

GAIL WINDS

by: Gail L. Roberson

Each afternoon I noticed the sunlight faded sooner. Every morning I realized a few more leaves had gathered on the ground beneath the big oak that stands near the back walk of my house. Even without the appearance of the leaves, subtle changes began to occur in my countryside weeks ago. . . tiny hints that Indian Summer was preparing her guest room for fall.

As a girl, I thought spring would never arrive. As a woman, I now prefer to welcome fall with open arms. Funny, isn't it, how certain seasons seem to correspond to certain stages of your life. Once I was eager to explore the new birth rites of spring and summer rituals, but now I'm content to welcome the slower pace of later in the year. Fall. Later in the year. Later in life.

By the end of September the sunlight begins to fade faster, and in a last burst of color and growth, summer deepens into early fall. The first fiery colors of changing leaves brought a hush over the land, like a deacon placing his finger across pursed lips to quieten the crowd as the visiting revival minister prepares to bless the dinner on the ground.

Pecans drop like miniature footballs. Those that strike the tin roofs make a sound not unlike the hail that came earlier in the year. Everywhere, everywhere, has a memory of something falling on a tin roof, whether rain, hail, sleet, limbs, or leaves. . . tin roofs revive many memories and awaken the senses of the past.

If you have never stood downwind of a peanut or corn dryer in the fall, then you have certainly not lived well. The hurricane of aroma that wafts from one will forever remain stashed in your brain, in whatever little drawer there is designed to store the memory of smell.

As the crispness of chattering leaves shuffles underfoot, autumn slowly stains the woods. Though the drying grasses prickle beneath my bare feet, the golden afternoons still warm the soil for my nude toes to enjoy a little while longer. When the copper glow of autumn finally replaces the lemon haze of heat, my one surviving rose enjoys a fall resurgence of bloom, awash with soft color and sweet fragrance.

A ride through the countryside rewards me with the sight of a scattering of fall wildflowers abounding in tiny patches of color, and somber browns are brightened by a network of evergreen. I notice pumpkins already at home upon the door steps, and glistening brown straw swaying in open meadows. Thirty years ago, my grandmothers would be out among those grasses, harvesting them in neat bundles to sweep their floors and their yards. Today though, few of us even notice the straw, and those who do, have no idea how to tie a bundle for use.

The gold of the harvest moon makes the autumn nights more brilliant than all the rest. I've been told that telescope sales are up this time of the year, and that the cushions on the wrought iron chairs are wiped clean of summer dust for longer visits in the cooler evenings. If you look up often enough, you might even see an occasional black line of geese winging wild and free.

The forest floor is thick with acorns, and the pines in the yard finally release the needles that gardeners race to claim. Leaf smoke and memories dance together in the ditches in front of nearly every neighbor's yard these days, and I deliberately inhale a small whiff each time I pass.

Puffs of chrysanthemums, the mellow fragrance of peanut hay, the last brave showing of blue morning glories, and apple trees finally bare of their summer load. . . all these things are now mine to savor. September feels so good. We should have two of them. At least.

Our Opinion

Charges Are Violating Law And Not Violating Religion

Jim Bakker, the evangelist now on trial, is in court on charges of violating the law and not there for violating religion. Some people seem to feel that religion itself is on trial. That is both far-fetched and untrue.

The fact is that Jim Bakker is charged with 24 counts of mail and wire fraud. If found guilty on all these counts, he could face a maximum prison sentence of 120 years. And we read that he could be fined as much as \$500,000.

Now many of his followers apparently are trying to establish an atmosphere surrounding this case that he is in court because of his religion. The fact that he operated under the guise of religion does not mean that if he committed wrongdoings that he did so because of religion. To Mr. Bakker religion was his profession and his profession is not on trial.

The fact is that his wife, Tammy Bakker, is in Florida at their new cable television headquarters depicting her husband's predicament as one of God versus pagan prosecutors. Now if anyone is trying to substitute religion for law, it would be her. With her facial makeup dripping down with the tears she generally sheds, it is possible that she can cause a lot of people to believe that her husband is just a poor country minister who is being persecuted because of his religion.

The big question then can be expressed in simple terms. Is Jim Bakker another Judas who stole the 30 pieces of silver or did he sell his mortal birthright for a spoiled mess of pottage? Is he a "religious genius" as his lawyer has termed him, or is he just another con man who took advantage of his position to reap millions of dollars out of people who believed in him and his message?

Jim Bakker must not and will not be either convicted or acquitted on account of his religion. In the court, it is a matter of law — violating it — and not any matter of what he or any of those officials in court happen to believe or not believe, when it comes to religion.

Just as all defendants in court on trial for allegedly breaking the law, Jim Bakker is clothed with innocence until a jury of his peers finds him guilty. And that jury in question might find him not guilty. The trial still has a long way to go before it ends, if we can believe what the judge says.

With 24 charges against him, he could be found guilty of some of them and innocent of others. But when the jury goes into that locked room to decide its verdict, there will not be talk of religious beliefs or religious philosophy, but in reality the jurors will be deciding one non-religious question. Is he guilty of breaking the law or is he innocent?

It is up to the state to prove guilt and up to the defense to defend him in the best possible manner. Again, the burden of proof is upon the state or the government to prove guilt. It is not up to the defense attorneys to prove innocence.

The law and religion are far different fields.

A Building Is Lost

Back just a few years ago, probably in 1983, the state appropriated the sum of \$800,000 for a center for treating emotionally disturbed children under the so-called "Willie M" program.

