

# Reflections

by Alta Nye Ozondine

## FAITHFUL PHOTOGRAPHER

I planned to add that, once again, as so many times in the past, William Lowry of Prospect UMC did a superb job of capturing highlights of the recent Honoring Ceremony on cameras. (If I keep adding and revising, I MAY get my response to that special ceremony together yet!) I also need to add that Sandy Plains member Gary Locklear, honored as first Native American to head the Rockingham District Native American Co-op, is another UM photographer, who regularly takes pictures of events involving the Co-op ministry. "Brother Bob" Mangum is the current Co-op director.

I've been SO frazzled lately, trying to work on too many different tasks at the same time (brain overload) that I told my current "Reflections" typist that I was "fizzled!"

I don't know WHERE I'd be by now, if it hadn't been for the weekend conference a lot of us attended recently at Lake Junaluska.

## LEON AND LAUGHTER

I've read that everyone needs to have at least one "belly" laugh each day. Like his dad, my husband Leon liked to have a good laugh during down time, when he was not pushing himself (and often others) to get a job done. On the other hand, I went through our entire marriage without learning the art of laughter.

Growing up as the oldest in a Depression-era home where we constantly had to conserve everything (including cleaning our plates at the table each meal) did NOT teach me how to laugh.

But in more recent years I've sometimes surprised myself by suddenly laughing out loud. (Leon had told me about doing this sometimes in the middle of the night when he was growing up. One night recently Byron surprised me by laughing in his sleep. And his laugh sounds a whole lot like his granddaddy's, even though they have never been together. I'm sure Leon would have been thrilled to get to know his grandson. Byron is looking forward to meeting his two grandfathers and the two uncles he has never seen, when he gets to heaven.)

To get back to my point, I laughed out loud on Wednesday when I hung up after a brief conversation with Dolly, who is now doing the typing for this column. I have a note on my desk from the day before, explaining that I was working on some more things for my column.

"Polly," it says, "I'm working on some other things----." I thought I had stopped calling her "Polly" in place of Dolly. But I suppose that recently visiting with a friend I used to see a lot in the late 80s. Polly Cunningham, and her husband, Dan, has impressed the name "Polly" back onto my "getting-older" brain. (That may be a "corny" way to put it. But, doesn't that sound better than "AGING brain" --- even though I suppose mine is doing just that, day by day, during these eighth-decade days, months, and years?)

Anyway, DOLLY, I apologize! From now on, hopefully, when I think of you, I can remember the name of another very special friend, going back to my VERY first visit to the Pembroke area in the summer of 1956, "Miss Dolly" Lowry. (Now I'm not sure whether I'm spelling either ONE of your names right. So, this seems like a good place to apologize for sometimes misspelling other people's names, even though I want to get them right, just as I want them to get mine right.)

## CONSOLATION CORNER JULY 4 ---PLUS 4

Each year, beginning in 1981, June and July give us an assortment of dates to remember. June 28, my Hunt couple's anniversary and July 4, Wanda Kay's birthday (along with that of my brother Stan and the United States of America).

And then there is Donny's Flag Day birthday, a bitter-sweet time of remembering, and July 8, that last day he and his brother Gordon and their daddy, Leon, were here in this world with us. They actually left very early that morning, so I did bid them a mostly silent, temporary good-bye, on that date, expecting them to return in about 12 hours. (Maybe it's not so surprising that I still wonder, when someone leaves on a trip, whether or not they'll be coming back.)

Actually I've been having more dreams about Leon just lately, 21 years later. One night I dreamed that I was trying on my wedding dress, because we were going to get married again, after he had been gone for years. Another time he was right there, and we were talking about getting married, maybe for the first time. Then, about dark on Sunday, July 8, I dozed off long enough for him to appear briefly in another dream. I gave him a tighter hug than the one I'd given him just before he left on July 8, 21 years ago.

