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TRUE STORIES OF HOPE AND INSPIRATION

Guideposts

MARCH 2020

AUTHOR AND HOME EXPERT

**KATIE
BROWN**

Meant to
Be a Family

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& HEALING**

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Good Memories

People say they love GUIDEPOSTS because they identify with the storytellers. It is that commonality of experience that so often overcomes our differences. Then there are stories that simply conjure up a memory and make us smile. Plenty of that for me in this issue. You too, I bet.

Take our *Close Calls* feature (page 40), about a couple in Texas who barely survive a tornado. I was a kid when we moved from fairly tornado-free Pennsylvania to Michigan, and my father kept repeating that we were going to Tornado Alley. He mounted all sorts of weather-monitoring gadgets to the walls, tapping and peering at them while we rolled our eyes. It didn't help when I came home and said we had tornado drills at school. Years passed without incident. Then one day, while he and Mom were eating lunch at Bill Knapp's, the tornado sirens went off. Dad screamed, "Hit the deck!" and *bam!* a tree smashed down on his late-model Monte Carlo in the parking lot. Dad made sure to draw lots of circles and arrows on the photo of the damaged car he sent me at college.

Mom was another story. She was ready to save the world, or at least help people in need, a little like restaurant owner Kazi Mannan (page 58), who feeds the hungry in Washington, D.C. One cold day, she was driving north on busy Telegraph Road, just past Miracle Mile shopping mall, when she saw two young men shivering with their thumbs out. Dad forbade stopping for hitchhikers (even though I occasionally traveled by pollex), so Mom tore home, dug up some old sweatshirts and tried to hurl them out the window of her moving car at the nonplussed hitchhikers, nearly causing a pileup in the process—with Mom shouting at all the horn blowers to mind their own business.

One of our *Living Longer, Living Better* storytellers worked for Eli Lilly pharmaceuticals. My uncle Eddie was a senior researcher at Lilly, doing important work on major diseases like diabetes and MS. One of my best boyhood memories was when he took me on a tour of his laboratory, instilling in me a lifelong interest in science. Katie Brown shares a story of adopting an infant daughter of a different race. My brother and his wife adopted two Korean babies, Clare and Rachel, and I remember well the joy of their arrival.

Our stories are our memories. I hope you find some good ones in this issue.

Edward Grinnan, Editor-in-Chief

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What's New on Guideposts.org



Feeding Body and Soul

Get a behind-the-scenes tour of Kazi Manan's unique restaurant (page 58) in our exclusive video. [guideposts.org/kazim](https://www.guideposts.org/kazim)

Through the Storm

In our video, Linda Stratigakis (page 40) recounts how she survived a terrifying tornado. [guideposts.org/lindas](https://www.guideposts.org/lindas)

New Ways to Observe Lent

Not sure what to give up in the days leading up to Easter? Check out these tips for some out-of-the-box Lenten inspiration. [guideposts.org/lentideas](https://www.guideposts.org/lentideas)

The Spirit of Spring

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

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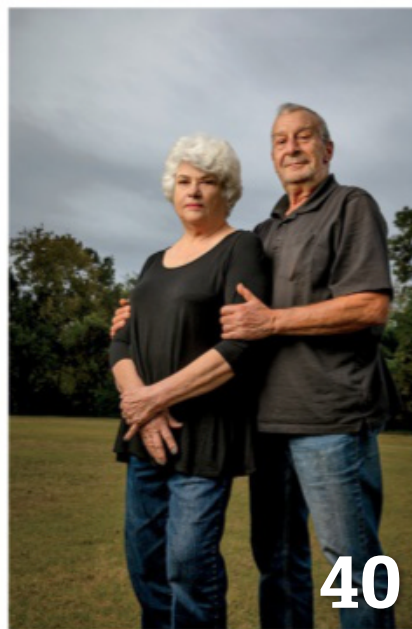
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*At Kazi Mannan's D.C.
restaurant, everyone is welcome,
no questions asked.*

By KIMBERLY ELKINS, EDITOR

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David G. (70), Writer—“With a family history of neurological issues, including Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, I started taking Better Memory for preventative reasons. After 5-6 months, I have more confidence in the way my mind is working and my ability to recall things. I am more in tune with what's going on, and less anxious about my mind deteriorating.”*

David D.—“My father (85) lives independently in an assisted living and he gave up his driver's license 2 years ago. I think he is a little bit sharper after taking the Better Memory pills for 3 months. Before he was struggling just to keep track of events for the day, now he is looking at his calendar and calls me to ask meaningful questions about the future events that he does not recognize.”*



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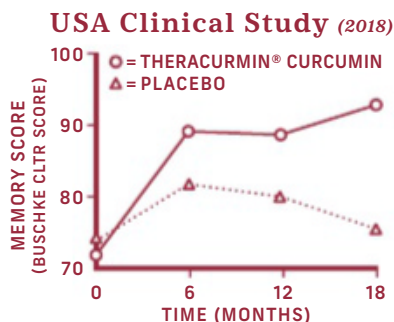
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*“The day you
plant the seed is
not the day you
eat the fruit.”*

actress **JENNIFER GARNER**, as posted
on her Instagram

*“Sometimes God will put a
Goliath in your life for you to
find a David within you.”*

via **pocket.praise**

*“The two most powerful
forces in the world are love
and prayer. Use them!”*

submitted by GUIDEPOSTS reader
FRANCIS TARDIFF, in East Tawas, Michigan

*“History is terrific; I love it.
But the past doesn’t equal
the future, and the minute
you think it does, then you’re
trapped—you can’t change.”*

MIKE ROWE, host of the TV show *Dirty
Jobs* and author of *The Way I Heard It*

*“No matter how you feel.
Get up, dress up, show up
and never give up.”*

message on the Addiction Prevention
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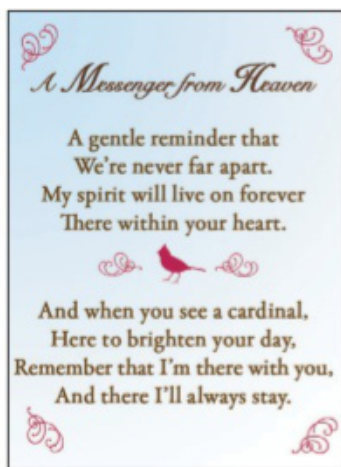
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YOU'VE GOT MAIL

Since leaving Virginia for Texas, I have picked up a habit that brings happiness to my family and rewards me as well: sending snail mail.

Most of my peers use smartphones to keep in touch with loved ones, but I take pleasure in picking out pretty cards—as well as gifts like temporary tattoos to send my nieces, who are 13 and 8. My cousin Angie gets postcards when I travel; she especially liked the ones from Hawaii and Taiwan.

Now that my relatives have discovered how much they love getting mail, they're writing to me too. It's so nice to see familiar handwriting in the mailbox, knowing someone took the time to let me know I'm on their mind.

CINDY MONTGOMERY
College Station, Texas

BEEP! BEEP!

In 2005, my church was having an Easter egg hunt. I wanted my toddler, Rachel, to participate, but she is blind.

The website for the Blind Children's Center in Los Angeles had directions on constructing eggs that beep—using a switch, a beeper, a plastic egg and other materials, so a visually impaired child can find the eggs on their own. A perfect project for my buddies at



the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and me! With additional volunteers from bomb squads, we made 40 eggs.

Three visually impaired children came to our first hunt. Since then, we've expanded to other cities and invited kids with other special needs.

Want to host your own beeping Easter egg hunt? Reach out to the Rachel Project, run by the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators, at iabti.org/beeping-eggs for more information.

DAVID HYCHE
Birmingham, Alabama

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A Different Path

I ran track in high school.
Was I pushing
my daughter too hard to
follow in my steps?

BY TONYA MAY AVENT

Woolwich Township, New Jersey

I GREW UP PLAYING SPORTS. BOTH my parents played multiple sports in high school, and my dad went to college on a football scholarship. I played softball as a child and excelled on my high school field hockey and track teams. My husband, Kenny, was playing professional basketball overseas when we met. He now works in education and coaches youth and high school basketball.

Kenny and I weren't surprised when our daughters, Kennedi and Kassadi, showed early athletic promise. Watching them outrun other kids on the playground, I knew they were destined for greatness on the track. Kennedi, our older daughter, was competing in the Junior



JIM GRAHAM



Olympics track and field championships by age seven. Kassadi wasn't far behind.

By the time Kennedy started middle school, our family life revolved around practices, track meets, plus regional and national championships. I had visions of college scholarships, maybe even the Olympics.

I did not envision sitting in a pediatric orthopedist's office almost two years ago, staring at an MRI image as the doctor calmly explained that Kennedy's posterior cruciate ligament—the thick tissue stabilizing the back of her knee—was torn. Her season was over.

"Immediate surgery might be necessary," the doctor said. "I've almost never seen this kind of injury in a child. It's a complicated repair, and recovery can take a long time. She might not regain full athletic function."

Kennedy was 13 years old. The day before, at a regional Junior Olympics qualifying event, she'd misjudged her long jump landing and ended up sprawled in the sand pit, screaming in pain.

This was not supposed to happen. Sports weren't just part of my family life. They were part of my *prayer* life. Athletic accomplishment was God's gift to my family. Part of our story. The story was supposed to end at the Olympics. Not in the operating room.

The doctor kept talking, but I had a hard time following the words. *Why, God? How could you do this to my child?*

I didn't set out to become a track

HEART TO HEART Tonya and her daughter Kennedy enjoy a leisurely walk together.

mom. Kenny and I weren't thinking Olympics when we signed the girls up for track. We knew they were fast, but we had an open mind.

Still, I couldn't help noticing at the first practice that Kennedy was especially good at sprints and the long jump. By the time the season ended, I was crushed when she didn't qualify for the regional Junior Olympics. She was only six years old.

The next year, she qualified and made it into the national finals. I began to think we might have a future track star on our hands.

KENNY AND I TALKED ABOUT IT, prayed about it and decided to make track a household priority. That meant committing to a full schedule of practices, extra workouts, meets and faraway championships.

We didn't ask the girls if that's what they wanted. Of course they did! Who wouldn't want to use a God-given talent to the fullest? Plus, they kept winning, and every kid likes to win.

Slowly but surely, track took over our lives. Weekends, even some Sunday mornings, were devoted to training. We stopped taking vacations so the girls wouldn't miss any practices. I would make time to visit local attractions wherever we traveled for meets and call that vacation.

We missed birthdays, family cookouts, Wednesday night Bible studies and youth group meetings. We spent thousands of dollars on meet fees, equipment, training and travel ex-

penses. I even restricted the time the girls could spend swimming with their friends, which would sap the energy they needed for competition.

