

# Notes from Toad Hall

Issue #2 ~ 2013  
Spring



## Random Notes

### **Journal entry: at a cabin**

Our first evening here. I sat on the dock and watched the sun go down across the lake. Fiery reds, oranges glowed like a furnace, cooling to apricot, pale gold, lilac, gray, darker, darker. Behind me the moon arose brilliant, cold, over the cabin. I walked back to the porch, passing off the dock, under the pines, and all around me bats flicked. We've never seen them here before. Dozens dove past my head, out over the water they twisted and flew, scooping up clouds of insects, silent, weird. I liked it—this life that happens in darkness, while we sleep, the pestilence eaten by bats in the chill of the night.



*Watching the loons*

Then the loons began to call one another. Their pitch and wails echoing, rising, falling, for longer than I'd ever heard. Lamenting in the night—or is it their joy? Whatever: I feel like a gift was given—the songs of the loons. I'm honored. Privileged because I heard them. Thank you, God.

The next day a ruby-throated hummingbird came in the sunlight to a pot of flowers right beside me. A chipping sparrow pecked my foot. A chipmunk sniffed my heel. A turtle surfaced in the water just before me. An armada of Canadian geese floated past. Twenty-one to be exact. A fish jumped clean out of the water. I saw his long white belly as he slapped the water with his tail.

A chipmunk sits on the bottom step. Dunk, dunk, dunking. Over and over he says it, sounding like a faucet dripping into a bucket. Then across the way another one answers and they begin a little rhythm—a back beat. I scatter some seed on the top step. In moments he finds it. First a single seed, he shells it, he eats another, then he notices the spread, the unexpected bounty. He quickly stuffs

his mouth, twitching across the step, vacuuming them up, his cheeks filling to give his head a comical roundness. He left a single raisin—apparently not to his liking.

I am still feeling a lack of cheer, a heaviness of spirit. Denis knows this. He *sees* how I feel, though I haven't talked about it. But he asked me. I could only say I'm doing what I can. Perhaps his love lifted me. Perhaps joy only returns slowly. I don't know. I haven't had many expectations. But this morning I feel different like I've awakened a bit and looking around, I think, possibly, I should see if I can find some wild raspberries, enough to put a little color into the peach cobbler I might make today.

### Writing, or not

Crabby day today.

At Caribou Coffee.

Okay 'til now. Three large women loaded with perfume at the next table.

Is it sad that this is my concentrating thorn-in-the-flesh at this moment? That it is now the overpowering scent of cotillion that overwhelms and derails my writing? And why shouldn't home be the good place to spread out my manuscript? That the interruptions there are more distracting?

Down, Evil One, down!

Quote for the day: "Writing is easy. All you have to do is stare at a blank sheet of paper until drops of blood form on your forehead." Gene Fowler (1890-1960)

### Chickadees

I was watching my black-capped chickadees at the window feeder. It's been weeks since I've put out any food for them. They were back almost instantly (as though I've been starving them) dee-dee-deeing.

One has just picked up a sunflower seed, and holding it between his toes on the edge of the feeder is hammering away viciously at it. Then he

tugged at it so hard he lost his balance and fell backward.

He finally gave up and selected another seed.



*Felted wool chickadee*

### Drastic discipline

Been rereading J. I. Packer's classic *Knowing God* (1973).

*God's love is holy love. The God whom Jesus made known is not a God who is indifferent to moral distinctions, but a God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, a God whose ideal for his children is that they should "be perfect... as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). He will not take into his company any person, however orthodox in mind, who will not follow after holiness of life.*

*And those whom he does accept he exposes to drastic discipline, in order that they may attain what they seek. "The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son... God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness... It [discipline] produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:6-11). God's love is stern, for it expresses*



holiness in the lover and seeks holiness for the beloved. Scripture does not allow us to suppose that because God is love we may look to him to confer happiness on people who will not seek holiness, or to shield his loved ones from trouble when he knows that they need trouble to further their sanctification. [p. 122]

Wisely, Packer adds a balancing comment:

As believers, we find in the cross of Christ assurance that we, as individuals, are beloved of God; “the Son of God... loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Knowing this, we are able to apply to ourselves the promise that all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). Not just some things, note, but all things! Every single thing that happens to us expresses God’s love to us, and comes to us for the furthering of God’s purpose for us.

