



Faith

This summer, I researched and presented a six-week faith-issues class for a short-term mission team to a Philippines church. Starting this fall, I co-facilitate a video series on hermeneutics (How to study your Bible) running through February. Ric and Lisa lead the evening class and I lead the small morning class.

Dr. Merrill Smoak (retired music director from Trinity Church) and I enjoyed belting out the Bass parts during chorus sections of the Sing-It-Yourself Messiah put on by Valley Concert Chorale. The team ran us through the entirety of Part 1 and closed with the Hallelujah Chorus.



Bass section at Messiah Sing (Bill Leach, VCC)

East Coast Vacation in Early November

On a 10-day trip in the North Carolina foothills with my daughter Karen, we noticed unfeigned friendliness and lack of racial angst typical of the Bay Area. Whether white or black, and especially black, the perceived feeling is that they dealt with those issues 50 years ago and everyone moved on with life. I found a hole-in-wall Chicken stand in a poorer part of Charlotte and was the only pasty looking guy waiting outside for our orders. All others were worker bees grabbing dinner to take home and not one of the dozen carried the hostile scowls that dominate California cities. I sided up to a man leaning against his car. Although startled by

my action, a friendly conversation ensued about his pride of place. Wherever I showed a modicum of interest, people gladly talked.

Marita, a Board member for the Jungle Aviation and Relay Service (JAARS), hosted us at their missions training airport, the Wycliffe Museum, and their Alphabet Museum. Our host arranged affordable lodging, private walking tours, and lunch with an IT Network manager. Grace, the daughter of founder Cameron Townsend and Nard Pugyao, a retired long-time native bush pilot regaled us with stories over dinner. We were one of many visiting donors over the decades but they treated us as honored guests. They were not subtle in dropping recruiting hints. Jack, our morning tour guide, exuded an irrepressible joy of life following Jesus as a pastor and now as a volunteer retiree docent.



Marita Eden (Host), Jack Brundage (Guide), Karen

Charlotte proudly named a road from the airport the Billy Graham Parkway after their native son. The Billy Graham Library has an iconic barn with a large glass cross as the entrance and his boyhood dairy farm brick home out front. The Barn felt far too small to display much, but that rural façade hid an enormous exhibit maze akin to Presidential Libraries that I visited (Reagan, Truman, Nixon). I now understand why it is a must-visit place. They upgraded all the exhibit space early this fall.



Billy Graham Library

In the afternoon, we visited the downtown Charlotte Museums, including one themed on Prison Reform and Slavery since 1500s. We examined a poster panel about slave ships (The Appomattox Courthouse NPS said 8.5 million from West Africa to South America and 500,000 of those taken to the United States in the 1700's). Just then, a uniformed security guard walked up and asked if we thought this matched historical facts. She was dark black and since we seemed willing, she described how we all trace back to common ancestry by DNA. When Karen mentioned the DNA test, they both pulled out their cellphones to compare. Both showed links to Benin and Togo. With a burst of a smile, the guard said, *"I told you so!"*

At Colonial Winston-Salem (a 1750's Moravian Christian settlement), a Tavern slave in period attire stopped us at the front door and regaled us with a history of the Moravians, the colonial-era slaves, and this Tavern, explaining why they built it on the edge of town for external traders. He loved playing this role bringing history alive

and he became the high point to us for the entire village. The gunsmith team came in second.



"I don't think we should eat those, Dad." - Karen

When visiting the Salem gardens, I ate what looked like an innocent berry. The evil Texas Bird Pepper fits on the high end of the burn scale. My last coherent words were *"Oh, they wouldn't plant something that we couldn't eat."*

Using the Andy Griffith Parkway, we crossed from Mt.Airy into Virginia and drove 115 miles of the scenic Blue-Ridge Parkway NPS, ending with the outdoor D-Day Memorial grounds in Bedford. We visited the Mabry Mill (NPS) with a working water wheel which in one building drove flour grinding stones, a sawmill, and a wood workshop (depending upon leather belt driven transmission). Icicles hung from the water flumes and main wheel. The Appalachian Trail crossed the Parkway at a few places. I officially walked 30 feet of that 2144-mile trail.