When the kids were little and played soccer, I used to shake my head at the parents who hollered and criticized from the sidelines. But when a track championship was on the line and I could tell one of my girls wasn't giving her all, what else was I supposed to do?

"Let's go, baby!" I'd shout at Kennedy if she started falling behind. "Faster! Move those legs!"

If the girls lost, the car ride home was no fun. "Where was the effort on that last sprint, Kassadi?" I'd demand. "Kennedi, you were faster in practice last week. What happened?"

Point by point, we went over every mistake and missed opportunity.

Standards were just as high at home. If practice was canceled because of rain, I took the girls out the next day for a makeup workout. During the summer, between track seasons, I supervised more workouts.

I bought some used hurdles from a yard sale and started hauling them to the track in the back of our SUV. If the gate to the track was locked, I tossed the hurdles over the fence and the girls and I followed.

The reward was posting victory photos on social media.

"Love your two beautiful winners!" people gushed in comments. I got a rush with each dose of praise. Our family looked just I wanted in those photos: Kenny and me smiling, our arms around



ON THE MEND Kennedy gets back to form with the help of her physical therapist, Greg.

our beloved medal-winning daughters. We were happy, fit, accomplished. Living proof of God's abundant goodness.

Where did Kennedy's injury fit into all of that? She was in terrible pain. Her season was over. She might require career-altering surgery.

To our immense relief, the surgeon we consulted said intensive physical therapy would probably be enough to return Kennedy to competition. The injury had likely been caused when Kennedy, trying to squeeze out a bit more distance on a jump, extended her leg too far and bent it backward on impact. Going for the win had torn her knee ligament.

There was more good news when I discovered that some of the country's best physical therapists were at my nearby alma mater, the University of

Delaware, which has a top-ranked physical therapy program.

Kennedi was assigned to a senior therapist named Greg Seymour, and the two of them clicked right away. Kennedi seemed hopeful.

My feelings were more mixed. I kept thinking about her extending her leg that extra distance. The more I thought about it, the more I wondered whether Kennedi had been trying so hard because she feared what would happen on the car

ride home if she failed to make finals.

Was I partly to blame for her injury?

For the first time in years, our family life did not revolve around track and field. Track season was over, and there were no more practices to run off to. Kassadi reveled in the freedom.

Three days a week, Kennedi and I made the 45-minute drive to the university for therapy. I knew better than to coach from the sidelines. Greg was an expert. My heart cried out every time Kennedi winced through a stretch or an exercise. I became her biggest cheerleader.

One day, I worked up the courage to ask if she thought I'd been too hard on her when she was competing.

"Yes!" Kennedi said. "Remember that movie we watched about kid athletes?" She meant *Trophy Kids*, a documentary about overbearing sideline parents that she and Kassadi and I had



ATHLETIC FAMILY Kenny, Kennedy and Tonya

watched on Netflix at the start of the last season. The girls told me I was just like the parents in that movie.

“Well, at least I never cursed at you.”

“No, but you treat me differently when I win and when I lose,” Kennedy said. “I wish you were the same even if I have a bad day on the track. I feel like you don’t accept me just for who I am.”

That stung. Bad. But I couldn’t object. In my heart, I knew what she said was true.

In fact, if I were totally honest, I would have to admit that my girls were happiest when track season was over. They enjoyed doing well, and they definitely loved hanging out with their friends at meets. But training? Stressing over meets? Not so much. I probably cared more about the medals than they did.

Or maybe it was more accurate to say I cared about winning *differently*. Somehow I’d begun basing my own self-worth on my girls’ accomplish-

ments. My constant criticism had bent them into thinking the same way. On their own, they would have kept things in perspective.

My prayers changed. I was already praying every day for Kennedy to heal. Now I added a new request: *Lord, please heal my heart so I can accept my daughters as the people you created them to be. Help me seek my satisfaction in you, not in their accomplishments.*

The following summer, we tried something different: an actual family vacation. We spent a week in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. We relaxed on the sand, played in the water (no swimming restrictions), ate great food and visited family and my husband’s old college on the way there and back. It was the best time we’d had together in years.

Kennedi was cleared to compete that fall. She joined the volleyball practice team at her high school, then moved to the indoor track team. We’re back to a hectic family schedule.

Not everything is the same, though. We seldom miss church or youth group anymore, even if that means skipping practice or a meet. And I don’t critique the girls’ performance. At least, I try not to. I’m learning to trust that if my daughters decide not to run track in college, that simply means God has something even more wonderful in store.

It’s their story—God’s story—not mine. My job is simple: Worship God, love and support my daughters. If I do that, we’re guaranteed to win. **G**

For more on this story, see **FAMILY ROOM**

One Cool Dude

It seemed as if I was always doing something to aggravate my World War II veteran grandfather. How would I take care of him?

BY MARY PEMBLETON, Asheville, North Carolina

THAT DECEMBER DAY IN 2014, I bounced my baby on my knee and tried to occupy my toddler while my 92-year-old grandfather rummaged through the closet for the right polo shirt to wear for our first trip to the Asheville, North Carolina, VA hospital. “Some people might think I’m prissy,” Granddaddy Bill said in his lilted Southern accent, “but I just like to look nice.” My grandfather had moved into our basement apartment from my sister’s house a month ago so that I could care for him as his Parkinson’s disease and mild dementia progressed.

I’d known this new arrangement was never going to be easy. But I was surprised that I was already gritting my teeth. Just convincing him to go in for a checkup today had been a struggle. “I hate being moved around,” he said. “I wish I hadn’t lived this long.”

An hour later, I wheeled Granddaddy

Bill into the VA hospital. “Careful!” he yelled. “I’m sorry,” I told him. “I know you didn’t want to come today.” We took a seat in the waiting room. Dozens of veterans, young and old, male and female, walked and wheeled their way to the various clinics. A lanky man sitting across from us adjusted his Vietnam Veteran cap. “You’re World War II, aren’t you?” he said to Bill.

Although deaf in his left ear, Granddaddy Bill still refused to get a hearing aid, so I repeated the man’s question loudly into his right ear. “World War II, yes, sir,” Bill said proudly. “Army, South Pacific.”

“Not many of you guys around anymore!” the man said.

“No, there sure ain’t,” Bill told him. “I used to organize a yearly Army reunion, but we had to call it off because it became a last man’s club.” Granddaddy Bill had been a charismatic host,

throwing huge parties at the house where he and my grandmother used to live on the South Fork River in Belmont, North Carolina, near us.

This charming man could, however, be strict and impatient with his unruly young granddaughter. The first night I'd ever spent away from my parents was at my grandparents' house. I was six. It was almost midnight, and I kept crying to go home. "Enough of this yammering!" Granddaddy Bill snapped. "No! Take me home!" I yelled. Back and forth we went, as stubborn as mules, until Bill drove me back to my parents' place, so angry he didn't speak a word the whole drive.

I breathed a sigh of relief when the rest of our visit to the VA passed uneventfully. A minor miracle—it seemed as if I was always doing something to aggravate my grandfather. Once when I was 10, I removed an ornament with my sister's name etched in gold from my grandparents' Christmas tree. I scratched out her name and wrote my own with the ornament's hook. Granddaddy Bill came up behind me and yanked it out of my hand, frightening me. "You are just too much!" he yelled, his voice thunderous. Those words seared themselves into my brain. From that point on, I steered clear of my grandfather. My mother died when I was 17, and Granddaddy Bill said, "Let me help you." He tried to take me in his arms, but I shrank away from him. The last thing I wanted was solace from this man I'd hardly spoken to in years, who'd petrified me as a child.



Granddaddy Bill's authoritarian nature carried over into our new relationship. Every morning, he would shout into the baby monitor at eight o'clock sharp, "*Maaaarrryyy!* Get down here with my breakfast!" I'd bring him his food, my jaw clenched. Later in the day, he'd yell, "*Maaaarrryyy,* come turn up the television!" Granddaddy Bill demanded a rigid schedule for his meals, his medications and his TV shows. His need for routine was a gift to me



REVEALED In the VA hospital waiting room, Mary slowly got to know her grandfather.

as a new mother in some ways. Still I resented his yelling and impatience. I tried to remind myself how hard it must be for someone who'd run his own successful architectural business to become dependent on others.

After months of mounting resentment, I told him, "Granddaddy Bill, I know it's frustrating not to be able

to do for yourself anymore, but I not only have the children to care for but sometimes I need to go the bathroom and eat as well. And the disrespectful way you speak to me has to stop." This was the first time I'd ever had a real talk with my grandfather, much less admonished him.

"Yes, ma'am," he said mockingly, but he seemed to take my words to heart and rarely spoke disrespectfully to me again. When he needed something, he



LIKE GRANDFATHER, LIKE GRANDDAUGHTER
Mary with Bill on his ninety-seventh birthday

even started asking, “Could I have some help?”

During our trips to the VA, we slowly got to know each other. When Bill went in for a monthly checkup, a young man in a wheelchair who was missing a leg introduced himself as an Iraq War veteran and asked Bill, “Were you in combat, sir?” All the veterans we met there treated the eldest among them like royalty.

“No, I was a mapmaker,” Bill said. “We’d go up in helicopters and snap aerial photographs and piece them together like a puzzle. I’d draw the maps from that.”

“Wow, Granddaddy Bill, I didn’t know that!” I said. “That’s so cool.”

“I’m a cool dude,” he said, chuckling. “After the war, I studied and practiced on my own, learning how to draw house plans.” I’d had no idea he’d

started his business without a degree. “You’re the very definition of a self-made man,” I said.

A few months later, Granddaddy Bill had to have cataract surgery. Ornerly as ever, he refused to take off his wedding ring, even after the doctor explained the risk of contamination and infection. “Since I first put this ring on, I’ve never once taken it off,” Bill said, “and I’m not about to start now.” He told the doctor how he and my grandmother, who’d died of cancer 12 years earlier, had loved going ballroom dancing. Another wonderful and surprising thing I’d never known!

“Don’t you love all this time we get to spend together here without the kids around?” I asked Bill after the surgery.

“I will say, it is nice to be away from those young’uns.” He smiled at me. “I know you need the break from ’em too. How are you feelin’ lately?”

“Fine, Bill,” I said. “Thanks for asking.” After all these years, my grandfather was actually offering me comfort. It was equally amazing to me that I could accept it. This man I’d avoided and been fearful of for most of my life was now becoming a cherished part of it, something I could never have imagined.

By the summer of 2016, the hearing in Granddaddy Bill’s right ear had gotten so bad that he grudgingly agreed to get a hearing aid. When the audiologist fit the device in his ear, Bill told her that it was too squeaky. I crossed my fingers that he would actually wear it—serving as his personal hearing aid had become a chore.

