



## Treasures Among Us

**Norma Garver**

12-20-1930 – 12-25-2015

It was planned to feature Norma Garver as one of our Treasures Among Us at some point. “At some point” is sometimes too late to take place during the “Treasure’s” earthly lifetime, so this is a posthumous tribute to her. Much of what follows was taken from her obituary or was spoken by Andy Cassidy when he preached Norma’s funeral. He graciously allowed use of his notes from that sermon to be the basis of this article.

Norma was born near Belle, Missouri and passed away in Rolla, Missouri. She spent several weeks in the hospital with various health problems, including pneumonia. She requested to be discharged so she could go home for Christmas. How appropriate it is that she *truly* went home on Christmas.

She was a graduate of Bland High School and began work at International Shoe in Bland, Missouri. In 1950, she married August Garver of St. James, and they recently celebrated 65 years together. For the last 56 of those 65 years, they resided in Rolla. She was known for her generous heart. She was often seen at Phelps County Regional Medical Center sitting with and caring for friends and loved ones through the night or holding the hand of someone as they departed this world. Norma was also a Bible class teacher for many decades and was a volunteer at the Rolla Nutrition Site for over 15 years.

Norma and Gus both grew up in the same rural area. They met as teenagers while Gus was busy making sauerkraut, and eventually, they both worked at the Shoe Factory in Bland. After their marriage in 1950, Gus was drafted and served two years in the US Army. For Gus, this was the most difficult part of their marriage—

being separated from the bride he loved. Gus says, “We were married for 65 years, and we had 63 good years together. Two years apart were not so good.”

During the time Gus was gone, Norma attended the Rosebud Church of Christ and made the most important decision of her life when she was baptized into Christ in Red Oak Creek in Rosebud, Missouri.

After Gus returned from the Army, he worked in a Ford dealership garage for three years, then went to college. Their son David was their first child followed by their daughter, Ruth. Norma was devoted to her husband and her children. Norma always thought of David and Ruth as her “little children”...no matter what age they were.

Through the years Gus and Norma became well-entrenched and well-known in the Rolla Community. Gus taught at the University, and Norma served as a volunteer at the hospital, at the Rolla Nutrition Site, and especially at the Rolla Church of Christ where she taught children’s Bible classes for many years. Gus and Norma were part of the core group of church members in the 1960’s that stepped out in faith to acquire the current church property and have the building constructed. They were personally involved in the construction work.

Norma was a generous servant to others, but she was not perfect! She had a weakness for Dairy Queen Dilly bars, and she played way too much gin rummy. She was not known for her organizational skills or for her mechanical abilities, but she still wanted to help other people get organized. One day Gus and David were working on a car in the garage. They spent considerable time taking off various engine parts and setting them on the floor in just the right order so that they could remember exactly how to put the engine back together again. They took a short break and came back to find that Norma, in an effort to be helpful in organizing all those stray parts, had gathered them all up together—in a box!

Norma and Gus were a pair, each incomplete without the other. This is how it should be after 65 years of marriage. Norma was a faithful wife for over 65 years—a rare

commodity in the world today! She was a faithful friend to many, and she was faithful as a Bible class teacher and elder's wife for the many years that Gus served the church as an elder.

Norma was a gracious Christian woman and made the Christian life look normal and easy...even though it isn't! She was always concerned about others—those who needed help or encouragement. Even when asked how she was doing, she quickly changed the conversation to how Gus was doing. She had a very sweet disposition and was very easy to have a pleasant conversation with. During the last two weeks of her life while she was mostly in the hospital, even though she was very weak and had difficulty breathing, she often commented about how nice the hospital staff was to her.

In a very real way, Norma's departure from this life on Christmas Day was very appropriate! Many of us were hoping for a white Christmas this year, but didn't have it. Norma, however, had a very white Christmas this year! Isaiah 1:18 says, "... though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow..." As a faithful Christian, Norma's sins were as white as snow! As an overcomer, God counted Norma as one of His elect... not guilty of wrongdoing, but welcome in His presence! And in Revelation 6:11 – the faithful in Christ were all given white robes to wear. On the day when we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our world, Jesus welcomed the coming of Norma into His world!

There is a well-known line from Shakespeare's most famous play, *Romeo and Juliet*, that says, "Parting is such sweet sorrow... that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow." There is sorrow because of the parting that took place on Christmas Day. For Gus, it is a parting of over 65 years of companionship. We parted with the friendship and fellowship we shared with Norma. We parted with her quick, sweet smile, and we parted with her constant concern for others. Even in the face of parting and the sorrow that goes with it, there is a "sweetness" that is very much a part of our sorrow. As a faithful Christian woman, we know that Norma's spirit departed from her body on Christmas Day to go and be with the Lord.