Thus, so far as we are concerned, God is love to us—holy, omnipotent love—at every moment and in every event of every day’s life. Even when we cannot see the why and the wherefore of God’s dealings, we know that there is love in and behind them, and so we can rejoice always, even when, humanly speaking, things are going wrong. We know that the true story of our life, when known, will prove to be, as the hymn says, “mercy from first to last”—and we are content. [p. 122-123]

It is the words “drastic discipline” that defines life. Drastic. How I feel. How I see life shaping up for those I love. But then God sees farther along the path. And these words are so familiar; the words from the Scriptures on God’s discipline. But Packer unpacks them for me. (Ha. An unintended pun.) (No, not a pun. A word play.)



Wisconsin lake house

That in our suffering we can’t hope that God will “shield his loved ones from trouble when he knows that they need trouble to further their sanctification.” This, strangely, removes some of the bewildering, hopeless, meaningless feelings that so take me down.

So, whoever it is—of all those I love most dearly, and for myself—I must remember this.

### A prayer for today

Almighty and most merciful Father, whose power and whose love eternally work together for the protection of Thy children, give me grace this day to put my trust in Thee.

O Father, I pray...

...for faith to believe that Thou dost rule the world in truth and righteousness.

...for faith to believe that if I seek first Thy Kingdom and righteousness, Thou wilt provide for all my lesser needs.

...for faith to take no anxious thought for the morrow, but to believe in the continuance of Thy past mercies.

...for faith to see Thy purpose of love unfolding itself in the happenings of this time.

...for faith to be calm and brave in face of such dangers as may meet me in the doing of my duty.

...for faith to believe in the power of Thy love to melt my hard heart and swallow up my sin.

...for faith to put my own trust in love rather than in force, when other men harden their hearts against me.

...for faith to believe in the ultimate victory of Thy Holy Spirit over disease and death and all the powers of darkness.

...for faith to profit by such sufferings as Thou dost call upon me to endure.

...for faith to leave in Thy hands the welfare of all my dear ones.

O Thou in whom all my fathers trusted and were not put to confusion, rid my heart now of all vain anxieties and paralyzing fears. Give me a cheerful and buoyant spirit, and peace in doing Thy will; for Christ’s sake. Amen.

A Diary of Private Prayer by John Baillie (1949) p. 121



At the cabin

# Hospitali

For our board meeting, Ransom Assisant, Anita Gorden  
refrigerator. Here is that original menu with hand

## Potato Leek Soup

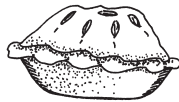
5 small Yukon Gold potatoes      2 c milk  
6 c water      1 large leek  
3 T chicken bouillon      1/3 c butter

Peel, cook & coarsely mash potatoes. Set aside.  
Wash, slice & saute leek in butter until tender.  
Add bouillon & 1 c water. Puree in blender.  
Pour puree into soup pot, add potatoes, milk &  
remaining water. Simmer 10 min. Add more  
bouillon, salt & pepper to taste.



## Polenta Pepper Pie

2 1/2 c water  
1 c cornmeal  
3/4 lb. ground sausage  
1 green pepper, finely chopped  
1 small carrot, shredded  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 diced tomato  
1/2 c. grated Romano cheese  
green pepper rings, thinly sliced  
2 oz. shredded mozz or provolone  
1/2 tsp salt



Bring 1 1/2 c water to boil. Mix remaining 1 c. water, cornmeal & salt.  
Slowly pour cornmeal mix into boiling water, stirring constantly. Cook &  
stir until thick & bubbly. Cook over low heat 5 min or until very  
thick, stirring constantly.

Spoon 1/2 polenta mix into greased 8" pie dish. Cover with waxed  
paper & spread remaining polenta on top of paper. Cool slightly,  
then remove top polenta layer & set aside.

Saute onion, carrot, sausage, tomatoes, peppers in olive oil until  
meat is cooked & veggies are tender. Spread this mix over first  
polenta layer. Sprinkle w/ Romano. Invert 2nd layer over the top,  
sprinkle w/ remaining cheese & top w/ pepper rings. Bake 350°, 20-25  
min or until cheese melts.

Ransom Fellows

Janua

Toad Hall:

## Wednesday

**Lunch-** House made sandwiches, carrots, fruit

**Dinner-** Vegetable stir fry with marinated pork and b

**Dessert-** Vanilla ice cream drizzled with olive oil and

"If you're afraid of butter, use cream."

— Julia Child

## Thursday

**Breakfast (Self-serve)-** Granola, fruit, yogurt, bage

**Lunch-** Chicken tortilla soup with Margie's homemad

**Dinner-** Honey glazed chicken thighs, coffee glazed c  
w/ yogurt and pecans, pickles

**Dessert-** Grandma Frolander's Lemon Angel Pie

"He showed the words "chocolate cake" to a group of A  
"Guilt" was the top response. If that strikes you as un  
the same prompt: "celebration."