Appalachian Trail at Montvale Overlook



Julie and David Stimmel, former leaders of my Life Group in Livermore, hosted us on their semi-rural home for five days near Lynchburg. The stay felt very restful, included a 1000-piece puzzle, quilt artwork, church, and raking a ton of leaves to a large pile by the creek.

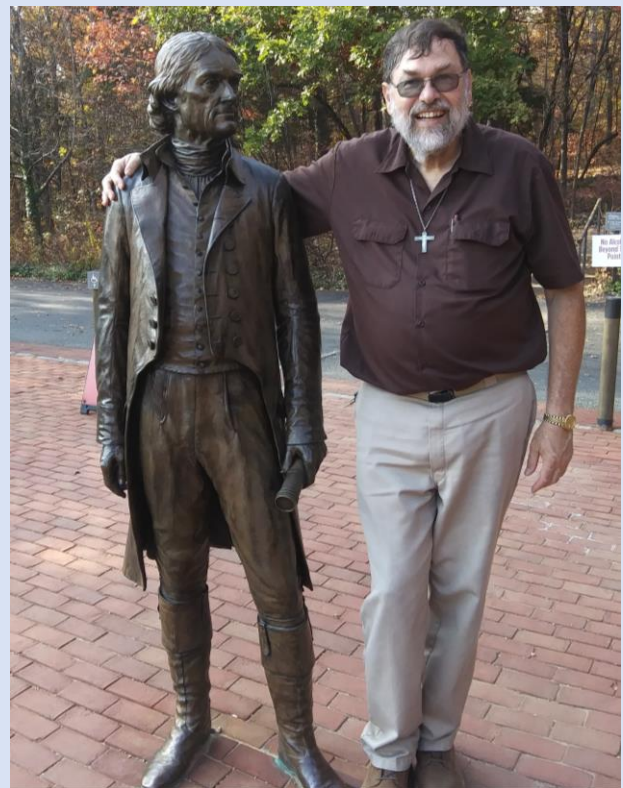
Karen and I explored the end of the Civil War at the town of “Appomattox Courthouse” (yes, it has a courthouse) and the Booker T Washington Slave Plantation. Both are National Parks. On a porch, a slave told about the two armies on either end of town. He spoke of the fear of the raiding parties, the battles that week, his dear Hannah (a historical slave) catching a stray bullet in her arm, his distress over her arm amputation and soon death, and the surrender at the McLean house ‘jess over yonder’.



Slave Recounting Battle at Appomattox Courthouse

He spoke in plantation vernacular like a Mark Twain story and never broke character. I expected a five-minute talk but we got a 30-minute Chautauqua quality monologue. He left us spellbound portraying the conundrum the slaves being suddenly free but with no means to survive on their own. At the nearby Civil War Museum (with General Lee’s uniform used at the surrender signing), Karen purchased the Emancipation Declaration and waving it, said, “*I got my papers. I am a free woman!*”

We visited the Monticello World Heritage Site with the early 1800’s side of slavery at President Jefferson’s estate. While illegal to teach slaves to read, with enough wealth or fame, a slave owner did whatever he wanted, teaching several of his slaves to read (but not write). The Sally Henning affair after his wife died led to irony on the tour. He promised his wife not to remarry, but honored that only in a legal sense. While Sally clearly gained privilege as his quasi-wife and kept her children by him near her, they remained in slavery. Jefferson said of slavery “*We have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go.*” – 4/22/1820 (quoting Emperor Tiberius by Suetonius ... found in Jefferson’s Library)



“Sir, unhand me! You are touching the person of the President.”

We closed out trip with a visit to the Greensboro History Museum catching a flavor of Jim Crow laws and the abridgement of voting rights of blacks after the Civil War. The traveling



Smithsonian exhibit on display dealt with the history of voting. Speaking of which ...

Politics is Odiferous

Yay! I found myself in the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association newspaper. They spoke at our Tri-Valley Republican club. I have supported them for decades since Prop.13 days.



