

August 28, 2016

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. - Amen.

"My Spiritual Journey" (Part 2)

This past April I shared with you what I could remember about the spiritual aspects of my life before we arrived in Lynchburg, my life as a child growing up and through my college years. One aspect of my life during those first 22 years that I overlooked in my April sharing has to do with my relationship to money, and I want to begin this morning with that.

My dad graduated from college in the early 1930's with a degree in Horticulture, and a dream of opening a Greenhouse, during what is now often referred to as the Great Depression. After graduation he was very fortunate to get a job working for my grandfather who was responsible for State highway maintenance in our part of Grafton County. He wasn't able to realize his dream of opening a Greenhouse, but he loved working in the garden, and he planted a huge one filled with fruits and vegetables. One of our jobs as children growing up was to weed the garden and to help plant and harvest crops, like potatoes and corn, when they were ready. My dad planted so much corn that we set up a roadside stand and sold it, along with other vegetables. The proceeds from the roadside stand went into savings accounts for me and my younger brother and sister. Those savings accounts were not to be touched until we needed the money for college. And it was a given that all three of us would attend college.

When I reached junior high school age I worked several summers for my maternal grandfather who had a family owned and operated civil engineering firm in Portsmouth, NH. I lived with my grandparents, hung out with my cousins, some of whom also worked for my grandfather during the summer and, among other things, learned how to work with a plumb bob and a level rod. Everything I earned went into my college savings account. During my junior year at Concord High School I had an after school job in the State Treasurer's office sorting and filing "paid" checks. Once again, everything I earned went into my college savings account.

During my college years, a couple of summers I worked for the NH State Highway Department on a Survey Crew doing more work with a plumb bob and level rod. One summer I also worked as a laborer for a few weeks for a highway construction firm. My financial aid package at Dartmouth included work for the Dartmouth Dining Association (3 years) and work at the local movie theater my senior year as an usher and concession stand operator. I thought that was pretty cool; and the movies were free.

All this is to say that I was raised to be frugal: save, save, save! My savings, together with Dartmouth's generous financial aid package and some private loans which I paid back over a period of years following my graduation, made it possible for me to receive an excellent college education. One twist: because my Sophomore year grades took a nose dive I lost the tuition scholarship for my Junior year. I dropped out of Band and the Glee Club my Junior year to concentrate on my course work. My Junior Year grades were much better and I got my tuition scholarship back for my Senior year.

During my four years of college I was enrolled in the NROTC. Upon graduation I was

commissioned in the US Naval Reserve. I had a 6 year service commitment, the first 2 on active duty and the next 4 in the Reserve. After graduation I reported for active duty to the Office of Naval Intelligence in the Pentagon and served there for 3 years. After that I was offered a position as a civilian employee in the Naval Counterintelligence Office in Arlington, Virginia.

I must say I enjoyed my years as a bachelor in and around our nation's capital. I bought my first used car and roomed with other bachelors, first in apartments, and later on several of us shared a house. My favorite car was a brand new bright red Chevrolet Monza convertible with a white top, one of those cars that Ralph Nader labeled "Unsafe at any Speed". And yes, eventually my Monza's rear motor mounts sheared off and the engine fell on the ground while I was driving the car. Fortunately for me I was rounding a corner on a city street in Washington and moving at a slow rate of speed.

During my years as a bachelor I always seemed to wind up getting into relationships with young women who were Roman Catholic. The relationships ended when the question came up as to whether or not I would sign the necessary papers to commit any children we might have to being raised in the Roman Catholic tradition. I just was not willing to make that commitment. After going through that experience a third time with a young woman whom I cared deeply for, and ending that relationship in 1964, I decided that I would not date any more young women who were Roman Catholic.

In July of 1964 I began dating my future wife. I picked her up for our first date in front of the CIA Headquarters building in Langley, Virginia in my bright shiny red Monza, with the top down of course. The good news: Judy was not Roman Catholic! She grew up attending Sunday School at a Methodist church in Wilmington, Delaware. I proposed to her Halloween eve. She said "yes" and we were married February 6, 1965 at Grace United Methodist Church in Wilmington. Grace Church is a beautiful old church. The Minister asked us to send him a Christmas Card each year to let him know we were still happily married, and we did that for many years until we lost track of him.

I believe our wedding vows mentioned something about "for richer or poorer". What Judy didn't know was that she had just married someone who was going to need \$400 to pay his Income Tax bill April 15th and he didn't have the money to do that. Fortunately, Judy had about \$800 in her savings account, and she graciously shared half of that with me so that I could pay my tax bill. Our marriage was off to a good start!

After spending some time as a graduate student at American University's School of International Service, I spent a year and a half with the Ford Motor Company Sales Office in Washington, DC. During the summer and fall of 1967 Ford's car and truck sales were lagging, and Monday morning November 6 I was laid off by Ford. Judy had finished her work with the CIA the previous Friday to deliver Cindy, our first child, and she had terminated her employment. She thought I was joining her for lunch on her first day at home. Unfortunately now both of us were unemployed. I believe that was about as low and stressful a time as Judy and I have experienced during our 51 years together. Fortunately, when Ford was struggling to sell cars, Dodge and Chrysler sales were doing well and Dodge was looking for someone in their Sales Office in College Park, MD. Thanks to some positive recommendations from my friends and associates at Ford, Dodge offered me employment doing the same kind of work I had been doing for Ford. After about a year and a half with

Dodge, I was assigned to a Dodge Sales Territory in May 1969. The Territory included 18 dealerships and was centered in Lynchburg.