## "SUICIDE FEELINGS"

Even some of us Christians (myself included) have experienced "suicide feelings" when we were under too much pressure. It's been a long time since I felt that the world might be happier without me. And I did not follow through on even PLANNING to take my own life. But, when we are depressed and/or under too much pressure of one kind or another (as I learned firsthand) we may feel so desperate that this seems to be the ONLY way out of our situation. I'm certainly not BRAGGING about having felt this way. In fact, I have felt guilty about the feelings I had at that time, about just giving up on my current role in life. But, the one GOOD thing that can come out of having had this experience (and all the other difficult experiences of my life is that I can better understand others who are dealing with similar problems.

As Christians, we are constantly reminded (in the Bible and by other Christians) that we are to simply "Trust in the Lord" and He will bring us through ANYTHING and everything! Over and over, I've learned how very true this advice is. In fact, I share this "Good News" to hurting people on a regular basis.

But there have been many times in the past when I forgot. When the problems surrounding me seemed SO glad that I (and a number of others I've known) were able to work through those feelings.

But I don't believe that ANY ONE of us human beings has the right or the ability to stand in judgment over the way another person eventually ENDS UP ending his or her life. Instead, when this happened, you and I need to BE THERE to offer love and encouragement to all the members of that person's family, as well as friends who may also be suffering.

As one person, I know I can't reach out to everyone, even though God has taught me to care deeply about each person on this planet. That's why I keep asking that you join me in praying for all individuals and families who are suffering, right here in this community and all around our world.

## Thus Saith God's Word

Rev. Ted Brooks, Pastor of West Saddle Creek Baptist Church

For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord; therefore, they shall not prosper and all their flocks shall be scattered." (Jeremiah 10:21)

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice saying, cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." (Ezekiel 9:1)

"Which say, it is not near; let us build houses; this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh." (Ezekiel 11:13). We need to look again and see what evils that provoked the indignation of the Lord. They are social rather than religious- idolatry, the worship of Assyrian gods.

Ezekiel said: "He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, to give warning to those who were in charge of the cities."

The language of the prophet is sometimes crude and offensive to the modern ear and his actions appear to be weird and childish. The stern and austere prophet portrays the severity rather than the kindness of God, his judgments rather than his mercies. But see something wrong here. God saw some prophets, pastors, false shepherds who had become brutish and had a prayerless life. They had not entered the work as a pastor who came to the mine with the ability to dig for gold. A false pastor will make an attempt to dig and has not sought God.

A false pastor will fail to recognize God on his throne, the good shepherd, the vine, the life giving Spirit, the river of life and the New Jerusalem. When the cry of God has entered the ears of the true pastor, his teaching for example; sin and judgment, the responsibility of the individual, the function of the true pastor, the need for a change of heart, the work of the spirit, the sovereignty of God over all nations, speak directly to our own situation.

False pastors are the men that devise mischief, give wicked counsel in the city (Ezekiel 11:2). When there is no cry in the ear, there is evil counsel of unbelief.

Today much is said, "We all have warts," my friend. The scripture tells us, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils." (1 Corinthians 10:21) "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (1 Corinthians 6:15)

Listen, my friend, a true pastor is a man under authority, speaking and acting under divine constraint. "The Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said unto me, go preach." (Amos 7:15)

A false pastor that has a prayerless life with God, will boast about sin but when Amos came upon the scene his message was, "I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:2) A true pastor is the herald of judgement, the prophet of doom. God will not revoke the punishments. (Amos 1:3) Amos went down town and preached bribery in the courts, heartlessness, brutality, prostitution, self-indulgence, the evil of luxury, the dispossession of the helpless, and the oppression of the poor.

Oh my friend, God hates festive pilgrimages and solemn assemblies. He rejects costly offerings and burdensome songs. What he does require is abundant justice and unceasing righteousness. (Amos 5:21-24) It is not the

worship in the sanctuary, but obedience in life.