As Paul says in *Philippians 1:21-23*, "*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*" For Norma, it was no longer necessary for her to remain in the body. She has departed to be with Christ... which is far better!!! What a sweet event took place, for Norma, on Christmas Day!

Two weeks before her death, we almost lost Norma. She woke up in our local ICU and shared that during her time of unconsciousness, she had been on a winding road. It was very light, and it was a pleasant experience. And she heard a voice say, "Welcome, good and faithful servant."

We know that Norma's parting, for us, is only temporary as we read in *1 Thessalonians 4:16-18*: "*...the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.*" We are encouraged that we shall meet with Norma again one day!

In *Revelation 22:1-5*: "*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. .... The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night there. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true."*

Our parting from Norma is only temporary. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Norma entered into Christ Jesus when she was baptized into Christ 64 years ago. We are parted now, but there will be a tomorrow, a day when we shall all gather at the river that flows from the throne of God. Just as there was a tree of life at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, we shall once again be able to eat from the tree of life... and what a glorious day that will be!

Her body toiled through her last days, but she lived a full life in the previous years. We know that when our bodies are committed to the earth, it is only that which came from the earth, for we are made from the dust of the ground and to the dust of the ground we return. But, we are more than dust, for when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, man became a living being as *Genesis 2:7* says. Our bodies serve us only as the temporary dwelling place for our restless spirits. Norma laid aside her temporary house. It was just a worn out garment waiting to be laid aside. It was made of the earth and to the earth it shall return, but, her spirit lives on with eternal life.

Each of us should be reminded that life is short. Even if we live 85 years as Norma did, it passes quickly and is gone. Each year, each month, each day is to be lived in the Lord's service, because someday we will all stand

before the judgment seat of Christ. We must be ready, be prepared, and live each day loving others and serving the Lord. Norma Garver, demonstrated how to live a faithful life! She who is faithful, even to the point of death, will receive a crown of life. Enjoy your crown, Norma!

Sunrise Newsletter for Women bids a fond farewell to Norma Garver, a Treasure who was among us too briefly.

**NOTE:** *This is the 24<sup>th</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.*

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### ***Farewell to Alberta Rowden***

*Sunrise also bids a fond farewell to Alberta Rowden who was the Treasure Among Us in the August, 2014, issue. She passed away January 16, 2016, in*

*Rolla, Missouri.*

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### **Book Review**

## **THE DOMINO EFFECT**

by Tim Lewis

“The Domino Effect” is a very easy-to-read book with lots of practical wisdom about the effects of choices we all make. The subtitle is, “Changing Your Life One Decision at a Time.”

The 13 chapters deal with: “Why are Decisions so Important?” “Good Over Evil (Excellence Over Mediocrity),” “God’s Way Versus Our Way,” “Bible Based Decisions,” “God-Glorifying Decisions,” “Christ-Imitating Decisions,” “Kingdom-Seeking Decisions,” “Golden Rule-Guided Decisions,” “Prayer-Saturated Decisions,” “Influence-Guarding Decisions,” “Thought-Purifying Decisions,” “Eternity-Minded Decisions,” and “How to Handle Bad Decisions.” Every chapter is practical and is followed by thought-provoking questions for discussion when it is used in a class or group situation.

Tim Lewis is the preacher at the North MacArthur Church of Christ in Oklahoma City. His book was published by Gospel Advocate. This is a book I plan to read again and again, and I plan to recommend it (or provide it) for new Christians.

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, MO  
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## **UNPREDICTABLE**

*“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.”* (Psalm 115:3) We cannot fathom what God chooses to do or let happen or why. If His purpose includes His supernatural intervention, that is what will happen. We are dependent upon God’s Grace, and we keep our faith in His promises and what He can do.

My husband has asked me several times over the years if, as a child, I ever imagined making my home and my life in a foreign country. “Did you ever think your life would turn out like this?” We all have our hopes and dreams and “plan” our futures; but if we are believers, we realize that God is out to build our character, which sometimes means discomfort on our part.

It takes a lot to build our characters and shape good personalities. If we realize we are a work of art and God is the potter, it is easier to accept hard molding and the pressure of those fingers. Sometimes we think we know enough or even everything, but we do not. That’s why we are commanded to pray “according to His will.”

Generally, humans are very unpredictable. Take the Israelites for instance. At the beginning of Exodus 15, they were very happy that water destroyed those pursuing them; but at the end of the chapter, their drinking water turned bitter – so they turned bitter. The Israelites were at one moment praising God their Savior and a while later, were full of bitter complaint. God being God gave them sweet water dealing with them just as a kind mother deals with a fussy child.