Meeting HTJA Speaker (HJTA 2023 V.49 N.2 Pg 5)

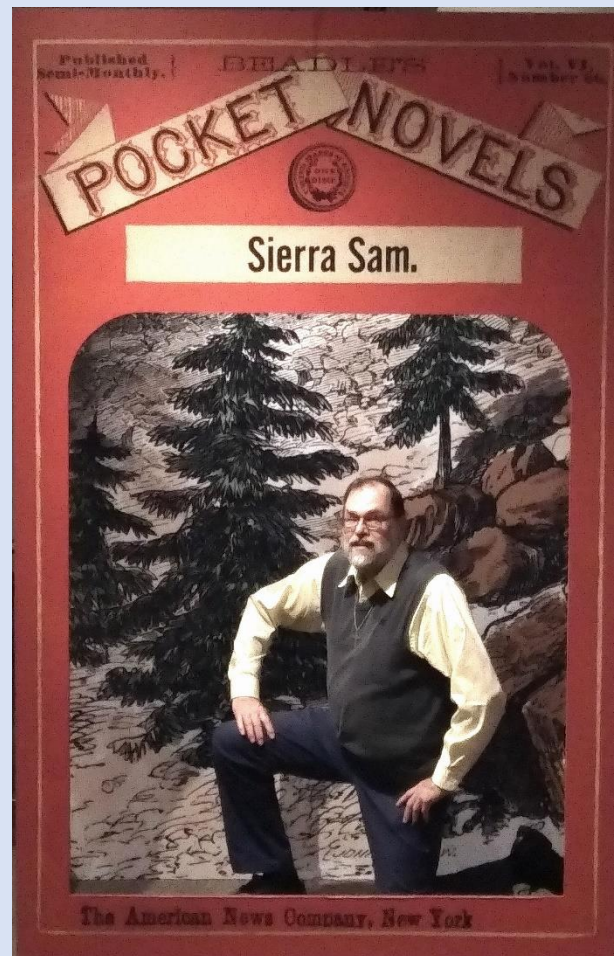
Boo! I attended the semi-annual Republican Convention in Sacramento only to discover my appointed delegate status expired the day before the opening session. Thus, I could not vote for traditional faith values within my own Party.

We faith conservatives protect children from transgender procedures, only to have our own State party in March vote such advocates in as permanent affiliates as thanks for fundraising. This Faustian bargain traded faith-based morals for cash. The Party and Log Cabin Republicans have danced together for decades. The March vote merely solemnized the de-facto marriage.

In May, the State Party then proposed platform compliance by removing the Family plank. The September convention rejected that 2-to-1. A pundit said we are a marginalized social issues backwater. Seeking “electable” (progressive) candidates continues until the Borg assimilates us. I hear it droning on: “Resistance is futile”.

Sacramento

To redeem the useless but prepaid hotel stay at the March Republican convention, I spent Sunday visiting museums since I could not vote. These included the Sacramento Railroad excursion (in an elegant observation car), California History Museum, every memorial monument on the Capitol lawns, State Indian Museum, Sutter’s Fort, Crocker Art Museum, and the California Automobile Museum (which replaced the dissolved Towe Ford Museum).



An Unlikely Gold Rush Hero

Medical

Gaining too much weight. By age 70, we all have a pot. As Bob Hope quipped to a fellow comic: “But in your case, the cover barely fits.”

Merry Christmas - Harry



Favorite Books from 2023

WORLD HISTORY

Men-Of-War: Life in Nelson's Navy, Patrick O'Brian, 1974, 95pg – This non-fiction youth book (for adults) gives background shipboard details for his 21 historical novels of the 1760-1820 British fleet (and helps explain parts of the 2003 film *Master and Commander*.)