After the appointment, I asked Granddaddy Bill, “You ready to go to the gift shop and hunt down some chocolate?” “Is the Pope Catholic?” he said. Bill was a chocoholic who averaged 10 king-size candy bars a week. In addition to a lapful of chocolate, he also picked out several new polo shirts. As we finished up our shopping, he took out the hearing aid and handed it to me. “Throw this away,” he told me.

“But Granddaddy Bill...”

“I’m not wearing it, Mary, and that’s that,” he said. I was disappointed but knew when Bill had decided something, that was that.

OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, OUR visits to the VA became more frequent as Granddaddy Bill’s health continued to decline, Parkinson’s weakening his ability to swallow, his strength and his cognition. In March of 2018, Bill developed a nasty cough. When I came downstairs to his basement apartment to check on him one day, I found him lying in bed, his teeth chattering and his lips blue. “I’m calling an ambulance,” I said. He sat up. “No, Mary, you are not! I ain’t going into no hospital!”

“Sorry, Granddaddy Bill,” I said, laying my hand gently on his shoulder, “but it’s my job to take care of you.” It was the first time in our relationship that I’d overridden his authority, his autonomy. Our roles were shifting, and the more decisions I made for his care, the more I saw that my grandfather and I were cut from the same cloth.

Like him, when I decided something, that was that. I wasn’t too much for him anymore. I was just what he needed.

In the following months, Granddaddy Bill fought one bout of pneumonia after another. The only place he still enjoyed visiting was the VA gift shop, a ritual after every appointment. When I took him in for lab tests on a blustery December day, he announced, “I want a World War II Veteran baseball cap.” We searched the gift shop shelves until another vet told us they no longer carried the WWII caps because there weren’t enough men left to buy them. We never got a chance to go to the gift shop again.

On New Year’s Eve 2018, I wheeled Granddaddy Bill into the VA emergency room. Through blue lips, he sang “Jingle Bells” over and over again. “Ouch,” he said as the nurses lifted him onto a stretcher. “What’s hurtin’, Bill?” I asked. “My pride,” he said in a moment of clarity before he began singing again. Then he stopped to look at me, and even through his confusion, he asked, “You okay, honey?”

“Oh, Bill, I’m going to miss you,” I said, squeezing his hand.

After this hospitalization, I moved him into a memory care assisted living facility, where he could get the specialized care he needed. Granddaddy Bill died five months later. I knew I was blessed to have been given the opportunity—one that I’d taken, challenges and all—to get to know my grandfather before it was too late. He was indeed one cool dude. 

Capturing Memories for Someone With Alzheimer's

For someone who has memory loss due to Alzheimer's or other dementias, memories from long ago are usually more vivid than recent ones. As Mary Pembleton found with her grandfather, asking about earlier days can help you develop a closer relationship. Try these tips from Home Instead Senior Care to evoke and capture memories for your loved one:

Ask open-ended questions. They can spark a meaningful conversation. Work up to the deeper questions. Some ideas: What was it like where you grew up? What did your parents and grandparents do for a living? What did you and your friends do for fun as teenagers? What are some valuable things you learned from your parents? What accomplishments are you most proud of? What are you most grateful for?

Look through old photos together. Offer your comments to get started: "That looks like Grandma" or "This must be from your honeymoon." If certain photos elicit vivid memories, set them aside to revisit later. Or create a scrapbook: Collect photos and mementos, and write down snippets of personal history that go with them.

Tell "I remember when" stories, and record them on video. All generations will have fun sharing stories and watching the video afterward.

Create a family tree. Compile a genealogy and other info about prior generations with the help of your loved one, especially if he or she is the only living link to your family's history.

Make a memory box. The sense of touch can trigger recall. Gather items that have meaning to your family member in one place—a box, a basket, a drawer. Have the person hold each item and share what it brings to mind. You can put together themed boxes with items relating to a specific experience, such as a favorite trip, a baseball game, a nature walk.

Listen to music from their younger days. Even after dementia limits verbal communication, people still remember and respond to music, particularly from their youth. Make a "life soundtrack": Include hits from each decade of your loved one's life, songs from their wedding, favorite hymns or carols, music featuring an instrument they played—and sing or clap along together to it.

Cook or bake a special family recipe. Because the sense of smell has the most direct connection to memory, the aroma of a favorite dish can bring back wonderful memories.

*For more tips on caring for someone who has dementia, visit **helpforalzheimersfamilies.com**.*



The first morning I helped Stanley down the stairs, the third step creaked. That's when I found out his wife, Martha always told him to fix it. And now he's just glad he never did, because that's home. I love hearing Stanley's stories about home. And now I get to be a part of them.

Maddie G.

— **Maddie G.**
Stanley's CAREGiver



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Women (*and Men*) Embrace Breakthrough Pill

Top medical doctor's natural formula targets your thyroid to combat lack of energy, mood, and more.

Patient after patient had similar complaints — lack of energy, mood swings, lack of romantic interest, and even more weight gain!

That's when Dr. David Brownstein discovered there was a common cause — a problem with his patients' thyroid!

In fact, 80% of Americans suffer from sub-optimal thyroid function. And women over 45 are particularly vulnerable.

"An incredible number of people across the country visit their doctor each year complaining of feeling tired, grumpy, or not quite right. Far too many of them are told this is normal for their age. Or even worse, that it's all in their head," says Dr. Brownstein.

"Don't buy into this big lie," he warns, "because nothing could be further from the truth."

Thyroid Test Not Always Accurate

Dr. Brownstein cautions: Very few people realize their thyroid isn't functioning adequately.

And a common lab test for thyroid function may be misleading. So unfortunately, many sufferers have been told their thyroid

is just fine when it's actually operating at a sub-par level.

Jumpstart Your Thyroid, Get Energy

Your tiny thyroid gland drives the metabolic rate of every cell in your body, 24 hours a day. It particularly impacts your energy level, your weight, and your mood.

From the beating of your heart to the function of your sex organs, your thyroid exerts a powerful hormonal influence on numerous critical tasks throughout your body.

Dr. Brownstein created a natural formula called **ACTALIN**® — a proprietary blend of 17 nutrients beneficial to thyroid health, including iodine.

And contrary to what you hear, the iodine in table salt is simply not enough for full thyroid health.

With daily use, **ACTALIN** provides the body with a non-drug way to rev up a sluggish thyroid and regain lost energy. In fact, **ACTALIN** has become so popular, over 600,000 bottles have already been sold.

Users Call ACTALIN® a 'Godsend'

"It is wonderful. For the first time in many years, I have my numbers right on my thyroid test. God bless you Dr. Brownstein."

Lois W. — Goldthwaite, TX

"My hair has stopped falling out and I am not so cold all the time any more. My energy has also improved."

Janice M. — Romulus, MI

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MYSTERIOUS WAYS

MORE THAN COINCIDENCE

I stepped into the furniture and carpet store and breathed in the familiar scent of leather and wood. I found it relaxing. I worked part-time at the post office nearby. I often spent my lunch hour here, browsing.

My husband, our two young children and I were set to move into a home we'd built ourselves. We needed everything from furniture to light fixtures. But we'd put all the money we had into finishing the house. Still, that didn't stop me from dreaming of what could be.

What was really delaying our move was the lack of carpeting. Our floors were cement slabs; with the Ohio winter settling in, they were already icy cold. I'd kept an eye out for sales and discounts, but wall-to-wall carpet remained beyond our budget.

Today brought a new promotion: a raffle. The lucky person would win \$1,000 in store credit.

"You should enter," a voice said.

I turned around. It was the store owner. We'd had several conversations, especially after I complimented him on the Christian music he played over the speakers. He was a pastor, always ready with a kind smile or a touching story about his congregation.

"But I've never bought anything here," I said. "Technically I'm not even a customer."

"Anyone can enter, Anita," the store owner said. "Go ahead!"

I filled out multiple entry forms. They were among hundreds of entries. But it was worth a shot, I supposed. On my way out, I stopped in the doorway and whispered, "Lord, you know my needs. I leave this up to you."

Weeks passed. Then my phone rang. "Congratulations!" boomed a voice. It was the son of the store owner. "We just held the drawing," he told me, "and you won!" I couldn't believe it. I'd never won anything that big before!

We'd put all we had into finishing the house we'd built. Still, that didn't stop me from dreaming of what could be.

After giving me details, he paused. "Anita," he said, his tone serious, "you were meant to win this contest."

Well before picking the official winner, the son of the owner told me, he and the store secretary had held a test run. He reached deep into the metal drum of entries and pulled out a slip. My entry form. He tossed it back in and mixed up the papers. The secretary picked next.

"Again, it was yours," he said. "Neither of us was surprised when your name was drawn this morning. Someone knew you needed this."

ANITA WINKELMAN
Tucson, Arizona

My Perfect Family

“Do you know your baby is black?” Of course I did. But why would the nurse ask such a question?

BY KATIE BROWN, Los Angeles, California

SHE IS MINE, AND I AM HERS, I TOLD myself, sitting in the waiting room of the geneticist my daughter’s pediatrician had recommended. I looked down at the tiny bundle in my arms, newly adopted Meredith, only one month old. I was here to learn her genetic history. Something her birth mother, Misty, who was white, couldn’t tell us in full. We knew Meredith was a baby of color, but was she Hispanic, African-American, Asian, Native American?

I tried to push away the selfish feeling that I wanted Meredith’s history to be mine. She may not have come from my body, but she had been born of my heart after much prayer. I thought of my miscarriages. The many failed adoptions. My husband, William, and I had almost given up hope of a second child when the possibility of Meredith floated into our lives just a month be-

fore she was born. Was she the answer to our prayers? William and I were beyond thrilled and somewhat stunned when, a few weeks later, we flew to Ohio, where Misty entrusted us with a tiny baby who seemed so pure and perfect. But could I love her the way I loved my biological daughter, Prentiss? *I hope I’m worthy of Meredith*, I thought.

I held Meredith close in the geneticist’s waiting room, her little mouth yawning. I wanted so badly to protect her. From physical and emotional pain. That’s why I was here. If she needed a sense of place, of her heritage later on, maybe this visit would help. *If we find out about Meredith’s people, would it make her less ours, less mine?* I wondered. Somehow it mattered. *I don’t want Meredith to be a part of any family*

STRONG BOND Katie and her younger daughter, Meredith

PHOTOS BY DAN MacMEDAN



but mine. I wasn't proud of this feeling.

We loved Meredith with our whole hearts, but we understood that she would face different challenges than we had experienced. I'd known it in theory long before she was born and then—suddenly, heartbreakingly—again right after her birth.

MEREDITH HAD BEEN BORN premature. The NICU nurses, perhaps sensing my heartache and feelings of inadequacy at not being able to nurse Meredith the way I had Prentiss, taught me how to hold her as she was being fed through a tube. Then later, how to fill Meredith's bottles and get her little self to drink.