— Michael Pollan

## Friday

**Breakfast (Self-serve)-** Granola, fruit, yogurt, bage

**Lunch (Chris Harper joins us)-** Potato Leek soup

**Dinner-** Polenta, Pepper and Sausage Pie and coleslaw

**Dessert-** Margie's Café Flan

"If you really want to make a friend, go to someone's h  
food give you their heart."

--- Cesar Chavez

## Saturday

**Breakfast -** Granola, fruit, yogurt, bagels w/ cream cl

# ity Notes

er made a lovely little decorated menu that she put on our  
written recipes and illustrations also done by Anita.

hip Annual Board Meeting

ry 10 & 11, 2013

Rochester, Minnesota

## Menu

rown rice  
sea salt

els w/cream cheese, oj, coffee/tea, milk, cereal, toast  
le tortilla chips, carrot and celery sticks, fruit  
arrots from HeartBeet Farm, dilled rice, fruit salad

mericans and recorded their word associations.  
exceptional, consider the response of French eaters to

els w/cream cheese, oj, coffee/tea, milk, cereal, toast  
p, Caesar salad, celery and carrot sticks, bread, fruit  
w

ouse and eat with him... the people who give you their

cheese, oj, coffee/tea, milk, cereal, toast



Anita's handiwork in Toad Hall guest room



## Caesar Salad

3 cloves garlic  
1/2 c olive oil  
1 c. white bread cubes  
1/2 t salt  
1/4 t dry mustard  
1/4 t fresh ground blk. pepper  
1 1/2 t Worcestershire sauce

1/2 T anchovy paste  
1 egg  
1 large head Romaine,  
washed & chilled  
1/4 c crumbled bleu cheese  
3+T Parmesan  
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Several hours before serving: Halve garlic & combine with oil in  
jar w/lid. Refrigerate at least 1 hour. Heat 2T oil in skillet;  
add bread cubes. Sauté until brown all over. Set aside.

To remaining oil, add salt, mustard, pepper, Worcestershire &  
anchovy paste. Shake & chill.

Bring 2" of water in small pan to boil. Turn off heat. Carefully  
lower egg into water, let stand 1 minute, lift out & set aside to cool.

Just before serving, rub inside of salad bowl w/ 1/2 garlic clove.  
Tear Romaine into bite-sized pieces. Shake dressing & pour over Romaine.  
Toss. Break egg over center; sprinkle w/cheese. Toss. Pour on lemon  
juice. Toss. Sprinkle w/ bread cubes. Toss & serve immediately.





# Ransom Notes



## Laity Lodge Summer Women's Retreat

June 27-30, 2013

All work is God's work, yet at times it can be difficult to discern exactly how to pursue the fullness of our work when certain aspects of it feel so thoroughly disconnected from the rest. For women especially, seeking to faithfully tether a wide range of commitments, longings, hopes, relationships, and responsibilities in a way that feels both coherent and sustainable can sometimes feel a bit much.

Over the course of this weekend retreat, women from a wide range of giftedness, seasons, and circumstances are invited to join Andi Ashworth,

Margie Haack, and Kate Harris to consider what it means—and what it looks like—to pursue faithfulness in all of life. Musician Sara Groves will join them to bring the gift of art to the weekend.

Sharing from their own wide experience and intentional but less-than-perfect efforts to provide hospitality, cultivate homes, offer leadership, care for friends and family, and serve in a variety of ways, they will seek to craft a meaningful conversation and offer tools that are helpful to single and married women, with or without children, professional women and women whose work is primarily in the home, and most of all for women whose lives bleed across all of these lines.

In case you don't know: Andi is editor of the Art House America blog and author of *Real Love for Real Life: The Art and Work of Caring*. Kate is Executive Director of The Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation, and Culture, a non-profit based just outside of Washington, D.C., that seeks to educate and equip the local church for whole-life discipleship. And Sara lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she and her husband Troy continue to build the Art House North community ([saragroves.com](http://saragroves.com)).

More information online at [www.laitylodge.org](http://www.laitylodge.org).



Margie at reading Lincoln, NE

## For prayer

- For Margie's readings from *The Exact Place*, scheduled at various places around the US in all sorts of locations.
- For Denis as he works on completing a book manuscript on learning to hear, blogs, and meets with people at Toad Hall.
- For Anita as she coordinates the hospitality ministry of Ransom and works to keep Toad Hall welcoming and full of beauty for those who come to rest, talk, and eat.
- In this 30th year of Ransom's existence (1983-2013) that we be able, in a small way, to demonstrate the winsome reality of Christian faith in our cynical and skeptical world.

