

A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS – 28

(JULY – SEPTEMBER, 2012)

Wednesday, July 4, 2012. Welcome, everyone, to the 28th edition of my journal! I am really surprised to be working on this issue, which will complete 7 years worth of Pennies! I never before kept any kind of journal nearly this long. I will continue as long as God gives me the strength and the prompting to write, and will continue to be thankful for the many friends and family members I connect to through these journals.

Anyone who is a regular reader of my journals knows that for the past 3 years or so I have written several poems that could be sung to old hymn tunes, those in the public domain. All these poems and their stories appeared, when they were new, in the various Pennies. And all my hymns, as I came to call them, were sung at the Sky View services and were received well. When we used the songs, either here or elsewhere, we just had the words written on a sheet of paper and the name of the tune to which it could be sung. I would have people sing the words when they were new to see if the syllables fit the notes of the tune as well as I thought they did. Chief among my singers are Cliff, who is the moderator of our services, and my son and daughter, George and Marty.

In December, 2011, my fifth hymn came to me. I called it “In Christ I Stand,” and said it could be sung to the tune of “Just As I Am.” When Cliff was in my room trying out the hymn, he stumbled in one spot. Then, for the first time, he said he would use his computer to put the words to the music, ensuring that he would not stumble in the January service. I was intrigued, since I had not considered the possibility of printing the words and music together. When Cliff brought the first copy to me, I was so pleased! We did some revising then, and for the service, had finished copies to hand out. The singing was great! I have a copy posted on my bathroom door; frequently I drive up to it and sing it in my mind. Delightful!

Then sometime in May I began to wonder if Cliff would do the same to my previous 4 hymns. “Are you open to a new project?” I typed on his next visit. After I explained, he willingly said yes. About this time my friend Vallie mentioned how much she likes when there is a Bible verse under the titles of hymns. I have often appreciated this as well, so I decided to choose verses for my hymns, too. In the following weeks Cliff would bring me copies of the songs for revising. Also, I had both George and my daughter MaryBeth use their editing skills on the hymns. By the beginning of June the project was nearing completion, or so I thought. Actually, the best was yet to come!

In mid-June, much to my delight, a SIXTH hymn began formulating in my head! This one, which also could be sung to an old tune, was about the future time when Jesus will come to the air to gather God’s faith family home to Heaven. Since it describes us as in transition, I titled it “Going Home.” Here is the poem:

GOING HOME

*By Verna Kwiatkowski. A Sky View poem. Based on
1 Cor. 15:51,52 and 1 Thess. 4:13-18. May be sung
to the tune of Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.*

Caught up! Caught up with Jesus to meet him in the air,
With joy we rise to greet him, delighted to be there!
The trumpet call has sounded with notes both loud and clear,
The voice of God commanded: "Come, children, gather near."

What joy when first we see him, our Savior, King, and Lord,
He gave to us salvation, which we could not afford.
Set free from all earth's shackles, and able now to soar,
We're heading for our homeland to live forevermore!

When we arrive in Heaven, and shed our final tear,
We'll take in our surroundings with heightened eye and ear.
How glorious the vision, so precious to behold!
Transformed, we gaze in wonder: the half had not been told!

Wednesday, July 11, 2012. A week ago I started to write about the hymn project, which still has me excited. Since then I watched fireworks with Ruth and James, had our July service on the first Thursday (in which we sang my new hymn), handled business, wrote emails, and visited with people, all the while writing my lead story for this journal. Now that I have written about the project, I want to write about the words to the new hymn, for several reasons:

- to use in the August service;
- to use on September 11 at Praise Fellowship, a group that Vallie has invited us to address;
- to have on hand in case someone wants to print a volume of Hymn Stories in the future; and
- to encourage the readers of Penny 28, as the apostle Paul instructed in 1 Thess. 4:18. Since you fall into this category, please read (or recall) the two Scripture passages written under the title, as a backdrop for this poem.

To me, the entire poem is invigorating and happy! Every time I read it, I am filled with a delight that makes me think, for example, of children on a roller coaster in an amusement park. We WILL be like children then, able to let our mixed emotions show, able to really ENJOY, and oh, so grateful! Now I will comment briefly on each of the verses.

Verse 1 – The coming of Jesus to the air to take his people home will be a noisy event, not quiet at all! The Bible mentions at least 3 sources of the sound: the Lord's loud command, the voice of the archangel, and a trumpet call. Though we are not told the exact words that God will use in his command, in the poem I have God say, "Come, children, gather near." I had in mind the story about Jesus weeping over Jerusalem

because, though he wanted to gather everyone to faith in him, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, many refused to believe in Jesus, thinking of him only as an ordinary man. I will be glad to come to Jesus when God gives the command, knowing how much he wants us to be with him. Far from being ordinary, Jesus is my Lord and Savior!