I was particularly fond of one nurse who seemed to spend the most time with us. It probably helped that this nurse was a fan of my television show. *What luck!* I thought.

"I love all your recipes," the nurse said one morning. She ran a few tests and handed Meredith back to me.

"Thank you," I said, beaming. It was sheer bliss to hold Meredith tight, skin to skin, and smell her head. How blessed I felt to be chosen to be her mom! But was that enough to make me her mother?

The nurse sat down next to me. "You know your baby is black?"

I froze. Maybe I had misheard her. "What?"

"Do you know your baby is black?"

I sat up straighter and held Meredith tighter. Like a lioness protecting her cub. "Yes, I do. But why would you ask that?"

"Well, I just thought someone like you would like to have the perfect family," the nurse said.

My jaw stiffened. *Excuse me?* I felt hot rage deep down in my bones. Rage that only a mother would know. Through the rage, I also felt deep sadness. It hit me that Meredith would grow up in a world very different than my own. A world full of people like this nurse. A world I could not always protect her from. The sting of racism, now so personal and unavoidable, felt as if God were shining a light into some very dark corners. Places I'd never had to go.

"I do have the perfect family," I said. "Meredith makes my family perfect."

William and I brought Meredith home to New York after a week in the NICU. We were overjoyed to be able to start this new chapter of our lives together. But soon after we got settled, Meredith got sick. Was it more than a cold? She was listless, her light brown skin paler than usual. I took her to an appointment the next day for a weigh-in and checkup and mentioned my concerns to the pediatrician.

"She's just badly congested," the doctor assured me. But I felt uneasy with her diagnosis. Something in my gut told me otherwise.

"I'm surprised," I said. "I thought when we got here you were going to send us directly to the hospital."

The doctor furrowed her brow and pressed the stethoscope against Meredith's back. Seconds later, she shot up, dialed a number and within min-



EMBRACING THE SACRED Katie (here with daughters Meredith and Prentiss) looks to discover God in her everyday life.

utes had an ambulance waiting for us outside. We were rushed through the streets of New York, sirens screaming. *Please keep her alive*, I begged. No more *Am I the best mother I can be to Meredith?* No more *Am I worthy of her?* Just *Please, God, please*.

Meredith was intubated at the hospital and diagnosed with RSV, respiratory syncytial virus. Though most cases of RSV result in nothing more than a cold, premature babies have a greater risk of developing a life-threatening infection. Meredith, her head wrapped and breathing with the help of a machine, was wheeled into a private room so as not to infect the other patients. William came to meet

us, and together we hovered over our precious daughter.

My minister and his wife, Terri, joined us. Terri took my hand.

"I don't know if I can do this," I said, looking at Meredith.

Terri squeezed my hand harder. "You can and you will. You must be strong enough for this. Your daughter needs you."

Could I be strong enough? Could I be the mother Meredith needed?

After several agonizing days, we were finally given the green light to take Meredith home again. The whole ordeal made me realize that I needed to be better prepared when and if Meredith had another medical emergency. Our pediatrician suggested I learn all I could about her family history.

"We *are* her family!" I wanted to shout. But I knew if I truly loved Meredith, if I wanted to keep her safe, I would do everything in my power to help her. And that included fulfilling the need she might have one day to know who she was. Her birth mother, Misty, had given us such a precious gift. She had been our angel. I couldn't endanger Meredith with my selfishness. I took a deep breath and scheduled an appointment with the geneticist.

Now here I was in the waiting room. The receptionist called my name.

I stood up with Meredith. *I'm going to get a lecture*, I thought as we walked into the back office.

The doctor came in. If you were casting the role of a top geneticist and needed someone who seemed sympa-

thetic and wise, you would cast this woman. She looked like a young Jane Goodall. “How can I help you?” she asked in a tender voice, perhaps sensing my trepidation.

Help me? I wanted to run out of the room. Take my Meredith and never come back. But I pushed through my ego. Through my shame. Pushed into the space of love. “Meredith is adopted,” I told the geneticist. “I was hoping you could tell me what her racial makeup is. We do not know if Meredith is African or Hispanic. We want to know

related.” She went on to explain that all people around the world today can trace their genetic ancestry to Africa and that variations in skin color have to do with people’s proximity to the sun. “What I can do is tell you the region of the world your daughter’s tribe is from. But know that her race, your race, are the same. The differences between your genetic makeup and hers are simple and minuscule.”

A sense of calm washed over me. Was it possible? Meredith and me—we were the same. I looked into her eyes, and she gazed up at me trustingly. *Yes, of course.* She was a part of us, and we were a part of her long before this day. Connected biologically. And spiritually. A verse from Galatians flashed

Was it possible? Meredith and me—we were the same. I looked into her eyes, and she gazed up at me trustingly.

so that we can help supplement her health record history. So I may help her settle...”—my voice caught in my throat—“any uncertainty she may have due to not knowing.”

I TOOK A DEEP BREATH. I WANTED SO desperately to do the right thing, to be the mother Meredith deserved. To be both completely loving and completely selfless.

My Jane Goodall sighed. “I’m not sure you’re asking the right question.” She placed her hand on mine and said, “Meredith is more like you than not. Ninety-nine percent of her genetic makeup is identical to yours. We have learned that all humans are closely

through my mind: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

I walked out of the geneticist’s office into the sunlight, chuckling to myself, holding Meredith close. I had been seeking to define what made Meredith different from me. Instead, I had been treated to an education in what made us the same. Only God could have orchestrated a way to reassure me when I needed it most. He had connected me with an expert who blessed me with her empathy. I already had all I needed to be a real mother to my daughter. **G**

For more on this story, see FAMILY ROOM

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Open Mind, Open Heart

It's never too late to learn something new

BY JIM HINCH, Senior Editor

THERE'S NO MAGIC FORMULA FOR LIVING longer and better. But a certain character trait makes getting older a lot more rewarding: having an open mind and heart.

Just ask David Starbuck of Chertertown, New York; Shirley Uekert of Marathon, Wisconsin; or Dave Jackson of Fishers, Indiana. These three very different people in their sixties, seventies and eighties live every day with the highs and lows of aging.

They thrive through it all by learning.

David, an archeologist, continues digging up military history in upstate New York despite a diagnosis of advanced pancreatic cancer.

Shirley, a farm wife whose husband died several years ago, defied a lifelong fear of water and learned to swim in her seventies.

Dave is a retired pharmaceutical chemist who spent much of his life



in a quiet, orderly laboratory—then plunged into acting not long after his own cancer diagnosis.

All three told me it is never too late to learn a new skill, try a new experi-

ence or listen intently for whatever life and God are trying to teach you. In fact, David, Shirley and Dave described their openness to whatever comes next as a cornerstone of their vitality. They live longer and better by envisioning their lives, and their souls, as unfinished projects.

Here are their stories—and their hard-won, inspiring wisdom.



David Starbuck

Chestertown, New York

Last August, a doctor told 70-year-old David Starbuck he had advanced pancreatic cancer, a diagnosis with a six-

month to one-year survival prognosis.

David had a ready comeback. “I vowed I would prove that doctor wrong and live for years,” he told me. “It’s the stubborn, ornery ones who survive. We archeologists are like that. I live for whatever I’ll discover next.”

David is not exaggerating. He teaches anthropology at Plymouth State University in New Hampshire. For the past three decades, he has devoted his life to the painstaking excavation of one of North America’s most important eighteenth-century military sites: Fort Edward, near Glens Falls, New York, a redoubt for 15,000 British army troops during the French and Indian War.

David supports the work with the help of nearby State University of New York Adirondack plus grants, private donations, volunteer labor and sometimes his own money. Though he gets a university salary, David, like many scientists, must secure his own research funding.

You might think the Yale-trained archeologist, who has dug everywhere from ancient Mexican ruins to the factory where cotton gin inventor Eli Whitney once produced firearms, would be content to rest on his laurels. “A lot of archeologists never want to retire,” he says. “We are programmed toward that passionate love of discovery.”

In addition to supervising annual summer digs at Fort Edward and nearby Rogers Island, David keeps busy writing research reports, applying for

STAY CURIOUS David supervises a dig at Fort Edward, on the Hudson River.

grants and laying the groundwork for what he hopes will become a visitor-friendly site at Fort Edward, similar to Fort Ticonderoga and other colonial-era destinations.

He does all this while commuting weekly to Plymouth State from his family farm in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. David, a lifelong bachelor, inherited the farm from his parents. In Plymouth, he stays in a motel.

“Some people have families to live for,” he says. “I live for archeology.”

David has published almost 20 books and monographs and been written up in newspapers and magazines. He loves the attention: He was a theater geek in high school. But attention is not what keeps him working—and living—through the challenges of cancer and aging.

“Archeologists are storytellers,” he says. A single small artifact—an officer’s brass cuff link, say—can conjure an entire world from the past. “It’s no longer abstract history. You’re connecting with someone from hundreds of years ago.”

Finding and sharing those moments keep David alive—physically and spiritually. “The best site,” he says, “is always the one you’re about to find.”

Shirley Uekert

Marathon, Wisconsin

The bet was one muffin.

Shirley, then almost 70, was chatting with a bank teller. She told the teller her latest news: At long last, she was going to learn to swim. “I was petrified of the water,” Shirley says—and always had been.

The teller, Sue Werner, tried to talk her out of it. “I used to be a swim instructor,” Sue said. “When people reach your age, they can’t learn to swim.”

Had Sue known Shirley better, she might have tried a different argument. (“I’m a determined person once I put my mind to something,” Shirley says.)

“I’ll bet a muffin you can’t,” Sue said.

Shirley was in the pool taking lessons that week.

Shirley had grown up in Wausau, Wisconsin, during the Great Depression. Her father hauled furniture for a store.

AQUAWOMAN Shirley is ready for some laps.



Her mother stayed home. That was Shirley's plan too. She married her husband, Eugene, when she was 25 and moved to his 240-acre farm, where he grew oats, hay and corn. Shirley and Eugene lived on the second floor of the farmhouse. His parents lived downstairs.

Shirley raised five children there and learned from her mother-in-law how to bake, can, garden and "do everything to keep farm life going," she says.

A self-described "shy and timid person," Shirley opened up when she met her neighbor, Phyllis Heise, whose farm was across the road. The two women have been best friends ever since, taking trips to places their stay-at-home farmer husbands didn't want to visit.

Shortly before that bank visit, Phyllis, who also didn't know how to swim, came home raving about a shallow-water exercise class she'd signed up for at the local pool. A chiropractor had recommended water exercise for Phyllis's achy knee.

Shirley was dubious. Earlier that year, while visiting one of her kids in Arizona, she'd clung for dear life to three foam flotation noodles in the family's backyard pool—in the shallow end.