# Family Notes

## What I love

I may be prone to love certain things too much – from the very important, like grandchildren, to everyday stuff, like Yirgacheffe coffee. I think about this and pray that what dominates my heart will not be grasped too tightly, but lifted to God with thankfulness in a loose hand.

Love winter but I'm done! Spring is late, March and April have dumped too much junk. Poor birds need to be scooped up, warmed and fed worms.

Being with family & grandkids. Late February. In Bemidji for Anson's hockey tournament.

Having an overnight with my mother and sisters, Roxanne and Jan.

Being isolated with Denis. A winter cabin visit.

Artful shenanigans with Anita. Making "Rabbit Crossing" signs for our boulevard trees.



*Robin pulling worm from snow*



*Paige, Ava Lou & Margie watch Anson's game*



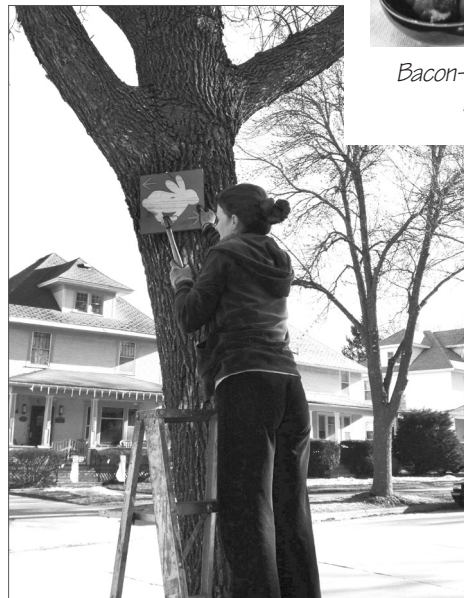
*Margie and her sisters*



*Bacon-wrapped stuffed dates and red wine at the cabin*



*Snowy road to the cabin*



*Bunny Crossing with Anita on the ladder*

# Final Notes

## Hazel Nut

A few days ago Becca gave birth to a little red-headed girl. (I've mentioned Joe and Becca, our vegetable farmer friends in the past.) She delivered at home with two midwives, Joe and sister Hannah attending. These days it's pretty common to spend some part of laboring in a tub of warm water. If only I'd known back in the day. The day she knew baby was coming – she and Joe dragged in a stock tank, scrubbed it out and early the next morning she was ready to get in. That night Hazel Eden was born. (Joe thought her middle name should be Nut.) The birth wasn't nearly so easy as all that – what I've written in a few words.

Four days later, Anita and I brought them a meal. Becca was feeling ready for girlfriends. We sat around the cookstove with cups of lemon drop tea as the sun reflected off the snow and the estrogen rose in mists around us.

Becca recalled details – emotions that ranged from despair “I want out of my body NOW,” to the angry declaration of “I’ll never do THIS again,” to sensing the Lord promising strength for THIS moment – like receiving drops of something you couldn't possibly drink all at once, but sip by sip the whole thing finally goes down. As we passed this little bundle around, we were sharing in an ancient feminine ritual – the wonder and the curse. How are we able to carry a child nine months, be contorted with excruciating pain, and then fall in love with the source, soon forgetting the cost and be willing to endure it again? It makes no sense. We rejoice and mourn at the same time knowing that in other places and other times it could be or even is otherwise for any of us. Barren, single or sick and dying, we are sisters. We take nothing for granted and yet we were filled with praise to God.

When Joe and little Silas came in from the greenhouse for lunch we were hopelessly sunk into this ever-new story of birth. When he saw us sitting in a circle intently listening, his mother-in-law assured him, this is age-old, it's what women do. He said he got it, “kinda like men retelling deer hunting stories.” She replied, yes, sort of like that.

Warmly,

Margie



Baby Hazel

## About Notes from Toad Hall

Toad Hall is the name of our home, christened by our children. It is from the book *The Wind in the Willows*, a favorite of ours. In it Mole, a shy yet daring character, and Ratty, who is much nicer and more sensible than his name would imply, have many adventures along the river. One of their friends is Toad of Toad Hall. Toad is something of an aristocrat and lives in a mansion. Otherwise, he has very little to commend him and really doesn't deserve friends since he is a callous liar, lacks common sense and, well, he lives for the pleasure of the moment—which brings him no end of trouble.

When we moved to Minnesota in 1981, our children had rarely seen such tall homes with their imposing three stories. They were used to one-story adobes which rambled along in the hot New Mexico sun. So, to them, a midwestern Gothic four-square looked amazingly like a mansion. Possibly even as great a house as Toad Hall.

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