Verse 2 – The most important truth of all is contained in line 2: “He gave to us salvation, which we could not afford.” How important it is for us to know that salvation cannot be bought! Even the richest billionaire can’t buy salvation, nor can it be earned. Instead, it is offered to each one of us as a free gift, fully paid for by Jesus Christ when he died for us on the cross. All we have to do is take the gift! We can all “afford” to do that!

The next line says: “Set free from all earth’s shackles, and able now to soar.” Today there are many things that keep us bound on the earth and to the earth, things like illness, disease, wheelchairs, prisons, poverty, responsibilities, and gravity. Yet even now, NOTHING can keep us from soaring as on eagles’ wings in our spirits and in our minds, if we really want to. But when the trumpet sounds, all earth’s physical shackles will be released from God’s children and our journey upward will begin. What a day that will be!

Verse 3 – The 2nd line says: “We’ll take in our surroundings with heightened eye and ear.” There I had in mind 1 Corinthians 2:9,10 where the apostle Paul says: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” Later in the same letter Paul says: “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face.” I am convinced that the sights and sounds of the realm to which we are going are so superior to the most beautiful we have on earth, that to see and hear them now would make us blind and deaf. So I wait in expectation, trying to be patient, until my body will be changed, whether by death or at God’s trumpet call. Then I imagine myself gazing in wonder, identifying with the Queen of Sheba, who, upon seeing the wealth of Solomon that had been described to her, said: “The half had not been told!” I hope you are as encouraged by these thoughts as I am!

Wednesday, July 25, 2012. For the past 2 weeks I have been working without a printer. At first I had a machine that both printed and made copies. When that one died of old age, I was given a used one that was a printer only. That one was still working when George gave me the welcome news that Marty had ordered for me a machine that again would perform both functions. When my daughter tried to install the dual equipment, she could not get the computer and printer to “talk” to each other. Then when she tried to put my previous machine back into use, it wouldn’t work. That’s the story of how I got to have no printer. I’ll let you know how the story ends. In the meantime, George has worked out a plan whereby he transfers material from my computer to his laptop computer, and then prints what I want through my new printer. It works! And I am thankful.

Thursday, July 26, 2012. Sky View is undergoing its annual state inspection this week. Yesterday in the 4th floor day room an official held an extremely private meeting with a

council composed of about 20 carefully selected residents. The room's double doors were closed, with Do Not Disturb signs on each. The meeting would last about 2 hours and solicit all kinds of information for the state to mull over. I know because at least twice in the past I was a member of the council. Afterwards, I asked a friend of mine how the meeting went. Her answer, which both saddened me and made me think, was something like this: "Sky View does not have the ability to bring us pleasure. I have been here two years and I am still not happy." How do you respond to something like that? Collecting my thoughts, I typed: "Carry pleasure within yourself & you will be happy anywhere." "Good answer!" my friend replied with a hearty laugh.

Last night I went to bed with these thoughts in my head. Over the next couple hours, between my dozing, the thoughts first became this poem:

Carry pleasure within yourself
And you will be happy anywhere:
In a house; assisted living; or in a
Nursing home in a wheelchair.

From there my mind exploded until I had mentally composed a full-blown essay on the subject of pleasure, which included a 4 or 5 verse poem. This morning all of it was gone except what I have already told you. I have a feeling, though, that this subject is not closed to me yet. Time will tell!

Tuesday, July 31, 2012. Before July ends, there are several things I want to record. First, Sky View passed the state inspection! I had no reason to think we would NOT pass, but still, the results felt good.

A very important event occurred on **Wednesday, July 18:** I had a visit from Helen Mayer, my caseworker from the Greater New York Chapter of the ALS Association. I didn't know I HAD a caseworker until I got an email from Marty about 3 weeks prior to the visit saying Helen was looking for me. I assumed it had something to do with my Lightwriter, the lap-size computer I use as a communication device. For almost 8 years the ALS Association has allowed me to borrow this piece of equipment free of charge! I can't praise the Association enough for showing me this favor!