Phyllis convinced her to try the class. Shirley discovered that, as long as she kept her feet planted on the bottom of the pool, she had a good time.

Still, it bothered her to watch other people her age nonchalantly swimming laps. Why couldn't she do that? She and Phyllis talked each other into taking lessons.

"The instructor had us stand in three-foot water and float on our stomachs,

and I was terrified," Shirley says of the first lesson. "We wanted to use the noodles, but she would not allow us to. She said we'd become dependent. We had to keep practicing and practicing. Once I almost drowned. I still made myself do it."

Eventually she worked up enough courage to venture into five-foot water. Then she paddled into the nine-foot deep end. At last she swam an entire lap. Two months later, she swam a mile.

I asked Shirley, now 87, where she gets her determination. "I am very strong in my Lord," she says. "I depend on him for everything. You need spiritual strength to keep going."

A homemade muffin helps too. Sue honored her bet and even made an extra lemon poppy seed muffin for Phyllis.

"That muffin tasted pretty sweet," Shirley says.

Dave Jackson

Fishers, Indiana

About five minutes after I started talking to Dave Jackson, he was telling me about his laboratory work for pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly and Co. I lost track when he got to the part about developing "systems to monitor the assay."

Dave is even-tempered, measured, precise. "I have always been in the chemistry lab," he says. "I love doing science. The lab fit my personality."

Shortly after Dave retired, his 31-year-old daughter, Emily, asked him an unexpected question: "Hey, Dad, would you be interested in trying out for a play?"

Emily had been cast in an Agatha Christie play at the community theater.



A NEW LIFE ONSTAGE David with his daughter, Emily, in a community theater production of Agatha Christie's *Spider Web*

She worked for an insurance company but acted in her spare time. Dave and his wife, Leanne, lived nearby.

Dave's answer was equally unexpected: "Sure, why not?"

It wasn't just Dave's chemistry background that made acting a surprise. A few months earlier, Dave had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The cancer was a less aggressive form, but he had a monthly treatment regimen to stop the growth of tumors and manage secondary symptoms. (As you might expect, Dave described this treatment in great scientific detail.)

Why audition? He had done some acting in high school. When his kids were younger, he'd appeared in a few home-made plays for a church fund-raiser.

There was also the benefit of spending more time with Emily. The two saw each other mostly on Sunday evenings, when Dave dropped by Emily's apartment for a weekly movie night. The two of them like the kind of action movies that Leanne "isn't into," Dave says.

But there was something deeper. The 66-year-old says throughout his life, and especially after the cancer diagnosis, he has felt that "God wants me to learn something. He's trying to teach me."

For Dave, life is for learning. School, work, marriage, fatherhood, church, retirement, cancer—each milestone is a chapter in God's unfolding story. In Dave's view, openness to new experiences, even something as offbeat as acting, is staying alert to God's teaching.

Dave landed the role of Constable Jones, who has four lines and finds what turns out to be a vital clue. He and Emily rehearsed during the drive to and from the theater. Dave got to watch his daughter shine onstage. His theater friends rallied around him as he underwent treatment. He has since acted in one more play and plans to audition for another this summer.

Dave says acting has deepened his relationship with Emily—and with God. "I feel as if God's not done with me yet," he says. "I'm still around and, in the meantime, getting lessons about love." **G**

For more on this story, see **FAMILY ROOM**



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Penny From Heaven

“DID YOU UNDERSTAND ANYTHING they said?” I asked.

Behind the wheel of our van, my husband, Nick, shook his head. “Something about...beekeeping?”

It was a Saturday afternoon, April 13, 2019. We were on our way home from a seminar in Jacksonville, Texas. The lecturers had spoken on ways to reduce our ecological footprint—a cause our son Michael is passionate about. He’s always reminding us of our duty to preserve the earth. We recycled, took monastic showers, tried organic farming and attended seminars like this one. We liked to think of ourselves as well-informed. But the Jacksonville seminar had been too much.

We wanted to be good stewards of the earth. Installing solar panels, switching to a mostly plant-based diet and reducing plastic and water waste could be overwhelming, though. Did that make

We thought the tornado had passed, but then we got an alert. Too late

BY LINDA STRATIGAKIS
Houston, Texas

THROUGH THE STORM Linda and her husband, Nick, held close to each other and their faith.





us ungrateful and unworthy of the task God had given us? As we stood to leave, the host took the stage once more. “Take care out there,” he said. “There’s a tornado warning near Alto.”

Nick and I shrugged. This was northeast Texas, part of Tornado Alley. Still, we had to pass through Alto on our way back to Houston. Best to be careful.

We drove slowly on Highway 69 South toward Alto, following the signals of local people who were helping the police direct traffic. I breathed a sigh of relief. *Phew, the tornado already hit.* We’d missed it. Then Alto came into view. There were downed utility poles everywhere. Sparks danced dangerously in the air. *How awful,* I thought as we passed fallen trees, demolished houses and schools with major structural damage. *Lord, protect these people.*

THE WORDS CAME TO MIND EASILY, but doubt crept up in my stomach. Was God even listening?

I’d been feeling distant from God for years now, ever since 2003, when my father passed away from Alzheimer’s. It had been agonizing to watch him decline over the course of 10 years. First came the memory lapses, then the struggles to find the right word. Eventually Dad lost everything that made him who he was—he couldn’t enjoy baseball anymore (in his younger days, he had played in the New York Yankees organization) or even recognize the people he loved and devoted his life to. Mom, his wife of more than six de-

CADES. His children and grandchildren. I tried to comfort myself by thinking of “Pennies From Heaven,” the song Dad used to sing to me when I was a child. *So when you hear it thunder, don’t run under a tree. / There’ll be pennies from heaven for you and me.*

“Whenever life throws you a curve ball, I’ll be there for you,” he’d say at the kitchen table. “No matter what.”

Dad had held on to that promise for as long as he could, but I wasn’t so sure about God’s promises anymore. Not after what he’d let happen to a good man like my father.

Nick and I now headed west on Highway 21. I saw signs for a festival at the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, a former Native American settlement just outside Alto. There were 50 or so cars in the parking lot. Like Nick and me, those people had been lucky to escape the tornado. Some of the cars behind us turned into the lot after we passed. *They must be going to the festival,* I thought.

Beep, beep, beep. My phone made a noise from my pocket. Not a regular text. An emergency alert. I pulled it out and read, “Take shelter immediately.”

I was just about to relay the warning to Nick when an enormous tree fell right on our windshield, slamming the van to a stop in the only grove for miles. *Too late to take shelter!*

Darkness spread across the sky like spilled paint. The wind howled. Three more trees fell on top of us. Before I could brace myself, the wind spun our van counterclockwise into a red dirt embankment, wedging us in deep. Was



AFTERMATH "It seemed as if the trees used their limbs to hold us in place," Linda says.

it just my imagination, or were the trees using their limbs to bury the end of the van into the dirt, holding us in place?

The tornado raged on, trying to yank us into the air. Our van was like an unbalanced washing machine, rocking back and forth, up and down. Yet I didn't scream. Or gasp. Or say a word. I felt oddly calm. I looked out my side window. The glass had been sucked out. *Anything could come flying in and knock us out*, I thought. Nick and I tried to get as low as we could, forcing ourselves down onto the floorboards, straining our seatbelts to the limit.

I glanced up. The dashboard—it was gone! Ripped away by the wind. Only wires left, blue and red, dangling. I felt Nick's hand close over mine. I squeezed back, hoping he would sense what I did—that somehow we were being sheltered from the storm.

Then I saw it. A flash of copper on the floor under the dashboard wires. A penny! How had it not been sucked into the tornado?

In my mid-fifties, after my father

was deep in his battle with dementia, I'd gone back to school to get a master's degree in French at the University of North Texas. School is hard for everyone, but for someone my age? Exhausting. But every time I thought I'd give up and quit, every time I felt as if nobody cared whether I passed or not, I'd find a shiny penny. On the ground, by the water fountain, on top of a pile of books in the library. Everywhere and anywhere. As if Dad were somehow reaching out to say, *I'm watching over you*. It had become a running joke in our family—Dad's messages to Linda.

Now, as the tornado held our van under siege, Nick's eyes found mine. Neither of us had to say anything. We knew what the penny meant.

The wind continued howling, the rain pelting. We ducked our heads and held on tight. Then light began filtering in through the cracked windshield, breaking through the ominous dark. Was this just a pause in the mayhem? Was a third twister bearing down on us? No. It was over. We'd made it! I pulled myself up and looked out the side window. A tree stripped of all its bark and branches leaned precariously over the van, but it hadn't fallen. It could've crushed me.

Nick and I pushed our way out through the door on my side, which was easier to open because it had been nearly ripped clean off. "I'm going to start digging us out," Nick said and began pulling up clumps of mud with his bare hands. I walked around the van to survey the damage. The front end was

totally caved in. Someone had indeed protected us. *Thanks, Dad*, I thought.

I punched 911 on my phone. The call went through, but the dispatcher on the other end couldn't hear me. Not with all the electrical interference from the storm. I tried calling my sister, Sandy, in Houston. No luck—she couldn't hear me either. But a second later, I got an incoming call from her husband, John.

"Everything okay?" John said, concerned. "Sandy says she couldn't hear you on her phone."

I told John about the tornado hitting us. He called the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department. Nick phoned a friend one town over to come get us. Officers pulled up. The sheriff took one look at our van and asked, "Lady, are you all right?"

YES, I WAS FINE. SO WAS NICK. WE were lucky to be alive. More rescue workers soon arrived—three helicopters and four police cars. By then, other folks were making their way to the grove. People from the festival who had seen what happened, families from nearby neighborhoods. An elderly woman and her husband walked over and asked, "Would you and your husband like to stay at our house tonight?"

"Thank you," I said. "But our friend is on his way."

It felt as if everybody wanted to help us: police, rescue workers and regular folks. I'd heard people call East Texas God's country, and that day I really understood why.



MESSAGE FROM DAD The penny Linda found under the van's dashboard wires

I stared into the grove, trying to put the events in order in my mind. Leaving the seminar and driving through Alto, passing the festival, the tree falling on our van and stopping us. I knew the insurance people would ask us a million questions. I wanted to be prepared, but I was still too stunned to process what had happened.

It wasn't until weeks later, sitting at our kitchen table and thinking about it some more, that I realized in our utter helplessness in the middle of the tornado, I had reached instinctively for God. Not with words but with my heart. And that breached the distance I'd felt from him. God was the one who pinned our van to the ground and protected us, sending us a sign that I, especially, would immediately understand. Who reminded me, through the wind and the rain and the darkness, "I am watching over you."

