



Volume 3, No. 11, November, 2015



## *Treasures Among Us*

**Clara Bryan  
Oklahoma City**

Clara Bryan was born in Warsaw, Illinois, where her dad worked for a button factory. She recalls all the shells which were used to make buttons but says they just threw away the ones they had—never realizing just what they had and how it would be nice to have some of them now. She was three years old when her family moved to Oklahoma, so in her words, “I’m an Okie, through and through!” When they lived near Hammond, Oklahoma, they had Indians living nearby. They were friendly Indians, so they were never in danger. Her mom was a Christian from an early age, but her dad was in his 80’s when he was baptized.

She grew up near Berlin (pronounced “Burrlan”), Oklahoma. Her dad was 50 and her mom was 33 when they married. Clara is the second of four girls born to them. She grew up during the Depression when it was very hard for older men to get work, so her dad worked with WPA during part of that time. The WPA men were building a storm cellar for the school in Grimes, Oklahoma, where she went to school during her 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years. WPA also built roads and other public works projects. It was hard but honest work.

Clara’s Grandma Patterson taught her and her sisters to read the Bible and taught them about God. Everyone in their family worked hard. The four girls all worked in the fields, but never on Sundays. Clara loved Sundays, especially the afternoons. She

would go down by the creek with a book and a blanket. She loved reading and listening to the wind blowing through the big cottonwood trees. Later in her life when times were stressful or she had bad feelings, she would remember the sound of the wind in the trees. It always brought her peace.

She and George knew each other from the time they were young kids. She just thought of him as an ornery boy in those early years. With a twinkle in her eyes, she said, “We were ‘old’ when we got married.” She was 18, and he was 21, and it was during World War II. He was serving in the Army at the time and came home on a 10-day leave to get married. He was stationed at Camp White in Oregon until he went overseas. Pearl Harbor was a momentous time in her life. They had a battery-powered radio, and family came and listened to their radio trying to get the news. When George was overseas, he served in Italy. She wrote him every day, but when she would get a letter from him, he would ask why she wasn’t writing to him. Invariably, a few days later, he would get 8-10 letters from her all at once. The troops were on the move so much that it was hard for the mail to keep up with them.

Their first child, George Kendall Bryan, was born while his dad was overseas, so George learned by letter that he now had a baby boy. Kendall was over a year old by the time George came home. Clara had a picture of George on the wall and thought that might be a good way to teach Kendall what Daddy looked like. She would ask Kendall, “Where’s Daddy?” and he would point to the picture. A funny thing happened when George came home, though, because initially Kendall didn’t understand that the man in the picture was his dad. George had some

difficulty readjusting to civilian life after three years in the Army.

George and Clara had a farm in far western Oklahoma when their children were little. George worked his own farm and also worked in construction. The construction paid well, so they decided to sell the farm. They had just about everything arranged to sell the farm, but their little sons were crying and didn't want to leave the farm. They said they were happy and didn't need a lot [of stuff], so Clara and George decided to stay with the farm. Even though construction paid more, they made it work on the farm and raised their children there. They raised cotton, wheat, hay, soy beans, and cattle. In the early years, they ran white face cattle but switched to Black Angus cattle later on. George loved horses and was very good at breaking (training) the horses from the time they were young. His favorite horses were Paint horses.

Later on, they also bought some Angora goats. Eventually, George got some sheep, and a shepherd dog named Missy came with them. Missy's job was to keep coyotes away from the sheep. George also had greyhounds and used them when he hunted coyotes to keep them away from the calves and the goats. He also had a wild turkey as a pet—and the turkey thought it was a dog! George always teased it, and it became mean. When the UPS man made deliveries and was leaving, the turkey would chase his truck all the way to the main road. George also had pet deer and an owl at one point, and one time he found a baby coyote and brought it home. Their boys raised the coyote and named it Lobo. George loved any and every animal, and his granddaughter, Amy (Wallace) Waite, inherited his love of animals. George served as County Commissioner for 8½ years. He did not have a lot of education, but he read a lot and studied about all the duties of the commissioners. He completed one man's term, then was elected for two more terms. He did a good job, was honest, and worked hard. When he decided not to run for any further terms, many of his constituents begged him not to quit. He felt like he had served long enough, though, and did not run again.