But Helen did not come to see me about the Lightwriter, although she was aware that I had it. Rather, she wanted to get acquainted with me, the client for whom she had been searching, and she wanted me to understand that she and the Association were available to help me, including access to a large supply of equipment that I may use if I need to. I reminded Helen that I had PLS, not ALS, and she said that was OK; all the benefits of the Association were mine. I can't tell you adequately how good it felt to be INCLUDED! Before this, I only knew there was no research association for PLS because it is such a rare disease. This was another welcome reminder that I am part of a Plan FAR greater than I!

One reason I may have reacted so strongly to the thought of being included is that in July I finished writing a poem that I had started in April. The title? INCLUDED! It is about being included in God's faith family. And that's another thing about July: it was quite

poetic. A couple weeks ago I heard someone say, "He makes me so angry!" For the next week I worked on a poem called PEACE, BE STILL, which is being well received by those who read it, including the person who made the comment. I'm sure these poems will show up some place on my website before long.

Trivia: Yesterday my aides on each of the 3 shifts were named Andrea! :)

Sunday, August 19, 2012. **WARNING: Graphic description of illness ahead. Skip this entry, if you wish.** About 2 weeks ago I began to notice a sharp decline in the ability to use my hands and arms, as well as in my general feeling of well-being and strength. As I have done several times before, I wondered if the PLS had reached another level in shutting me down, and if that were the case, how would I react to it? (I think it's a good thing to test our desired reactions occasionally!) Then symptoms of an infection began to show up: mainly a big increase in mucous production, serious coughing spells with mucous, an elevated heart rate, and some labored breathing.

Last Sunday, when the nurse discovered I had a low-grade fever, I realized that I was sick, and not just declining from PLS. The nurse called my doctor, who immediately ordered antibiotics, which started the next morning, as well as medicines for fever and for coughing, which started right away. I canceled my appointments for the next couple days, thinking I might be contagious, and spent a lot of time dozing in my tilted chair, not having the energy to do anything else. What amazed me was how quickly I began to feel normal once the antibiotics were started. Also, I cannot discount the fact that 2 women, in particular, were fervently praying for me!

Friday, August 31, 2012. For the past 2 weeks I have been deeply involved in 3 projects: preparing for the September 6 service at Sky View; writing a service for Praise Fellowship, scheduled for September 11 at 10 a.m.; and trying to get another volume of Sky View's Horizons ready for printing. My own printer still does not work, except as a copier, so my work has included making special appointments for George to print my material in his own unique way. George is preparing me for the possibility of a new computer (he suggests introducing the new printer was like putting new wine in old bottles), but I still am hoping the old one can be repaired so I can continue with my familiar tools. I am trying hard to give thanks in all circumstances, including this one, and I find that this conscious effort really does spare me a lot of frustration. I can see my Father's wisdom behind this command.

Halfway through the 2 week period we had a special treat: a visit from our son David from North Carolina. He flew into our area Thursday evening, August 23, and left on Tuesday morning, August 28. The reason he came at this time was to attend the memorial service and burial of his Aunt Frances, Leo's sister, who died in July. An added benefit of this timing was that David and his New York relatives were able to celebrate his birthday together for the first time in many years: he turned 53 on Friday!

David had placed in his schedule 2 lengthy visits with me at Sky View: Friday and Monday afternoons. Both of us were more than content with this arrangement! On Friday I wanted to inquire about his wife Dana's father and stepmother, so I typed "Charles and

Jane” on my Lightwriter. This reminded David that his father-in-law and he had the same birthday! And so, after bringing me up-to-date on their conditions, he called them and talked to both on the phone. David had remarked several times that he wished I could meet Jane, who had married Charles, a widower, a few years ago, but obviously that is not going to happen.

Then, as he spoke, Plan 2 came to him. He told Jane he was going to put the phone on the speaker setting, so she could speak to me even though I couldn’t answer. What a treat lay ahead for me! First Jane said she had read many of my writings and had gotten to know me that way, besides what David and Dana had told her. Then she continued to say, in the same conversational, matter-of-fact voice, something like this: “I look forward to meeting you in Heaven. We are not going to meet on earth, but I’ll see you in Heaven!”

I was overjoyed! David told Jane I was making signs of happiness, while he himself was grinning and nodding as if to say: “I TOLD you! I KNEW you would like her!” I love when people speak of Heaven as a real place, where we continue to live! Jesus said believers do not die, and I believe that! We simply move to a different realm where we continue to serve our Lord as we did on earth, with different coworkers! Jane and I won’t have to be introduced in Heaven; we will simply know each other. I find this to be so exciting! How does it make you feel?

Wednesday, September 12, 2012. Here I am on the OTHER side of the 3 projects I told you about – and of a special visit from the Dyer family from Hamilton, Massachusetts over the Labor Day weekend! A point of interest every time they come recently is to see how much their teenage sons have grown. I predict that the next time we see the 4 of them, they will all be approximately the same height!