G

For more on this story, see **FAMILY ROOM**

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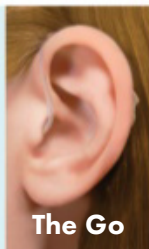
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The Education of Ruby Nell

She was six years old in 1960, when the nation watched her lead us into a new era. She told her story in our March 2000 issue

BY RUBY BRIDGES HALL, New Orleans, Louisiana



TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT the cover of this magazine. The little girl on the left is me in November 1960, walking up the steps of William Frantz Public School in New Orleans, the first black student at the formerly all-white elementary school. That's me now, on the right, married, a mother of four.

Forty years separate those pictures. Forty years that brought incredible change in our country, forged in the crucible of the civil rights movement and the battle to end segregation. Forty years that changed me as well.

I was born in Mississippi in 1954, the oldest child of Abon and Lucille Bridges. That year, the United States Supreme Court handed down its landmark decision ordering the integration of public schools. Not that I knew any-

thing about school at the time. What I knew and loved

was growing up on the farm my paternal grandparents sharecropped.

It was a very hard life, though, and my parents heard there were better opportunities in the city. We moved to New Orleans, where my father found work as a service station attendant, and my mother took night jobs to help support our growing family.

As I got a bit older, my job was to keep an eye on my younger brothers and sister, which wasn't too difficult. Except for church and the long walk to the all-black school where I went to kindergarten, our world didn't extend beyond our block. But that was about to change.

Under federal court order, New Orleans public schools were finally





forced to desegregate. In the spring of 1960, I took a test, along with other black kindergartners in the city, to see who would go to an integrated school come September. That summer, my parents learned I'd passed the test and had been selected to start first grade at William Frantz Public School.

My mother was all for it. My father wasn't. "We're just asking for trouble," he said. He thought things weren't going to change, that blacks and whites would never be treated as equals. Mama thought I would have an opportunity to get a better education if I went to the new school—and a chance for a good job later in life. My parents argued about it

and prayed about it. Eventually my mother convinced my father that, despite the risks, they had to take this step forward, not just for their own children but for all black children.

A federal judge decreed that Monday, November 14, 1960, would be the day black children in New Orleans would go to school with white children. There were six of us chosen to integrate the city's public school system. Two decided to stay in their old schools. The other three were assigned to McDonogh. I would be going to William Frantz alone.

The morning of November 14, federal marshals drove my mother and me the five blocks to William Frantz. In the car, one of the men explained that when we arrived at the school, two marshals would walk in front of us and two behind, so we'd

be protected on both sides.

That reminded me of what Mama had taught us about God, that he is always there to protect us. "Ruby Nell," she said as we pulled up to my new school, "don't be afraid. There might be some people upset outside, but I'll be with you."

Sure enough, people shouted and shook their fists when we got out of the



TRAILBLAZER Ruby integrated William Frantz Public School in New Orleans. (Inset) Her GUIDEPOSTS cover 20 years ago

car, but to me it wasn't any noisier than Mardi Gras. I held my mother's hand and followed the marshals through the crowd, up the steps into the school.

We spent that whole day sitting in the principal's office. Through the window, I saw white parents pointing at us and yelling, then rushing their children out of the school. In the uproar, I never got to my classroom.

THE MARSHALS DROVE MY MOTHER and me to school again the next day. I tried not to pay attention to the mob. Someone had a black doll in a coffin, and that scared me more than the nasty things people screamed at us.

A young white woman met us inside the building. She smiled at me. "Good morning, Ruby Nell," she said, just like Mama except with what I later learned was a Boston accent. "Welcome. I'm your new teacher, Mrs. Henry." She seemed nice, but I wasn't sure how to feel about her. I'd never been taught by a white teacher before.

Mrs. Henry took my mother and me to her second-floor classroom. All the desks were empty, and she asked me to choose a seat. I picked one up front, and Mrs. Henry started teaching me the letters of the alphabet.

The next morning, my mother told me she couldn't go to school with me. She had to work and look after my brothers and sister. "The marshals will take good care of you, Ruby Nell," Mama assured me. "Remember, if you get afraid, say your prayers. You can

pray to God anytime, anywhere. He will always hear you."

That was how I started praying on the way to school. The things people yelled at me didn't seem to touch me. Prayer was my protection. After walking up the steps past the angry crowd, though, I was glad to see Mrs. Henry. She gave me a hug, and she sat right by my side instead of at the big teacher's desk in the front of the room. Day after day, it was just Mrs. Henry and me, working on my lessons.

Militant segregationists, as the news called them, took to the streets in protest, and riots erupted all over the city. My parents shielded me as best they could, but I knew problems had come to our family because I was going to the white school. My father was fired from his job. The white owners of a grocery store told us not to shop there anymore. Even my grandparents in Mississippi suffered. The owner of the land they'd sharecropped for 25 years said everyone knew it was their granddaughter causing trouble in New Orleans, and asked them to move.

At the same time, there were a few white families who braved the protests and kept their children in school. But they weren't in my class, so I didn't see them. People from around the country who'd heard about me on the news sent letters and donations. A neighbor gave my father a job painting houses. Other folks babysat for us, watched our house to keep away troublemakers, even walked behind the marshals' car on my way to school. My family

couldn't have made it without our friends' and neighbors' help.

And me, I couldn't have gotten through that year without Mrs. Henry. Sitting next to her in our classroom, just the two of us, I was able to forget the world outside. She made school fun. We did everything together. I couldn't go out in the schoolyard for recess, so right in that room we played games and for exercise did jumping jacks to music.

I remember her explaining integration to me and why some people were against it. "It's not easy for people to change once they've gotten used to living a certain way," Mrs. Henry said. "Some of them don't know any better, and they're afraid. But not everyone is like that."

Even though I was only six, I understood what she meant. The people I passed every morning as I walked up the school steps were full of hate. They were white, yet so was my teacher, who couldn't have been more different from them. She was one of the most loving people I'd ever known. The greatest lesson I learned that year in Mrs. Henry's class was the lesson Martin Luther King Jr. tried to teach us all. Never judge people by the color of their skin. God makes each of us unique in ways that go much deeper.

From her window, Mrs. Henry al-



HISTORIC U.S. marshals escorted Ruby to school.

ways watched me walk into the school. One morning when I got to our classroom, she said she'd been surprised to see me talk to the mob. "I saw your lips moving," she said, "but I couldn't make out what you were saying to those people."

"I wasn't talking to them," I told her. "I was praying for them." Usually I prayed in the car on the way to school, but that day I'd forgotten until I was in the crowd. *Please be with*

me, I'd asked God, and be with those people too. Forgive them because they don't know what they're doing.

"Ruby Nell, you are truly someone special," Mrs. Henry whispered, giving me an even bigger hug than usual. She had this look on her face like my mother would get when I'd done something to make her proud.

Another person who helped me was Dr. Robert Coles, a child psychiatrist who happened to see me being escorted through the crowd outside my school. Dr. Coles volunteered to work with me through this ordeal. Soon he was coming to our house every week to talk with me about how I was doing in school.

Really, I was doing fine. I was always with people who wanted the best for me: my family, my friends and—in school—my teacher. The more time I spent with Mrs. Henry, the more I

grew to love her. I wanted to be like her. Soon, without realizing it, I had picked up her Boston accent.

Neither of us missed a single day of school that year. The crowd outside dwindled to just a few protestors, and before I knew it, it was June. For me, first grade ended much more quietly than it began. I said good-bye to Mrs. Henry, fully expecting her to be my teacher again in the fall.

But when I went back to school in September, everything was different. There were no marshals, no protestors. There were other kids—even some other black students—in my second-grade class. And Mrs. Henry was gone. I was devastated. Years later, I found out she hadn't been invited to return to William Frantz, and she and her husband had moved back to Boston. It was almost as if that first year of school integration had never happened. No one talked about it. Everyone seemed to have put that difficult time behind them.

After a while, I did the same. I finished grade school at William Frantz and graduated from an integrated high school, went to business school and studied travel and tourism. For 15 years I worked as a travel agent. Eventually I married and threw myself into raising four sons in the city I grew up in.

I didn't give much thought to the events of my childhood until my youngest brother died in 1993. For a time, I looked after his daughters. They happened to be students at William Frantz, and when I took them there every morning, I was literally walking into

my past, into the same school that I'd helped integrate years earlier.

I began volunteering three days a week at William Frantz, working as a liaison between parents and the school. Still, I had the feeling God had brought me back in touch with my past for something beyond that. I struggled with it for a while. Finally I got on my knees and prayed, *Lord, whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing, you'll have to show me.*

Not long after that, a reporter called the school. Psychiatrist Robert Coles had written a children's book, *The Story of Ruby Bridges*; now everyone wanted to know what had happened to the little girl in the famous Norman Rockwell painting that had appeared in *Look* magazine. No one expected to find me back at William Frantz. Dr. Coles had often written about me, but this was the first book intended for children. To me, it was God's way of keeping my story alive until I was able to tell it myself.

ONE OF THE BEST PARTS OF THE story is that I was finally reunited with my favorite teacher, Barbara Henry. She reached me through the publisher of Dr. Coles's book, and in 1995 we saw each other in person for the first time in more than three decades. The second she laid eyes on me, she cried, "Ruby Nell!" No one had called me that since I was a little girl. Then we were hugging each other, just like we used to every morning in first grade.

I didn't realize how much I had picked up from Mrs. Henry (I still have a hard time calling her anything else) — not only her Boston accent but her mannerisms too, such as how she tilts her head and gestures with her hands when she talks. She showed me a tiny, dog-eared photo of me with my front teeth missing that she'd kept all these years. "I used to look at that picture and wonder how you were," she said. "I told my kids about you so often, you were like a part of my family."

We have stayed a part of each other's lives ever since. It turns out that because of what I went through on the front lines of the battle

MEMORIALIZED

Norman Rockwell painted Ruby's first day.

for school integration, people recognize my name and are eager to hear what I have to say about racism and education today. I speak to groups around the country, and when I visit schools, Mrs. Henry often comes with me. We tell kids our story and talk about the lessons of the past and how we can still learn from them today—especially that every child is a unique human being fashioned by God.

I tell them another important thing I learned in first grade is that schools can be a place to bring people together—kids of all races and backgrounds. That's the work I focus on now, connecting our children through their schools. It's my way of continuing what God set in motion 40 years ago when he led me up the steps of William Frantz Public School and into a new world with my teacher, Mrs. Henry—a world that under his protection has reached far beyond just the two of us in that classroom. **G**



OUR PUPPY RESCUE MISSION

This was the dog that put joy back into the voice of the man I loved. Of course I had to help Chris bring Bear home from Afghanistan

BY ANNA MARIA CHIASSON, Fort Kent, Maine

ISAT CROSS-LEGGED ON MY BED IN the house I rented with some other students and stared at the phone. It was 10 P.M. on a Sunday in March 2010. I was in my last year of a college program in food science and nutrition, doing a dietetic internship. My fiancé, Chris, was deployed to Afghanistan with the 172nd Mountain Infantry of the Army National Guard, and he hadn't been able to call for almost two weeks. I took the framed photo from my nightstand and traced the lines of his face. He looked so strong, so capable in his camo fatigues, his eyes squinting against the Afghan sun.