The center came into being, and in 1986 it was felt that smaller homes are much better for the Willie M. children than are large centers. So the center in Durham was closed, according to the story.

Now the state is asking that the \$800,000 be returned to the state. The Durham County health officials are seeking to negotiate the matter with the state, but the story says, "in the meantime they are not sure where the building is or who has been using it since the center closed."

Losing an \$800,000 building, in our opinion, is not easy to lose. But officials there should not worry too much. We suspect that Senator Kenneth Royall already has a legislative bill prepared forgiving Durham County on the \$800,000 bill.

Has Wetzel Paid His Debt For Two Brutal Murders?

In 1957 Frank Wetzel in extremely cold blood murdered two North Carolina highway patrolmen. They were Troopers W.L. Reese of Hamlet and J.T. Brown of Sanford.

He was tried for his life after he was caught in one of this state's most memorable manhunts. He was given two sentences of life in prison. The men he killed were in the line of duty. They had families, and in his senseless rampage he widowed two young women and he left some children fatherless.

In years gone by North Carolina has sent many human beings to their death in the electric chair or gas chamber or through the needle for crimes less heinous than the two brutal murders committed by Wetzel.

It was 32 years ago that the murders took place, and Wetzel has been in prison since then. Today he is an inmate at Odom Prison Center in Northampton County.

The two patrolmen were in the acts of stopping the Wetzel car in both cases. In each case Wetzel pulled his gun and without cause shot the officers. He has often been described as a handsome man, and at his trial young girls stood outside the court and swooned over him as he was brought out of court.

The N.C. Parole Commission now has before it a plea for parole for this man. It is argued that he has earned his parole, and now at 67 years of age, he is looking to the sunset of life. He is now a senior citizen, but the usual favors given to senior citizens as of now are denied to him.

The head of the North Carolina Highway Patrol, Col. Jack Cardwell is the only North Carolinian we have read about who is opposing the parole for Wetzel. And surely Col. Cardwell has good solid grounds for opposing it. After all, Troopers Reese and Brown came up in the Highway Patrol with Col. Cardwell. In a real sense they were "recruits together."

At the same time, we cannot imagine any member of the North Carolina Highway Patrol today who will endorse parole for Frank Wetzel. Now we feel sure others will speak out in opposition to parole for this man. We cannot recall the name of the judge and the prosecutor who were involved in the proceedings. We would like to know how they feel, if they are available.

Wetzel had a history of crime before he came to North Carolina. He had escaped from a mental institution in New York and he came to our state then. He says and his friends say he is a reformed man who now deserves parole.

Being reformed and paying a debt are two different matters. Has he paid his debt to society? Can he ever pay it really?

This man was married in 1982 while in prison. Plans have been made for his living arrangements should he be paroled.

The big question is and remains simple. Should he?

Is He Faking?

The insinuation by the News Media is that Jim Bakker was faking illness. The prosecutor called the psychiatrist who explained to the judge that Bakker was suffering from fear and mental illness to such "a hired gun." We took that to mean that the prosecutor feels the illness is a fake.

When a witness the day before had some type of attack on the witness stand, the prosecutor blamed the defense attorneys for prompting Bakker to rush to his side and pray.

We read that psychiatrists cannot really determine what is fake and what is real in all cases. As a patient at the Butner Center, a psychiatric evaluation was made, and he is back in court.

We have no way of knowing the truth, but we hope that the full truth on his condition will eventually be known.

Faking or not, he appears to be in serious trouble as the trial resumes.

The HANDYMAN

Wet Basement Walls

By Joe Zorc
PM Editorial Services

Q: The interior walls of my basement are always damp, and puddles form on the floor after it rains. What can I do to prevent this?

A: The first line of defense against a wet basement is proper grading. Inspect the grade around your home to insure a positive slope away from your foundation. Make sure all downspouts have splash blocks or extensions to divert water runoff away from the foundation during rainstorms.

If surface water is properly diverted and your basement is still wet, the probable cause is groundwater. You can prevent groundwater penetration by laying drain tile at the same height as the footing around the exterior perimeter of the house and waterproofing the outside wall surface.

Dig away the earth from the problem wall down to the base of the footing. Scrape away all loose earth, which should reveal any cracks in the wall. Next, use a stiff brush and warm water to clean the foundation. Chisel and rake out all cracks or faulty joints and fill with a mortar mix.

After the wall is dry, trowel a heavy coat of asphalt roof cement or any of the many available sealers from the foundation up to the earth line. Problem walls may take two coats.

Now that the wall has been waterproofed, you must give the groundwater a path to escape. This path is a drainpipe laid around your footing. This drainpipe, available at hardware stores and home improvement centers, must be perforated to allow water to seep in and be taken away.

Lay the pipe next to your footing at a slight slope made by a gravel bed. Cover the pipe with 6 to 12 inches of gravel and place some building felt over the gravel. Backfill above the building felt, making sure you have proper grading.

The end of the drainpipe should lead to a sewer or dry well. A dry well is simply a large hole dug in the earth away from your home and filled with gravel into which the drainpipe empties.

Resolving a wet basement is a large job and can sometimes be solved without digging. The professional technique involves forcing a special sealing compound along the base of the wall under pressure. It tends to flow to the wall and into the fissures and cracks. The cost usually depends upon the severity of the problem. **Ed**

Joe Zorc has been involved in home renovation and repair for more than a decade and has taught carpentry for the Home Builders Institute.
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