Besides coming to New York to visit family, MaryBeth came as an editor to confer with me, her client. She is working on the massive project of editing two volumes of study materials I wrote in the 1990s and called “Points to Ponder.” In a short time we had the basic questions answered, after which we all socialized together. I feel so fortunate to have three of my children – George, Marty, and MaryBeth – editing my writings. The two that live the farthest away – David (NC) and Paul (CA) – sometimes use my materials in their own ministries, and so does Leo. We still work together in serving God, all glory to his name!

Last Thursday, September 6, we had our service here at Sky View, and, as usual, it was such a joy! Then on Monday the new edition of Sky View’s Horizons came off the press and was distributed. It is being well received. Excited about the response, Elinor, our Social Services volunteer, would like to publish one more volume this year. I may have to cut back on my involvement this time, as other projects are begging for attention. As my mother used to say, “We’ll see.”

And then yesterday we gave our service at Vallie’s group, Praise Fellowship, at the United Methodist Church in Shrub Oak. Technically, I was the speaker for the group, and the team members were there to present my material, since I can no longer talk or play the piano. But the team does far more than just PRESENT my material. Each of the

readers and musicians receives a copy of the program and their individual parts ahead of time and they practice how they will read or play their parts. I would say they INTERPRET my material, often giving me a pleasant surprise as they do so. Someone said to me before the meeting, "I see you brought a cloud of witnesses with you." I liked that thought! We work together for the glory of God as countless others have done before us all through the ages, as multitudes around the globe are doing right now, and as many will do in the future, until Jesus returns to take his people Home. What a privilege! What a prospect!

Tuesday was an absolutely beautiful late summer day to take a bus ride through the countryside, and Paratransit was the perfect vehicle to give me such a ride. Carolyn Burke, who had made all the arrangements, came a half hour before Paratransit was due, to help me with the finishing touches. My aides and nurses, both Monday night and Tuesday morning, worked together with my appointment in mind. At Sky View and at the church the buses were exactly on time, driven by men who were kind as well as competent. (Come to think of it, the same could be said of all the men and women who have served me as Paratransit drivers!) Carolyn sat by my side during the whole meeting, ready to take care of my needs. It was an absolutely beautiful experience!

Saturday, September 29, 2012. Time to close up another issue of Penny! It seems to me that September has FLOWN by! The October service is finished now, ready to be given next Thursday. And then, besides my regular visitors – whom I appreciate! – I had 2 very special visits this week. On Monday Robert & Yvonne Rayow came from near Albany for a very enjoyable reunion, and yesterday my brother Bob, who lives in Maryland, took a train ride to spend a few hours with me! Besides reminiscing, which is always a joy, we catch each other up on our current activities as best we can during his visits, being close enough in our outlooks on life to understand and appreciate what the other is doing. In his retirement, Bob is doing very well, and I applaud him!

I have decided to conclude this issue with the poem PEACE, BE STILL that I mentioned earlier. May God bless you all! Lord willing, I'll see you in Penny 29. Verna

PEACE, BE STILL

By Verna Kwiatkowski. Sky View. Thoughts upon seeing the frustration of a worker who said, "He makes me so angry!"

Do not let other people be in charge of your emotions.
Try to be steady and peaceful, not wavy like the oceans.
Remember how Jesus calmed the storm and made it cease?
He can calm your inner storms, and bring to you his peace.

"Be still and know that I am God," the sons of Korah said.
Ponder this while working, and while lying in your bed.
When others treat you in a way that you would call unnerving,
Consider this: God knows! It is he whom you are serving.

Know that God makes all things work together for your good.
Cast your cares upon him; it is God who says you should.
Perhaps what you are going through is given as a test.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart; God knows what is best.

Jesus said, "Come to me when you are burdened and tired."
The rest you then receive will leave you fresh, and inspired!
When you have peace within yourself, you pass it on to others.
What a lovely gift to give your sisters and your brothers!

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.
Plant peace along your path today for those who are in distress.
God's grace will be sufficient for you, if you will allow it to be,
Then you can have the glorious pleasure of sharing the victory!

PEACE! BE STILL!

Some of the Scriptures referred to in this poem are:
Mark 4:35-41 • Psalm 46:10 • Ephesians 6:7,8 • Romans 8:28 • 1 Peter 5:7
Proverbs 3:5 • Matthew 11:28 • James 3:18 • 2 Corinthians 12:9

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