Normally Chris was really social, the life of the party. But the last time we talked, the conversation had been dry and limited. He was being transferred

to another forward operating base (FOB). Deployed for just a few months, he'd already sounded war-weary. When I asked what it was like in the mountains of Pak-tia province, Chris described the abandoned animals roaming around looking for shelter and food—all in a flat voice. I was worried sick. Serving in a war zone was taking its toll on Chris, and I was helpless to do a thing about it except pray.

Finally the phone rang.

"Hi, babe," Chris said.

That's more like it! He hadn't sounded this upbeat in weeks.

"Guess what?" Chris said. "I found a puppy. I named her Bear."

"A puppy?" I couldn't keep from





smiling. Both of us were big-time animal lovers—one of the things we'd bonded over when we met during my senior year of high school.

Chris told me that a few weeks prior to his arrival at the FOB, a suicide bomber had entered the compound in the middle of the night. The stray dogs that hung around hoping for handouts started barking. One dog took off after the bomber. Another dog, Target, alerted the troops in their sleeping

GOOD DOG Thousands of overseas dogs and cats have been reunited with their service members because of Bear (with Anna).

quarters, just seconds before the bomber blew himself up. All the soldiers survived the attack. But Target was badly injured.

The very next day, she gave birth to a litter of puppies. The soldiers weren't about to let them die. They nursed Target back to health and cared for

her pups, feeding the dogs from their plates and loving the dogs as if they were their own.

“Bear is one of her puppies,” Chris said. He explained that in Afghan culture, dogs weren’t valued as companions. They were considered unclean and rarely let into homes.

“I won’t be at this outpost long, and pets are security risks,” he said. “I want to save Bear. Will you help me get her home to Maine?”

Get her home? How do you get an animal from Afghanistan to America? But this wasn’t just any animal. This was the pup that put joy back into the voice of the man I loved.

“Of course,” I said, trying to sound confident. I would do everything in my power to help Chris.

We hung up. I had no idea where to start, so I went to my laptop and looked up “rescuing dogs from Afghanistan.” Amazingly, a British website popped up. The good news was that this could be done. The bad news was that it would cost \$3,000. I was a full-time college student who had a nonpaying internship and did nannyng on the side to pay the rent. Where was I going to get that kind of money?

A couple days later, I opened my laptop and saw the sweetest picture I’d ever laid eyes on. My big, strong GI was cuddling a tiny brown-and-white ball of fur to his chest. She was a mixed breed with giant paws, five weeks old and 100 percent adorable. The smile on Chris’s face made me want to hug them both. I could see that Bear had gotten into Chris’s

heart. There was no question now: I had to get that puppy to the United States.

I didn’t have any savings. Chris was trying to put money away each month for our wedding. He’d banked almost \$1,000, but honestly, I wasn’t crazy about using our wedding savings to get a dog. We’d dated for five years, and ever since Chris proposed when he was home on leave, I’d been eager to set a wedding date.

As I was getting ready for bed, my eyes landed on the candle on my nightstand, reminding me of a fund-raiser that my church youth group had held. We’d sold scented candles and made \$5 profit on each one, with the proceeds going to missions. That was a good cause. So was this.

I ordered fund-raising candles from a manufacturer. Then I e-mailed everyone on my contact list and asked them to buy candles. At first there were no responses. So I e-mailed again, this time attaching the photo of Chris and Bear. The requests started rolling in. After a few weeks, I counted orders. Everyone was generous, but I had to sell 600 candles to raise the full amount to get the pup. Was there something else I could do?

Crossing campus one evening, I remembered how a sorority had organized an online raffle to raise money for charity. *Maybe I can do my own raffle!* I thought.

The next day, I approached a few businesses and asked if they’d donate items and services. They were happy to help. I e-mailed friends and family,



BATTLE BUDDIES Bear boosted Chris's spirits while he was deployed in Afghanistan.

sold tickets, then raffled off the items.

A few Facebook friends offered to donate money for Bear's transport after reading about my fund-raising efforts. When I posted about how Bear's mother, Target, had saved soldiers on Chris's FOB, many more people wanted to help.

I was a woman on a mission. Not just to raise enough money to get Bear to the States—it was more than that. I had a purpose now, something I could do besides worrying about the man I loved while he was at war.

Finally the day came when I had the \$3,000 we needed to cover Bear's vaccinations, transport from the FOB to a local shelter, transport to the airport and airfare to the U.S. I wired the money to the British agency that would handle all the arrangements. I couldn't wait to tell Chris.

He and I talked Sunday night. "That's great, babe!" Chris said. "I was talking to some of the guys, and we want to bring all seven of the pups here to the U.S."

I tried not to panic as I did the math. Seven times \$3,000 was \$21,000. We hung up, and I collapsed on my bed. How was I going to raise that kind of money? I needed a lot more than candles and raffles.

That night, I tossed and turned, thinking about those puppies—and about all the dogs in Afghanistan that were abandoned and stray. I felt helpless all over again. It was one thing to raise \$3,000—but \$21,000? Impossible.

I needed an idea. A really inspired idea. I didn't have a prayer of raising \$21,000 on my own. Maybe that's exactly what I needed to do—pray and then leave things up to God. *Lord, help me help the soldiers who love these pups.*

That afternoon, I logged on to Facebook during my break at the internship. *That's it!* The idea came to me like a bolt out of the blue. How had I not thought of it sooner? I'd make a Facebook fan page!

"Puppy Rescue Mission," I typed on my laptop that evening. I shared the story about Target and her litter, calling them the Lucky Seven. I posted the photo that Chris had e-mailed me and set up a PayPal account. Once people read the story of Target the hero dog and her litter of pups, they would "like" it and click on the link to make donations, or so I hoped.

The next day, I nervously logged

on to Facebook. *Lord, if this is something you want me to do, I prayed, please let the people in America who love dogs and our soldiers help bring Target and the Lucky Seven home.* Facebook friends, military personnel and fans I didn't even know quickly "liked" the page. The donations poured in.

Within three months, I had the \$21,000 needed to bring the Lucky Seven to the U.S., where they would live in safety and comfort with their soldiers' families until their soldiers were able to join them stateside.

Bear arrived in the U.S. in June 2010. Her flight landed in Washington, D.C., and a truck driver from our area picked her up and brought her to Maine for us.

I was waiting when the truck arrived at my parents' camp at Long Lake. I scooped up the no-longer-so-little ball of fluff and held her close. Nuzzling the pup that had comforted Chris while he was thousands of miles away comforted me. I looked into her ebony eyes and stroked her soft coat. "Welcome home, Bear," I said.

I took care of Bear just as Chris had. And Bear took care of me those difficult last few months before Chris's deployment ended and he was able to come home. She reminded me that there were many things a college student with no money could do. All I needed was some divine guidance, a lot of caring people (including a great team of



PAW-SITIVE THINKERS Anna, Chris and Bear of the Lucky Seven litter

women I met through Facebook who dedicated themselves to our mission) and the steadfast love that only a dog can give. **G**

Editor's note: *Anna and Chris married in 2013 and had a baby boy, Wyatt, in 2018. Their dogs—Bear, Alphy and Griz, all from Afghanistan—round out their family. Since its establishment as a nonprofit in December 2010, Puppy Rescue Mission has helped military men and women bring home more than 3,000 dogs and cats who were their loyal companions during deployment overseas. "We're always looking for volunteers to help with transport, fostering and fundraising," Anna says. Find out more at puppyrescuemission.org.*



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NO PUSHING

I sat down by a window with my prayer journal just as the sun was coming up and turned to my prayer requests. Lists of names filled at least 15 pages. Some names had been there for years. Friends, family, people from church, even strangers.

Every day, I prayed for them all.

God, this lady is looking for a new job. Please find her something with a good salary where she can do something creative.

This man from church needs a lung transplant, but I'm asking for you to heal him completely.

My son's been looking for a new house for months. You need to either lead him to the right place or make him stop wanting it. Quickly!

I always prayed as if God were standing there next to me, perhaps even taking notes on the instructions I gave. I never seemed to just ask God to take care of a problem. I couldn't stop myself from telling him exactly how to handle it. Still, whenever a prayer had been answered, I crossed the name off the list. Job done.

This morning, though, I was feeling particularly discouraged. There were so many names in my prayer journal.

So many of them that were not yet crossed out.

"Why do I even bother, Lord?" I said out loud.

All at once it hit me: Was I a pushy prayer, telling God what to do instead

of just asking for his help? After all, it's a prayer request, not a demand.

I bowed my head. *Please forgive me if I've been a pushy prayer. Your will, Lord, not mine.*

I lifted my head. Looked again at my list of names. The morning sun streaming in

through the window was shining right on the journal's top page, casting the shadow of a perfect cross.

I could feel God's presence there beside me. *Don't worry, he seemed to be assuring me. I've got this.*

I still give God the occasional suggestion for how to fulfill my prayers. I can't seem to help myself. But I know he always answers our prayers to him in his own way and in his own time.

Job done. **G**



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An Abundant Table

BY KIMBERLY ELKINS, Editor

D.C. restaurateur Kazi Mannan practices what he preaches... and it's changed his life

KAZI MANNAN SITS AT HIS USUAL table in the Sakina Halal Grill, the Pakistani-Indian restaurant he owns in Washington, D.C., a few blocks from the White House. He is just this side of 50, tall and wearing a dark suit. He calls out to a man in a baseball cap headed to the buffet table. “Hey, Derek, how’s it going?”

“The chicken vindaloo is dynamite today,” Derek says. “Going back for some rice pudding. Thanks again, man.”

Kazi smiles and says, “We know all our regulars’ orders by heart.”

Derek is one of a dozen nonpaying customers who’ve come for lunch, most of them homeless. “Family” is how Kazi refers to these customers, who make up about 20 percent of Sakina’s clientele. In the past six years, the restaurant has given away more than 80,000 meals, with many people eating there twice a day. No one is ever turned away for not having money or asked about their circum-

PHOTOS BY JAMES KEGLEY



stances. There's no judgment, period.

At some tables, those who can't pay sit side by side with those who can, including White House staffers. Kazi's philosophy is not just to give away food; learning about one another is equally important. "Food is great magic to bring us together," he says. His compassion and generosity were inspired by his mother, Sakina, the restaurant's namesake, who passed away when Kazi was 20. Along with his nine siblings, he was raised Muslim in Pakistan without access to running water or electricity. "Even though we were very poor, my mother gave away so much food to people in our village that I would get angry with her, afraid there wouldn't be enough for our family. 'God will make sure there's plenty left for us too,' she would say, and she was right. We never went hungry."