When the going gets tough, the first person to lean upon is God. *“And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”* Psalm 50:15. If He decides not to immediately deliver us, then we will receive His Grace to put up good-humoredly with trouble – to His glory. (2 Corinthians 12:8-12)

From the things I have been through in Thailand, I can say that I’ve always found strength in the Lord; and, in hindsight, see that things always fell into place. I just needed to be patient and remember that God’s wheels grind slowly but exceedingly fine.

I have also watched the love of Thai Christians for the Lord grow hot and cold at different stages of their lives – but God’s love always remained unchanged. Perhaps we should ask, “If you are not feeling close to God, guess who moved?” We might see a light of understanding come on in their eyes.

Death is a certainty, and life is unpredictable at best, yet is controlled by God. We see leaders come and go, countries rise and fall, hordes of people wiped out by floods, earthquakes, fires, starvation, droughts, wars, terrorists, sickness, and greed. But just as Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever." Thank you, Jehovah God, for your constant unchanging nature!

Rebecca Voraritskul, Khon Kaen, Thailand  
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## HOLDING ON TO THE SON

Tonight as Jackson went to sleep, we did the normal bedtime routine and then laid down to hold hands as we said our bedtime prayer. Weston is not a very good hand holder yet, so he had started to wiggle after the prayer. As I turned to settle Weston, I had to let go of Jack's hand for a split second.

As I was trying to care for Weston, I felt Jack's sweet little hand searching for mine. What made this so sweet is that he had fallen asleep while we were singing and saying our prayer. Therefore with closed eyes, his heart searched for the security of his mother's touch. As I quickly took his hand back, he fell calmly back to sleep.

At that moment I realized I was the in-between person in a cord of three. For each night I have learned as I take my son's hand that I in return take THE SON'S hand to safely lead us through each night; one child reaching out to his mother, and one child reaching out to her Father. I am that link, at this moment, between God and my son. He has given me these precious boys to raise knowing the full love of God our Father and the Son!

As I was thinking about these things, I fell asleep sitting up trying to watch my sons—as Jack normally is going to have a seizure within an hour of going to sleep. However, mom and I have been working on his diet, and it had been two months without a seizure. After a few too many blueberries yesterday, I knew we might be in trouble. Thankfully, Bryan knew this too and came in to check on us and woke me up.

As Bryan and I talked about the day, I still held Jack's tiny miracle of a precious hand. While we were talking, Jack sat up and was in a seizure. It was bad enough that we had to go ahead and administer meds, and he quickly came out of it. The whole time, though, Jack looked to us to guide him through. He knew, even when he couldn't talk, where to look for help and guidance to save him from his sickness.

We quickly stabilized him and got his pulse oximeter on so I could monitor his vitals until they returned to

baseline. I was thankful that God yet again brought us through. I was so thankful that my hand that was holding my son's hand was also holding THE SON...the one who never fails!

I tell you all this, not because we want you to feel for us, but rather so that someone reading this may gain the strength we have in learning to hold on to the One who controls all the storms in life. Maybe you are going through a storm and you feel like no one understands. Please know there is a God and HE IS ALIVE...always awake and ready to hold your hand to gently guide, love, and protect you through anything you may be going through! So tonight reach out for the One who is always willing to hold you through the storm, knowing full well that with HIM we can do ALL things!! May each of you rest quietly in the hands of our Heavenly Father, tonight and always! All praise and glory to our God above for all the miracles He does for my sweet family daily!! Thank you, Lord, for never letting go of my hand!!!

Kim Kemnitzer, Salem, Missouri  
©January 3, 2016

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## February

*Like mimic meteors the snow  
In silence out of heaven sifts,  
And wanton winds that wake and blow  
Pile high their monumental drifts.  
And looking through the window-panes  
I see, 'mid loops and angles crossed,  
The dainty geometric skeins  
Drawn by the fingers of the Frost.  
'Tis here at dawn where comes his love,  
All eager and with smile benign,  
A golden Sunbeam from above,  
To read the Frost's gay valentine.*

~Frank Dempster Sherman, "In February," c.1886

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The logo for Sunrise Newsletter features the word "Sunrise" in a large, blue, cursive font. To the right of the text is a stylized yellow sun with rays. Below the text and sun is a blue banner with the text "The Newsletter For Women By Christian Women" in white. The entire logo is set against a white background with a thin black border.

*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.seekgrowserveandlove.org>. Click on Resources, then on Sunrise Newsletter. You will find the current issue plus all previous issues.

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