, a bit like Disneyland President Lincoln but only three feet away. I kept waiting for their other museum manikins to jump to life. I hope more STEM robotics are in the works. They added to the ambiance of the static aircraft displays. I could not absorb the breadth of material in a single day.

On the trip back home, I met with several Southern California relatives on both sides of the family, some not seen for sixty years.

My last stop was the Kern County Museum in Bakersfield. This collection of pre-1920s homes were moved onto the Fairgrounds with in-situ museum artifacts as if occupants still lived there. In their outdoor oil/gas exhibits, a gas pump touted 15.5 cents per gallon, tax included (in 1960's). My small rental car averaged 40mpg freeway. With gas prices nowadays, the cost for one gallon today could have filled my tank back then.

I arrived home with 461 usable photos (about 45 per day before culling), lots of walking, and 1500 miles.

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Memoirs Status

Both memoir projects have newly found photos and text changes. Edit dates on my web site identify chapters revised or expanded this year. Newspaper articles about Jack Rittenhouse updated his chapter *Stagecoach Press*. More estate papers about Anne and her mother updated the chapter *Anne*

I visited John Satterthwaite, active at age 91 as a model railroader. As my mother's cousin/brother, I tried to locate him after my mother died in 2004 without success. He found me on the web this summer. I had not seen his family for almost sixty years. He patiently explained the convoluted family linkage between his mother and mine. New data and many family photos resulted in a third edition of the chapter *My Mother*.



Uncle John Satterthwaite, Orange, CA - 10/2021

I visited my pastor cousins (Mark and Kurt) and then met older cousin Lynn, unseen for more than sixty years. I was too young to remember him when my parents visited his parents. Kurt arranged all three families to meet for lunch and I spent the rest of the day with Lynn's family. He filled in a couple of gaps in the chapter *My Father*.

I drove back on Sunday morning to worship with the families of Pastor Kurt and Pastor Mark. We shared family memories later at a steak house.

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Schroeder Pastor-Cousins, Riverside, CA - 10/2021

L-R: Cindy and Mark, Self, Kurt and Mary
(Lynn and Becky the day before)

The Find-A-Grave™ web tool helped anchor in family data this year not in paper form (or with conflicting or absent dates among various on-line family trees). I enjoyed linking up tombstones across the country for several family branches and talking with likeminded family historians.

Their protocol for editing engages them such that one editor sent me an unknown newspaper article about Jack (noted earlier). The editor did not know him personally yet sent me a 1991 news clipping and photo he kept about a film crew covering Jack's Route 66 guidebook. Who would keep a 30-year old clipping about a niche book specialist as Jack? I was much grateful to get a scanned copy.

Livermore Heritage Guild

Here are two behind-the-scenes glimpses of my projects with our local historical society.

[1] We have a child's gravestone from 1867 in storage, which the donor found in his backyard in 1981. No one found the family among Livermore settlers and so it languished unclaimed for 40 years.

This year I sought the backstory. It belongs to the Sacramento area. A joint team from Rancho Cordova and our Guild traced the parents when they migrated in 1849 (Gold Rush) from Wisconsin. Every tidbit discovered raised further questions for more research. Our goal in early 2022 is to have a publicized return of the headstone to her grave.

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[2] We have microfilm newspapers of Livermore since the 1880's. Museum on Main in Pleasanton donated Livermore-specific reels over two years ago, doubling our total to over 350 reels. I hunted for used microfilm cabinets across the country for months to no avail. One used cabinet cost a lot to ship from the East Coast. The week we voted to pay, Terry on our team discovered that Western Railway Museum (WMR) in Suisan was taking delivery of a war-era cabinet with eight shallow drawers in 12/2019. Our team drove up for a tour of their very large archival all-steel building.

The perfect-sized drawers had arrived but the shell was stuck in Los Angeles until 2/2020. Then California closed museums for a year and a half.



LHG transport team and Cabinet (S. Junk 9/2021)

L-R: Jeff Kaskey, Refurbished Cabinet, Susan Junk

WMR re-opened and we picked it up this August. In a weekend, I unfroze the slide rollers, disabled the broken gravity-locking mechanism, and painted the war green unit to match our powder-coat shelving. Then I broke my ribs (noted earlier), halting installation for four weeks. The crew insisted that I only kibitz during installation and not do any lifting. At last, the packed eight-drawer unit contains all of our microfilm two years later!