COMMUNITY-MINDED Kazi Mannan at his restaurant, where everyone is served regardless of their ability to pay

A woman in a business suit stops by his table. "The waiter told me you're the owner. It's wonderful what you're doing here. I'd like to make a donation." Kazi shakes his head. "I'm sorry, ma'am, but we don't take donations. You can support us by buying a meal." The woman looks surprised. "Then how on earth do you keep this place open?" she asks. "I never worry about making ends meet," Kazi tells her. "My only responsibility is to do what I know is right and leave the rest to God." The woman walks away, smiling.

As a young man, Kazi knew he would have few opportunities in Pakistan. So even though it meant leaving his wife and family behind, he went to America at age 25, arriving with less than five



dollars in his pocket. “I spent many nights hungry. You pass by a restaurant, but nobody is going to let you in if you can’t pay.” He found a job as a gas station attendant in Washington, D.C. He was shocked to see so many people struggling with homelessness. Kazi’s biggest challenge was dispelling the assumptions and perceptions he held of other ethnicities and nationalities he encountered in his new home. “I had to work hard to break down the walls of my own ignorance. But through my experiences with people here, I finally understood that we have much more in common than the media ever shows.”

Kazi’s second job, as a limo driver, allowed him to put by enough money within a few years to buy a small fleet of limos. But despite his business success and growing family, he still felt he didn’t know God’s plan for him. He continued to save as much money as he could, but he never knew for what exactly. He prayed about it daily.

Six years ago, the answer came un-

expectedly. Kazi frequented an Indian restaurant downtown and had become good friends with the owner. One day, his friend was complaining about the trials of running his business, and Kazi found the opportunity he’d been waiting for. “I will buy your restaurant,” he said. “Name your price.”

Within a week, the place was his. Kazi set about renovating it: opening up the space, painting the walls a pale yellow and decorating them with traditional Pakistani artwork and tapestries. He bought 30 new tables—some large enough to seat eight—and hung an ornate chandelier for the restaurant’s crowning touch. The day Kazi opened the Sakina Halal Grill, he drove to a nearby homeless shelter and invited the people he found there to join him in celebration. At first, no one believed him. “Do you swear you’re not going to charge us?” they asked. Soon paying customers were also flocking to the new establishment as word spread about both its noble mission



and its good, moderately priced food.

As he goes to check on something in the kitchen, Kazi notices an older woman in a frayed housedress hovering near the door. He introduces himself. “What’s your name?” he asks. “Juliette,” she says softly. “I heard about this place from my cousin. It took me an hour to get here on the bus.” Kazi grabs a menu. “What would you like for lunch, Juliette?”

“I don’t really know these kind of foods,” she says, scanning the menu. “Something with vegetables and meat would be good. And a soda.”

Kazi asks a waiter to bring her vegetable samosas and a lamb curry. “Now let’s sit down and get to know each other,” he tells her, and soon they are chatting like old friends.

“If we would each share a meal once a week with someone less fortunate, the entire world would begin to align with the ultimate goals of peace and understanding,” Kazi says after Juliette finishes her meal and leaves. “Even this small mercy will have a ripple effect.” Though

SERVING OTHERS Kazi with a restaurant volunteer (far left) and some of his patrons. “God is action,” he says.

his beliefs might sound cliché or naive to some, Kazi Mannan puts his money where his mouth is: He has made it his life’s work to feed America’s hungry. To that end, his newest and most far-reaching project is a foundation that will partner with 50 restaurants across the country, all operating on Sakina’s model.

For those who’d like to put their own higher intentions into practice, Kazi suggests what has worked for him: 30 days of performing one act of kindness for someone outside your family, even if it’s simply giving a compliment. Keeping a daily kindness journal also helps. “It’s like going to the gym,” he says. “After a month, it becomes a habit. And if it doesn’t work for you in 30 days, try 45! God is action.”

Derek circles back to Kazi’s table. “This place is the biggest blessing in my life. In some ways, it’s even changed me.”

“Me too,” Kazi says. “Me too.” **G**

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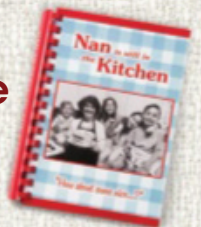
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FAMILY ROOM

MEET THE PEOPLE IN OUR PAGES

Fear didn't stop **Shirley Uekert** (*Open Mind, Open Heart*, page 34) from getting in a pool and learning to swim, and it didn't stop her from taking her first trip overseas last year, either. Shirley's son Ken lives in Germany, and she visited him in June. Her cousin Bonnie made all the arrangements and accompanied her. Ken lives in a centuries-old barn that has been converted into apartments in the historic municipality of Nussdorf, a place that thrilled Shirley. "It was nice to be in a lovely town with church bells ringing and roosters crowing to wake us up," Shirley says. Her own church in Wisconsin, Zion Lutheran, recognized Shirley's 60 years of service as organist in January of 2019. Zion Lutheran's organ now has a CD drive, which Shirley sometimes uses so she can step away to take communion. "It confused one of the ushers, who looked back and forth trying to figure out how I could be in two places at once."



UEKERT Shirley and her son Ken on a cable car in Germany

Katie Brown (*My Perfect Family*, page 28) didn't want to go to church the day she wound up meeting her friend George. It was cold out, and Katie wasn't feeling well. "Then the thought that, if you do not want to go, that is when you really should go, set in." Katie ended up in a pew toward the front, sitting next to a fellow congregant, George. After the children went to Sunday school, he confided he hadn't been able to make it through a whole service since his wife passed away. That day, with Katie by his side, George did. Now she and her family sit with



George every week. In her new book, *Dare to See*, Katie talks about the moments she has been touched by God's grace. "A loving, smart, funny, mischievous, compassionate God is the one who has held my hand all these years," she says. Visit **katiebrownfaith.com** for more information.



AVENT Tonya wins using God's playbook.

Guideposts Impact



"Thanks to Spanish translations of Guideposts booklets such as A

Prayer for Every Need and Spirit Lifters, I can provide our Spanish-speaking patients and their families comfort and reassurance. I often see eyes light up as I pull the booklets from my pocket."

CHAPLAIN FRED SELF

St. Bernardine Medical Center and Community Hospital of San Bernardino, both in San Bernardino, California

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"I've been calling 2020 the Year of the Leap—I'm jumping out of the boat and ready to walk on water toward purpose work," says **Tonya May Avent** (*A Different Path*, page 14). "It's exciting and scary at the same time!" Tonya has blogged about using the Bible as a playbook for life at **destined4thedub.com** since September 2018. "My daughters and I came up with the name together," Tonya says. She's now turning the blog into a ministry. "We're going to support foster children and disadvantaged youth by providing sports equipment, club fees and other services that wouldn't normally be available to them." Tonya used to be a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) for foster children, so this new direction combines two of her passions.

"After the tornado, the rest of my family started to collect pennies they found at just the right, encouraging moments," says **Linda Stratigakis** (*Penny From Heaven*, page 40). "It helps us connect, knowing that my

daddy kept his promise to be with us always.” Though the Stratigakis clan has discovered that prepping for natural disasters has also been eco-friendly, Linda admits that her earliest conservation efforts sprang from frugality. “When I was growing up, if I wanted to go to a movie, I had to collect and return Coca-Cola bottles,” she says. But seeing the destruction left by Hurricanes Katrina and Harvey inspired Linda and her family members to prepare for catastrophes by farming, switching to propane from natural gas and installing a private water system. These changes have had the benefit of getting the family to eat more vegetables—a healthful move. “I want to be as kind to Mother Nature as she has been to us,” Linda says.

STRATIGAKIS Linda and her husband, Nick, are accidental conservationists.



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CONTINUED

HOW A STORY MADE A DIFFERENCE

CLASSIC COMFORT

Last summer, my son Andrew complained of a stomachache. But he didn't have a fever, so I put off calling the doctor. When I finally did, I regretted procrastinating—his appendix needed to be removed! I didn't have my phone or any company in the hospital waiting room. As I reached for the Bible, I spotted **GUIDEPOSTS**.

But it wasn't just any **GUIDEPOSTS**—it was the November 1999 issue, which included Marion Bond West's story *A Comfort Beyond Measure*. In it, Marion wrote fondly of her Georgia congregation. My family had moved nearby



around that same time, and we hadn't been able to find a church. Then we went to hers and found community. I even sat next to Marion in Bible study recently!

I turned to her story. Her last lines rang true once more: "Sometimes just knowing we're not alone means more than we can say. And it is perhaps the greatest comfort God can give us, the greatest proof of his love."

AMY WILLIAMS
Athens, Georgia



FORMAL FRIEND

When I wrote a *Someone Cares* story in the July 2017 **GUIDEPOSTS** about Operation Deploy Your Dress—a nonprofit

I started with fellow Army wives to give formal wear to military families—we had only three locations.

We now have shops on seven Army installations and will open at Fort Hood this spring. All military ID holders can choose one outfit a year. We have received thousands of gowns, suits and accessories from donors who say they heard about us in **GUIDEPOSTS**.

We started ODYD to help more service members attend military balls, which build camaraderie and help spouses get to know each other. Have some fancy duds cluttering your closet? Check operationdeployyourdress.org for more info.

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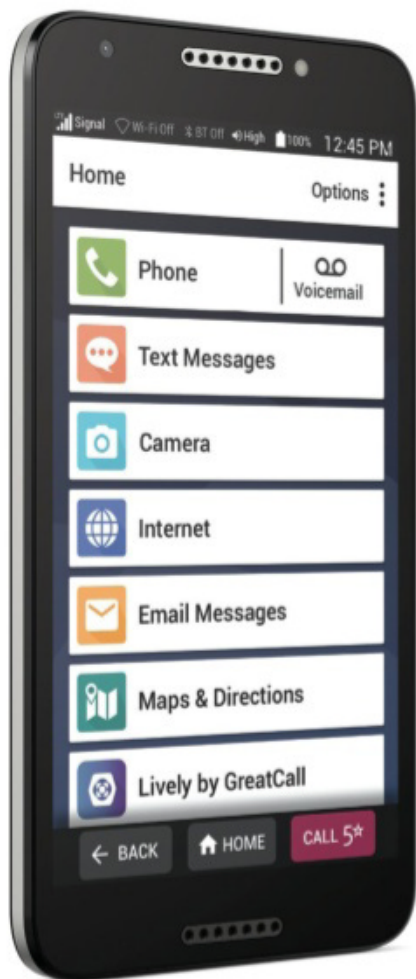


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