Bartlett's West: Drawing Mexican Boundary – Robert Hine, 1968, Yale Univ Press, 155pg – Boundary survey team in New Mexico (1850-1853) led by civilian Commissioner Bartlett with unvarnished view of political meddling, ill-defined authority, backstabbing military vs civilian control, Apache depredations, typhoid, ... all made mute by the Gadsden Purchase. In spite of conflicts and disease, team artists made wonderful sketches and watercolors of this desolate area prior to portable cameras. Author compares to 1832-34 Karl Bodmer artistry (See *Views of a Vanishing Frontier*)

Up From Slavery, Booker T Washington, 1901, 1995 Dover reprint, 166pg – Purchased at Lincoln Memorial in 2002 but finally read in 2023 for tour of Virginia plantation of his boyhood slavery and his freedom after the Civil War. Both Appomattox Courthouse NHP and Booker T Washington Memorial provided context of the predicament of former slaves. He addresses problems and solutions from the late 1800's that applies today. He describes new educational principles of Hampton Institute in Virginia and the subsequent start-up of his Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. This book gives the early Tuskegee history for understanding the 1995 film *The Tuskegee Airmen*.

Lindbergh Alone, Brendan Gill, 1977, 216pg – Retrospective biography of Charles Lindbergh early life leading to his Air Mail years, his May

1927 solo flight to Paris, and the calamitous aftermath as he established early passenger aviation. The author (a journalist) lets us see the private Lindbergh within his intentional isolated life away from the hounding media, using private letters, photos, and diaries, in tandem with quotes from Lindbergh's autobiographies. The book closes with his involvement in early rocketry where he became aware of, arranged funding for, and became friends with unknown professor and experimenter, Robert Goddard.

Straight on till Morning: Life of Beryl Markham, Mary Lovell, 1987, 2011 reprint, 421pg – Researched biography of a jungle pilot and Derby-level horse trainer with a penchant for bed hopping among British gentry. This page-turner fills gaps in Beryl's *West with the Night* (1942) and continues through 1986 as a top horse trainer. She was a horse whisperer, fearless with animals, flew 1930's airplanes, spoke four African languages, but severely lacked moral, social, and fiscal responsibility. The book covers some pioneer interaction of Europeans with Africans, and her early civilian airplanes. *Out of Africa* by Karen Blixen (1938, 1984 reprint) provides more background. Beryl bedded Karen's pilot lover after a split. Author interviewed Beryl for six weeks, just before she died. The 1991 film *Shadow on the Sun* (James Fox 3hrs) portrays this adventurous and deeply flawed horsewoman/pilot.

Graf Spee: Life and Death of a Raider, Dudley Pope, 1956, 246pg – Edge of seat, cat and mouse start of WWII as Germany disrupted commerce trade routes to England from pre-war 1936 to 1939 with a "pocket" battleship (a monster above treaty limits). This is the very last battle where warships moved under radio silence without radar, sonar, or long-range aircraft. The larger ships used spotter seaplanes hoisted on board but their ranges were limited. The book closes with a slugfest with three small English cruisers limping to defeat with their



guns knocked out. Then, much to the surprise of the English, the Graf Spee ran to neutral Montevideo. The book alternates chapters between English and German commands, letting the reader know the score while both sides remained in the dark. Use a world map to track the first attacks and subsequent hunt.

Violins of Hope, James Grymes, 2014, First edition, 320pg – Author finds Jewish-played violins that barely survived the Holocaust and their dedicated restorer. He then investigated those evil years through the eyes of just seven Jewish symphonic violinists (one chapter each) who delayed their immediate demise by playing daily in the death camp orchestras. Many know the most infamous German and Polish camps, but I never knew the devastation faced under Nazi-inspired Norwegian, Romanian, and Ukrainian confiscation, torture, and starvation of their own Jewish citizens.

The Livermore Amador Symphony played a dozen such violins (with repairer's adult son at hand) in February 2023. Several violins were in museum cases with the son answering questions. Yet, the museum video clips did not prepare me for this fast-paced researched book. It took me by surprise despite my knowledge of the WWII camps. It made what I heard at the concert palpable versus staying distant with the common but faceless macro data. A must-read.

The Wit and Wisdom of Harry Truman, Ralph Keyes, 1995, 200pg – Quotes by theme. Purchased at his Presidential Library. While a fully partisan judge and politician (Democrats all good, Republicans all bad), his quotes made worthy reading.