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Seventy-Five Years Ago

My mother enjoyed her "civilian" Willy's Jeep during college "*purchased after a futile attempt to buy a car.*" Few women drove, much less in a 4-wheel drive Jeep in 1946. The first post-war car, Studebaker, became available in 5/1947 and her Aunt bought one for her use in June. I believe Barbara sold her beloved Jeep that December.



Barbara's Willy's Jeep, Syracuse, NY – Summer 1947

Fifty Years Ago

I was nearly as skinny as the bow for my String Bass on performance night in 1971 for *Carousel*, the musical by Rogers and Hammerstein.



Pit Orchestra, Simi Valley, CA (R. Palmer 1971)

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Most Enjoyed Books for 2021

Russian Journal – Andrea Lee, 1979 (1984 Edition) – Two PhD students (husband, and wife author) were exchange scholars at Moscow State University and Leningrad 1978-1979. Andrea, my age, lived among students. Their 120 square foot dorm normally bunked six students or two families. I visited 20 years later. Two generations in the USA have no visceral knowledge of socialist life. Her wonderful prose brought back sights, sounds, and smells from my short two visits. She describes not finding fresh food, high inflation, and Black Market operators. The book captivates with short deeply personal vignettes about specific friends. It is not a political screed but feels unintentionally prophetic. Every voter born after 1970 must read this book and then go make a Russian friend.

Don't Know Much About History – Kenneth Davis, 1995 – U.S. History summary from 1492 to 1992. This is *governmental* history, not our scientific, cultural, or religious history. He exaggerates in a few places (“*For every mile of railroad laid ... thousands of workers died.*” p.192) and castigates the Electoral College (p.426) without explaining the compromise reached with all 50 States. This handy compendium lists both government exceptionalism and warts. He says nothing at all about post-1750 Judeo-Christian faith.

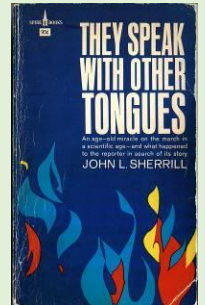
Legends, Lies, and Cherished Myths of American History – Richard Shenkman, 1988 – Topically arranged myths within U.S. History. Some would think such books debunk the exceptionalism of the American Experiment. Not so. The author compiles source material in a readable form to describe what happened and how the myths evolved. Beyond the Puritans (whom get some rare positive press) and later sparse notes about Jews and Irish Catholics (but only as immigrants), the author says nothing about post-1750 Judeo-Christian faith.

Orthodoxy – G.K. Chesterton (1908, 2007 Reprint, Hovel Audio 2006) – I re-listened intently to this book which fires on all cylinders in audio format.

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With dry British wit, he explained how he as a recalcitrant agnostic came to adopt Christianity. Those who most need to read/hear this book are predisposed to evade just such a temptation. He amazed me even in the few instances where I rarely disagreed with his logic. While loosely attuned to Catholic theology, the material fits well for anyone tired of age-old taunts at Christian faith. I found precursors for C.S. Lewis’ *Mere Christianity*. Indeed Lewis, once an atheist, tips his hat to his earlier reading of Chesterton.

They Speak with Other Tongues - John Sherrill, Episcopalian, Fleming Revell, 1964 (Chosen Books reprint, 2004) – It has been years since I last devoured this best readable history about glossolalia from a journalist’s perspective. This book was one of several that fired up the Jesus Revolution (1966 – 1980). Despite the clarion title, this introverted *Guideposts* magazine editor gives a remarkably calm and nuanced perspective. Nearly six decades later, it still has high value for anyone seeking more than mere church attendance, tongues or not.



Around the World (in Seventy Years) – Betty Smith, 2008 – Sixteen week-long missionary trips over 20 years (1985-2004) to various countries, ending when author turned age 70. Starts with Methodist *Lay Witness Missions* (which Anne and I led in California churches), then service in independent charismatic churches, Messianic churches, and closing with her Baptist church (including Billy Graham Emergency Pastoral Care after the 9/11/2001 attacks in New York City). Like myself, she launched into faith during the Jesus Movement with many references to the Baptism into God’s Holy Spirit, prayers for healing (and people remarkably healed), deliverance from evil, and unashamed about Jesus. Over the chapters, references to miraculous events wane. She still engaged in bold prayer resulting in changed lives. However, she found in the faith-cynical USA, people responded better to her listening to wounds of their heart and in-person loving acts.