Before Cindy was born in November 1967, Judy and I became members of Rock Spring Congregational Church (UCC) in Arlington. It was a church that I had become familiar with during my bachelor days. Cindy was baptized there.

When I learned that we would be moving to Lynchburg, I asked our Minister if he knew whether or not there were any UCC congregations here. He replied that he believed a younger brother of Gordon Cosby, Minister of The Church of The Saviour in Washington, was minister of a church in Lynchburg. One evening during a visit I made to Lynchburg to call on my new Dodge dealers in this area, I found the address of the Church of the Covenant in the telephone book and drove out here to look around. There was no one on the grounds, and the Church House and Lodge buildings were wide open. It certainly didn't look like any church I had ever seen.

During the summer of 1969 we sold our house in Arlington and purchased a house on Ridgewood Drive here in Lynchburg. Judy and I, with our oldest daughter Cindy, then about 21 months old, and a dog named "Boo", moved into our new house August 19 and Dod, the night that Hurricane Camille devastated Nelson County. We are still living in the same house today.

We visited a few other churches here in Lynchburg, but fairly soon we settled on the Church of the Covenant. I became involved in the inner city ministry and the programs offered by the Kum-Ba-Yah Ecumenical Center. One of my first experiences was with a tutoring program. I tutored a few 8th grade students in French. Later on I agreed to be the Institutional Representative of a Boy Scout Troop sponsored by Kum-Ba-Yah. We met at the Yoder Center. Unfortunately the Troop's dynamic young black Scoutmaster disappeared after getting the neighborhood boys organized and excited about the program. I was unwilling to see the troop disband so I reluctantly agreed to assume the Scoutmaster's responsibilities. I hung in there for a couple of years, and it was a good experience for me. But eventually there were fewer and fewer boys in the Troop, and the Troop disbanded.

By February of 1970 Chrysler had more cars in inventory than it could sell and I was notified that my sales position was being eliminated. I was laid off by a car company a second time. Judy and I decided that we wanted to stay in Lynchburg, rather than move back to the Washington DC area. We were expecting Samantha, our second child, and we had come to really appreciate the slower, less hectic pace of life here in the Hill City. Once again friends in the automobile industry advocated for me. Folks at John P. Hughes Motor Company in Lynchburg and Dixie Motors in Altavista spoke favorably on my behalf to their contacts at Fidelity National Bank, a local bank which did a lot of financing of inventory and installment sales contracts for local auto dealers. In March of 1970 I was hired by Fidelity's Installment Loan Department. I worked for Fidelity and its successors for 16 years.

Samantha, our second daughter was born August 2, 1970, and our son Timothy was born September 9, 1972, both at Virginia Baptist Hospital. Bev Cosby baptized both of them here in this Chapel, and the baptismal services for both were very emotional for me. The baptism was not something that just happened at a certain point during the worship service. Bev Cosby's sermons were focused on the potential for the life of the child being baptized and

how the community could help nurture that child so that he or she would be able to realize his or her God given potential.

During the 1970's I taught Sunday School classes on two occasions. The second time I couldn't wait for Spring to come when the Class would be over. It wasn't the children, it was me. I felt as though I just wasn't called or gifted to teach a Sunday School Class.

In the Spring of 1973 Bev Cosby and Will Cardwell's brother Sam, then a member of the Church of the Covenant, invited me to have lunch with them at The Piedmont Club, a private club located on the top floor of what was then The Fidelity National Bank building. (Today it's known as the Bank of the James building.) The reason they invited me to have lunch with them was so that they could talk to me about Covenant membership. They wanted me to know that whenever I was ready for it, Covenant membership was a possibility for me. My hesitation at that time was because I was not convinced that I could make a commitment to the "disciplines" or "practices" with integrity.

Many years went by and in the fall of 1983 Bev preached a sermon about "change", and the different ways we make changes in our lives. One way change can occur is with a conscious commitment to pick yourself up, set yourself down and head in a different direction. I thought about that for a number of months, especially as it related to my readiness for Covenant membership. Finally, on November 5, 1984 I invited Bev and Sam to have lunch with me at The Piedmont Club. The purpose of the lunch was to tell them that I was ready to accept their invitation and become a Covenant Member.

At that time new Covenant members were expected to be part of a Mission Group. The Mission Group I chose was the New Land Jobs Mission Group, which was supportive of Barbara Holdren and the New Land Jobs job counseling and job placement program she was beginning. Later on I joined the New Land Samaritan Inns Mission Group which was focused on helping the homeless. That Group met at The Gateway (now called The Gateway House) until only Bev Cosby and I were left. In 1998 The Haven Mission Group began with a focus on long term supportive housing for those who suffer with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) and needed a place to live that was "drug and alcohol free". That Group is still my spiritual home today.

Thank you for listening and letting me share with you this morning. I am open to sharing Part 3 of my spiritual journey with you at some time in the future. - Amen