They had their own meat, always had a garden and were healthy and happy. Granddaughter, Amy, says, "Grandma is a good cook and a good baker." Clara got lots of practice cooking for her family.

When the wheat harvesting crews came through, she cooked for lots of workers every day.

About once a month, several of the ladies from the church would go to Westview Home where they sewed and ironed or helped in whatever ways were needed. Some of the women had ailing husbands and spent their time taking care of them. George and other able men took turns sitting with those men on Sundays so that their wives could go to church. Clara would go with the women to church. Clara loves Romans 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* "Oh Lamb of God," is her favorite song, and hearing a recorded version sung by her grandson, Heath, and his wife, Tiffany, brings her to tears.

Clara and George have four children. Kendall, Norman, Jeanette, and Joy. All of them still live in Oklahoma. George was a good Christian man, and he and Clara were faithful to be in attendance Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings and Wednesday nights. Clara taught children's Bible classes and VBS over the years.

Clara loved to write, and she filled many journals over the years. She also took lots of photographs over the years and was even told she was costing her husband too much buying so much film and getting all those pictures developed. Nowadays, some of those same people ask her for copies of some of those very pictures! She got into scrapbooking for a while and used some of her better pictures in the scrapbooks. She and Amy enjoyed scrapbooking together. When Amy first introduced her then boyfriend, Ken, Clara says, "I thought if Amy doesn't want him, I'll adopt him as my grandson!" Ken and Amy have since married.

Amy says that her Grandma Clara used to send a letter with every birthday card to every family member. Clara can't see well enough to write anymore. She can still read with the aid of a big magnifier, but she misses reading and writing at will.

Ella Ewing, the tallest woman in her generation, was a distant relative of hers (second cousin to Clara's dad). Ella was born in LaGrange, Missouri, and reached a height of eight feet, four inches tall and died at the age of 40 in 1913. It is believed she suffered from pituitary gigantism, a medical

condition caused by the overproduction of growth hormones.

Though Clara has spent most of her life in Oklahoma, she has traveled as far as Oregon and California. She has seen Carlsbad Caverns, and she has been to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. She has also been to Branson several times and has seen the Presleys, the Hughes Brothers, Ray Stevens, Mel Tillis, and Shoji Tabuchi. Sometimes she and George would pack a couple of suitcases and take off with no plan. They would choose a direction and go that way until there was something they wanted to see. They stopped in whatever town they were in when night came. She says there were no deadlines, and those were some of the best trips they ever took. If she had the chance, she would like to go back to Crater Lake in Oregon and to see the Redwoods in California again.

Clara and her husband, George, had to leave their beloved farm in western Oklahoma in 2007 and move to Oklahoma City. Since moving away from the farm, Clara reflects that she finds comfort in the song, "This World is not My Home," because it helps her remember that everything in this life is essentially temporary.

George had surgery in 2006, then had a stroke during surgery for an aneurysm. Sadly, George passed away March 11, 2011.

Clara modestly sums up her life by saying, "It was a quieter life. I look back now and think it was an okay life." Her modest description falls short of accurately describing the impact that her warm, friendly spirit has had on friends, neighbors, and family. Hers is a story of a life well lived.

**NOTE:** *This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> in a series highlighting noble Christian women in our congregation. We truly have many "treasures among us" in the women who exemplify Christianity in all its facets and have much to teach us all.*

◆◆◆◆◆



**Judy Kendall-Ball—Scotland**

While we both were raised loving the Lord and serving in our local congregations, after marriage,

neither my husband, Ken, nor I had formal training for mission work—other than some short-term mission trips while in college at Harding. Bible classes there and association with people of like mind, helped. Ken's degree was in journalism, and mine was in early childhood education. Unknown to us at the time, God was preparing us for the ministry we now focus on—our LESSONS TO LIVE BY—a print ministry for primary school children.

Our time on the mission field primarily has been as follows; 1988-1996, in South Africa, with our children, self-supported; 2003-2014, in South Africa, just the two of us, and seven AIM teams—40 students in all; and August, 2014 to present, in Scotland where we hope to stay until we go home to heaven.