Two observations rang true for 2023: *"There are more prima donnas per square foot in public life in Washington DC than in all opera companies ever to exist."*

Moreover, his scary premonition: *"We would lose something important to our political life if the conservatives were all in one party and the liberals in the other. This would make the nation divided either into two opposing and irreconcilable camps or into even smaller and contentious groups."*

Mono Lake Guidebook, David Gaines, 1989, Fourth Ed., 104pg – This salt-laden landlocked lake is a crucial mid-point food source for massive bird migrations. He describes the conflict between the larger environmental need versus the myopic water-is-water mindset of Los Angeles. After devastating Owens Lake, Los Angeles built the aqueduct up the east side of Yosemite and began diverting water from Mono Lake to let it become a toxic lagoon. While not an activist, I value stewardship and wise use of nature. We must think holistically of our environment. Use the excess water to feed Los Angeles but do not take all of it!

- 9/2023 Update: The elevation of 6392 feet is the limit to prevent toxic alkali dust storms and to avoid the disastrous 1991 level of 6372 feet. It is now at 6383 feet.

Lighting The World: My Journey in Lighting at GE, Tom Soules, 2021, 142pg – This is a breezy first-person chemical-physicist narrative of the NELA Park for electrical lighting 1968-1993 and how LED technology escaped out the door to China. While LED and CFL are common consumer terms today, many science authors explain acronyms only the first time, meaning you will head to the valuable Index to decode CMH, HID, FEM, and HSH. Regardless, I will never again look at a humble fluorescent lightbulb in a blasé way. The author and his lab-rat peers illuminated the world for decades with the most amazing chemical and engineering science prior to LED lighting.



FAITH

The Four Hundred Silent Years, H.A. Ironside, 1914, First Ed., 104pg – Author vastly summarized verbose Josephus (Roman Empire), First Maccabees (Seleucid Empire), and other texts from 425BC to 25AD. This speed-read starts with Persian Empire and finishes Chapter 3 with an ill-advised compact with Rome. Chapter 4 explains how a non-Jewish Edomite became King of the Jews through bribery and backstabbing (literal murders). Pundits made a rhyme: “safer to be King Herod’s pig (Greek: *sus*) than his son (Greek: *uios*)”. Chapter 5 reviews morality tales (being the apocryphal books of the Septuagint).

Josephus: Thrones of Blood (History of the Times of Jesus 37BC to AD70) - 1988, 231pg, Barbour Pub. – This gives military history from installation of King Herod and ending with destruction of the Temple. This paraphrase in date order is easier than reading Josephus. I learned that General Titus (son of regional General and new Emperor Vespasian) kept four Roman legions (23,200 total) within their siege camps because two rival armies of Zealots (15,000 vs 8,500, 23,500 total) fought each other within Jerusalem. Titus let rivalry reduce the defenders and then he breached the walls.

The Practice of the Presence of God – Brother Lawrence, 1692 (Hendrickson audiobook and reprint, 2004, 155pg) – Born 1614 into brutal 30-Year War (imposing Catholic faith upon resistant German towns that spun out of control), and after serving in the French Army, joined the Carmelites in 1640 Paris as a lay brother. He served as cook and dishwasher (jobs he intensely disliked). His transforming realization occurred in 1650. Cardinal Beaufort interviewed him about this life-change starting in 1666. Upon Lawrence’s death, the Cardinal published letters and interviews covering those final 25 years. The book later became popular among English Protestants such as John Wesley.

“...the least little thought of Him will be acceptable. You need not cry very loud; He is nearer to us than we are aware of.”

"There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God." – Br. Lawrence

The Story of American Methodism – Frederick Norwood, 1974, eighth printing 1989, 448pg– Methodists in America started not as a separate church but believers engaged in their Bible and daily faith through hundreds of “classes” within the Anglican Church. After the Revolution, it became a real church to hold new preachers accountable. Such served an uneducated rural population migrating westward. The history up to the Civil War captivated me but I recoiled about pietistic faith only among the uneducated.

Nearly all denominations split over slavery. After Darwin (including his principle that blacks were less human) and Higher Criticism of the Bible from Europe (prior to archeology and molecular science), the demand for seminary elite filled urban pulpits with nascent liberalism. Their strict application of Darwin and Higher Criticism undercut the Bible as trustworthy.