No man, my friend, can be in right relationship with God who is not in right relationship with his fellow man. (Matthew 5:23-24)

We are dealing with the Lord himself in our ordinary human relationship. He who does not love the brethren he sees cannot love the God he does not see. (Matthew 25:31-40; 1 John 4:7-21)

Oh, my friend, a true pastor will tell his deacons this. He will preach it from the pulpit. God and Amos were walking together. (Amos 3:3)

My friend, in 1 Corinthians 5:11 we are told not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person or covetous or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a swindler, not to eat with such a one.

My friend, there are those who are saved, but all are not drunkards or covetous persons. The church my friend is not immoral. The true church has been to Calvary and been washed in the blood of Christ, our Lord, and his "blood cleanses us from all past sins."

The problem is a false pastor has abandoned the nation so that it is even possible to not know truth. When a false pastor speaks "all have warts," in other words he says there is no absolute body of truth that should govern our thinking and behavior. Everybody has ideas. Everybody has opinions, but nobody has the truth. The lack of truth has led to a conscienceless society in which people can sin big time and feel no emotional or spiritual pain. God created pain whether physical or spiritual to tell us something is wrong and to keep us from going as fast as we could go. But when people do not have truth, they don't have anything to give them pain. When they make wrong decisions they become seared. (1 Timothy 4:2) Also read Ezekiel 4:16-17. Ezekiel left us with these words: "Even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." (9:1) Brother Paul said of these weapons of our warfare that they are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (II Corinthians 10:4-5) Notice Ezekiel said of this destroying weapon that it is in our hand.

The weapon in Amos' hand was "Thus Saith God's Word" that God is a God of Judgement and the God of wrath. What Amos came to say was that God is not only a light, but as darkness as well therefore not only was he a God of love but a God of wrath.

Amos was aware of the inescapable presence of the almighty God. Amos was a God intoxicated man. He was vividly aware of the reality of God. The Lord of hosts in all his power and majesty. God declared to Amos, "I will send a fire on the wall." (Amos 1:10) Now you are probably asking this question: "What about us?" Listen to these words "As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him." (Amos 5:19) Also "Though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence I will command the serpent and he shall bite him." (Amos 9:3) "Though they climb up, I will bring them down." (Amos 9:2) How? "Every beast of the forest is mine." (Psalms 50:10) "The beast of the field multiplied against thee." (Exodus 23:29)

Look around you, my friend, alligators are eating people. Sharks are coming ashore and eating people. Horses are turning on their riders. Dogs are attacking children. Do you not see God is angry because these nations of ours have ripped up the women while child? Do you not see "It's because he did pursue his brother with the sword and did cast off all pity? God said "I will send a fire upon man." God, my friend, wants us to walk together and to agree upon his word. Agree that he is active in solar eclipses and earthquakes. (Amos 8:9, 6:1) God himself declared "He who does not love the brother he sees cannot love the God he does not see." (1 John 4:7-21)