### Life in South Africa

Our first work was as self-supported vocational workers in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, because we wanted our children to experience more of their father's South African culture. Our original commitment was for two years, which extended to eight with no furloughs. The people we worked among all spoke English, but we both learned some Zulu, Xhosa, and Afrikaans. Living in the culture for 19 years taught us both to have a more functional knowledge of those languages.

In the South African culture, we dealt with both whites and blacks in Natal on the eastern coast of South Africa. Once we moved to Cape Town and then to Port Elizabeth, the coloured populace entered into the mix, too. The white people we worked with were either English or Afrikaans, each with their own cultural differences. The Afrikaaners still resent the treatment their forefathers suffered from the English during the Boer War. They're a very proud, closed people; but once you make a friend with one, they are loyal.

We found that whites were not nearly as open and ready to study scripture as the blacks and coloured people. An earlier generation of missionaries in the area where we lived had helped to establish several congregations. Our work with them was mostly of a support nature.

During the government transition in South Africa in the mid- 90s, we lived through violence and stress around us. All the cultural beliefs of a people were being challenged, and no one knew what the end

result would be. South Africa is still a young nation, making their mistakes along the way.

The black "Africans" that we were blessed to work with have always been kind and eager to study. Toward the end of our years there, we cherished being with the Africans, often spending time in villages. Their cultural strengths are their resilience and ability to survive. What we would view as extreme poverty is just life to them. We always felt safe with them all. They would indeed give us the shirts off their backs, so we had to be careful not to admire something of theirs too much. One negative aspect of their culture, is their need to "tell you what they think you want to hear," rather than the honest brutal truth. At times, it was hard to know whether you and the person you might be studying with were really on the same page.

Some memorable conversions I have seen and/or participated in were of refugees who became the "Palm Tree church of Christ" on the beach front in Port Elizabeth. We began meeting with this group of people within a month of moving to PE. They come from many different countries in Africa but have common ties in that they are in Port Elizabeth, trying to make a living to be able to send money home to family. These people sell their curios daily to the tourists, be it in blazing sun or cold windy days. I have fond memories of Ken sitting amongst them, teaching and answering their questions, while they took turns holding an umbrella over his head. One by one, they were convicted of their lost states, and we would just step down to the beach and baptize them in the bay. They now meet under a palm tree, sharing the good news. They have no transport to get to any of the congregations, so they have neighboring vendors watch their goods so they can gather to praise God. They called Ken, Daddy; and I'm Momma. I'll never forget them.

Serving as a missionary has changed me. Learning to totally depend on God is foremost—for His care, putting the right people in our lives just when we need them; pointing us to those who need to know Him through our feeble efforts; learning what is really important, and what isn't. It isn't about physical comforts, or about us; it's about Him.

I am personally much more flexible than I was in the states and am grateful for every blessing that comes. Even knowing I will probably never live down the street or in the same town as any of my

children or grandchildren, I am at peace. It will never be easy, but I know I can do it. My approach towards people has changed over the years. I now realize that everyone I have any interaction with is never by accident. Each one has a burden and a story, and I am learning to listen.

For young women and their families considering working on the mission field, here are some things they need to know. Trust God. Don't put your dependence in any human; put it in God. Remember that even the trials will be blessings eventually, if you look for the lessons learned. If you are serving in a very different culture, look for common ground. You'll find it, and those friends you make will be such blessings and will enrich your life. Don't measure everything to "back home." It will make you sad, and probably irritate others. Learn to see the differences as chances to add to your life story.

#### Transition from South Africa to Scotland

Moving to Scotland wasn't on my radar. Now that we've been here for over a year, I know that we are here for a reason. We have been more challenged with things Satan is doing here, but never have we been more embraced by a church family. This won't be easy, but it will be worthwhile. I came in just as two women who had dominated had withdrawn themselves. They had suppressed the other women excessively.

The timing was great as we have been able to "start over" with our ladies classes, where my focus has been. We have spent many class periods just letting them share, vent, and find out that they have the ability to teach. Watching them each teach a class, then shed tears as they speak of how they haven't been allowed to speak out for years, has been great for us all. We have shared many hours over crafts, taken trips into the countryside together, prayed, and studied. No stress, just good fellowship, and, "this is how it should be--sharing without the control issues." My focus is on helping these wonderful ladies find their own voices in the family and helping them realize their own strengths as they serve the Lord.