Denominations took decades to re-unite with mixed results. The larger Methodist groups joined piecemeal until 1968 when the United Methodist Church formed without concern about disparate theologies. Urban churches hosting 80% of the members were already theologically liberal and focused upon political social engineering. (I joined a rural UMC in late 1972 during the Jesus Revolution, not knowing its merger occurred only four years earlier.)

Divisions made the new UMC anything but united, already politically fractious by 1970, split along theology in contention since 1830.



Cross in the Sunset– The Story of Methodism in California-Nevada, Leon Loofbourow, Vol. 1, 1966, 239pg, Hist. Soc. of Cal-Nevada Annual Conf. – Refers to cross on Telegraph Hill when Glide Memorial in San Francisco was strongly evangelical and biblically conservative. Covers competing Methodist bodies (split over slavery).

Aside: J.C. McPheeters (1889-1983) for 18 years pastored Glide Memorial (1931-1948, pg176-181) and while still pastor, became President of Asbury Seminary (1942-1962) in Wilmore, KY. This distant Seminary made a big summer presence (1950-1990) at Redwood Christian Park in Boulder Creek. In 1981 and 1983, I met Dr.McPheeters as a vibrant elderly man at that Family Camp.

Tanya and the Border Guard, Anita Deyneka, 1973, 94pg. I read this after college and gave it to some child. Wife of the founder of Slavic Gospel Assoc., wrote this historical fiction of a family in Leningrad. I wrote to SGA in 2023 about how I first learned about them through the Jesus People Explo'72 and told of my valued SGA books. They sent me this old copy gratis. I forgot the plot and got weepy reading it fresh. While for children, the true-to-life storyline brought out deep emotions. People born after Perestroika might not understand.

Memoirs of a Jesus Freak, Kent Philpott, 2014(?), 2016 2nd Ed., Earthen Vessel Pub., 328pg – A rare first-hand page-turner about the earliest participants in the Jesus Revolution. It is a key resource for 1967 to 1972. See also ***God's Forever Family: The Jesus People Movement on America*** by Larry Eskridge.

Aside: Pastor Kent and wife Katie helped my ***Greek for Beginners*** on-line class by providing students and attended themselves.

- Part I (168pg) - As the Summer of Love in 1967 gave way to hard drugs and predators,

Kent and his crew helped trapped youth 50 years. He tells of supernatural (good and bad), hindsight, and history (good and bad).

- Part II (160pg) –46 short sketches of leaders

The Church of Modesto, Jim Bouck, 1999, 334pg– Interviews of several pastors regarding 1983-1998. They crossed racial, denomination, and church size boundaries. Many participants came with roots in the Billy Graham Crusade of 1948, the Luis Palau Crusade of 1983, and Promise Keepers events of 1995 and 1998. These were theologically conservative churches. How much of that unity remains after 25 years?

Amish Peace, Suzanne Woods Fisher, 2009, 218pg – One of her few non-fiction books that feed her historical novels. Many in-person interviews with Amish families in their barns and kitchens and hosting a church service in their large living rooms once a year. I found deep affinity of some practices with my own faith walk, aspects we busy moderns can use.

NoFear: Real Stories of a Courageous New Generation, Tony Perkins (Family Research Council), 2015, 188pg – Vignettes of students facing bullying from Jesus-hostile sources.

Delighting in the Trinity, Michael Reeves, 2012, IVP, 141pg – Argues that a monotheistic God with Trinitarian features best fits the Biblical narratives. God is a relationship-based sharer of himself long before Creation, which is counter to a non-relational Allah not very interested in humans, and alien to the New Atheist concept of God as the Thor-like “Stalin-in-the-Sky”.

Aside: All through the Tenach, moved by the **Spirit** of God, the Prophets tell of God treating Israel as a wayward bride and yet His beloved. One standard Jewish prayer is Avinu Malkeinu (Our **Father**, our King). These familial and relational concepts were present in Judaism long before Christianity.