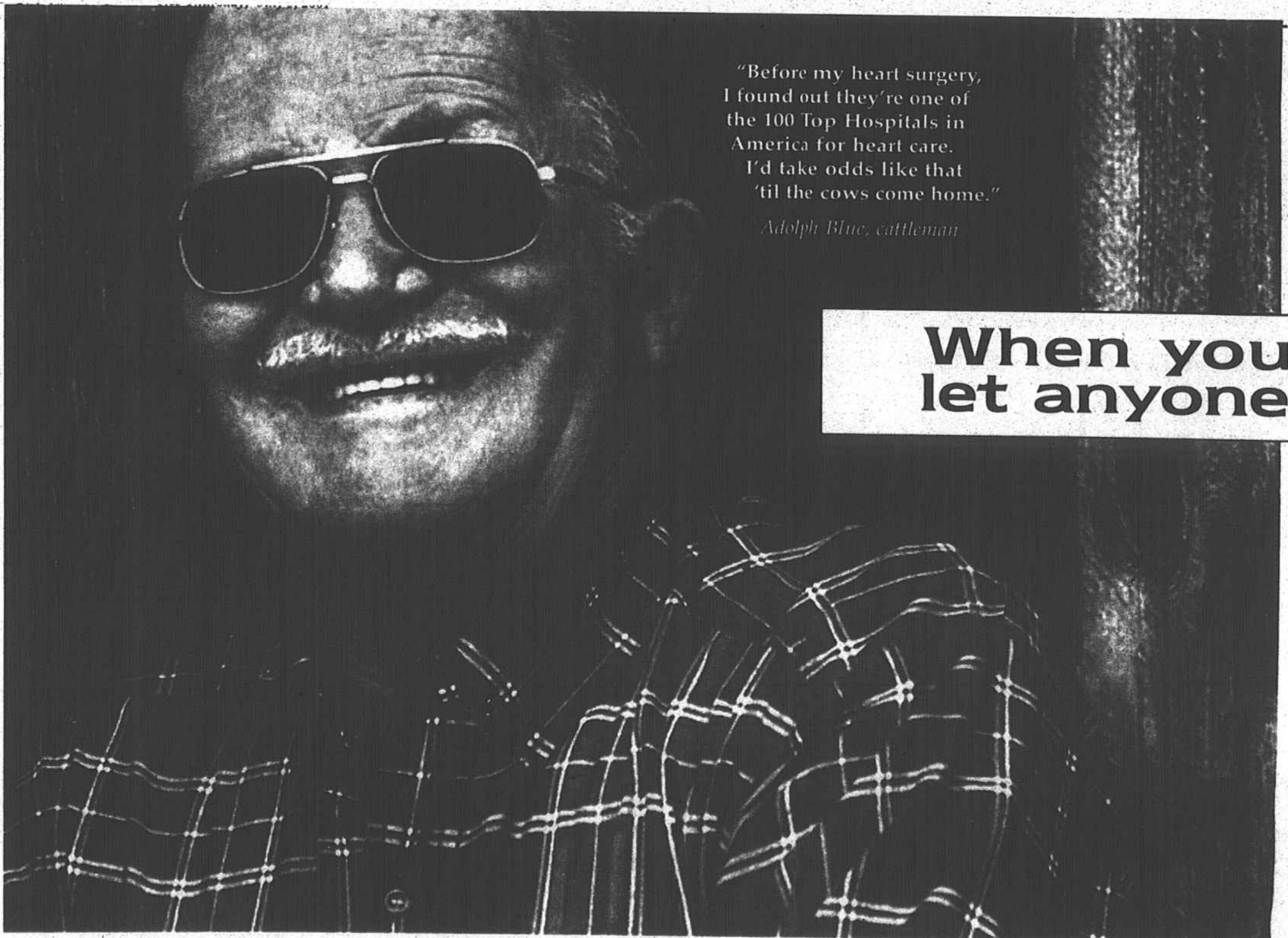
My friend, God has a consequence for sin. One day he will make a visit upon a people who are not obedient. When he does, Job said, "What shall answer him?" (Job 31:14)

This nation of ours has taken on too much. Wicked counsel has been passed out like truth. Man now has said in his heart "Thou wilt not require, God hath forgotten, he hideth his face, he will never see it." (Psalm 10:11-13)

God has said it. "I will send a fire." My friend, every aborted child will be yonder to witness against these nations of ours. Those who sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes. (Amos 2:16)

God will one day do a follow up. "Be sure your sins will find you out. You may silence the preacher, but God has warned us. You may out run the lion, but a bear will give chase. Hide in the wall of your house, he has declared "All the beasts are mine". Escape will be impossible, lest when you expect him he will appear and remember you can't get his attention if you have unforgiven sins. God does not skip over sin. That is why we are told to confess our sins. God will not listen to us when sin is unconfessed. No one, I say again, no one gets away with sin. People go to hell for rejecting the blood of Jesus Christ and remember, if you can't love whom you have seen, how can you love whom you have never seen?

George Washington Parke Custis, the grandson of First Lady Martha Washington, became the adopted son of her second husband, President George Washington, and the father-in-law of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.



"Before my heart surgery, I found out they're one of the 100 Top Hospitals in America for heart care. I'd take odds like that 'til the cows come home."

Adolph Blue, cattleman

# When you let anyone