We are nearing the end of our "honeymoon" period here. While we miss friends we left behind in South Africa, we are "at home" here now. Compared to South Africa, it's a night and day thing. First world versus third world. No burglar bars on our doors or

windows. No need to pay anyone to watch our car when we're out shopping. The electricity hasn't been cut here, as we were accustomed to in South Africa. While the weather here is definitely not the sub-tropical weather we lived in for almost 20 years, we have adjusted to the gray days. Another major adjustment has been dealing with a people that do not have God as their center. In South Africa, people were so receptive to studying that we never really had to search for someone to share the good news with. That's going to be a major factor here. This will take a real mind shift for us, and we must remember that God only asks us to sow the seeds. He will reap the harvest.

The most rewarding part of our work is knowing we were open to God's leading and seeing that we can really find work in the Kingdom here in Scotland. We are already in love with the church family and have made good friends with workers in neighboring cities. It is very rewarding to find our place in the scheme of things here and have a sense of belonging. We were both a bit concerned about the changes we would face after almost 20 years in the African culture. We're going to be fine! Just fine!

Our children are our only family stateside. Ken's family members are spread all over the world, and I was an only child; so our three have no extended family on which to rely. Because of their growing up years in Africa, each has an expanded world view of the Kingdom and a better tolerance of people with differing cultures. They would all like to see us come home to be nearer to them, but they accept our decision to stay on the field. We all work hard to stay connected, and the blessing of technology serves us all well. We are committed to getting home once a year, as long as we have the finances to do so. Now that we are only one flight away, we hope they will be able to come to us from time to time, too.

As a little girl in Tennessee, I never had any idea that my life's journey would be what it has been, but I give thanks to God for all He has led me to, given me strength and wisdom to face, and I give Him all the glory for it all.

◆◆◆◆◆

### *30 Books of the Bible Puzzle—Answers*

There are 30 books of the Bible hidden in this paragraph. Can you find them? It's **a most**

remarkable puzzle; my friend worked on it during a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, **keeping** himself occupied for hours. He passed it on to the rest of us, including one guy who used to do puzzles in his **john** boat while he fished. Another friend studied it while playing his **banjo**; **Ellen** Gray, a writer, mentioned in in a newspaper column. According to a local paper, the **Chronicle**, some Alpha Delta **Phi lemonade** booth set a new fundraising record when they featured this puzzle at an event. One friend of mine **judges** this puzzle to be such a tough **job** that before she starts working on it, **she brews** a cup of tea to steady her nerves. **There** are a few easy ones, for a **fact**. **Some** of them, however, may leave you in a **jam**, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. The **Truth** is, **from answers** I've received, I have to admit **it** usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them, **at the worst**. I suppose something in our **genes is** responsible for blinding people to where some of **those are**. As my friend **Daniel** Humana **humbly remarked**, "They're all hidden in plain sight!" I've heard plenty of **lamentations** from people who simply can't find them all. One helpful **revelation** is that some books, like **Timothy** and **Samuel**, may occur without their **numbers**. Also, punctuation and spaces in the middle of a name are **normal**. **A chipper** attitude will help you **compete** really well against those who claim to know the answers. Don't make a disgusted **exodus** from the project; I assure you there really are 30 books of the Bible **lurking** somewhere in this paragraph.

Order in which the books appear above: Amos, Luke, John, Joel, Chronicles, Philemon, Judges, Job, Hebrews, Esther, Acts, James, Ruth, Romans, Titus, Matthew, Genesis, Hosea, Daniel, Nahum, Mark, Lamentations, Revelation, Timothy, Samuel, Numbers, Malachi, Peter, Exodus, Kings

◆◆◆◆◆



*Sunrise* is a monthly newsletter written and/or assembled by members of the Rolla Church of Christ. All previous issues can be accessed by going to <http://www.seekgrowserveLove.org>. Click on Resources, then on Sunrise Newsletter. You will find the current issue plus all previous issues.

◆◆◆◆◆