

Notes from TOAD HALL

Still Winter 2002



M Margie Reads Through the Bible in a Year: *A composite history*

January 1st: Resolved to read through the Bible in a year. To pick a program and simply stick with it.

I know I've tried this before and failed (the lure of winning that Sunday School Certificate just wasn't compelling enough) but this time I am really going to do it. Sheer will power will take me there. No excuses. It doesn't matter that I work, have children, am sick, travel, celebrate holidays, or am just a lazy slob, this year I WILL do it.

I skip the plan that suggests you read straight through the

the Bible from beginning to end (too boring). And the one that has you read twenty verses from five different books every day (too annoying). I go for the historical one. It looks interesting. This one has you read the Bible chronologically and you get to see the flow of Biblical history. I like the idea. You start with Genesis and end with Revelations, but, for example, when you get to the life of Moses you get to throw in the Psalms he wrote and hear his poetry all through his troubles and triumphs. And when you get to the kings of Israel you get to read what the prophets were saying while their kingdoms crashed.

This desire is more than just wanting to congratulate myself on having done a good thing. Reading through the entire Bible would keep me from going the same old route which takes me to familiar places.

Like Luke when I want to be jazzed by Jesus' life. To the Psalms when I am depressed and doubting. I avoid Ecclesiastes; it is very dark. I am not fond of Leviticus either, too many sacrifices. And the minor prophets do rant so. However, I want to hear God's voice in all it ways during all the times he spoke to and through men. I want to know Him. I want to know the hard parts where babies' heads are dashed against stones. And I want to know why we must endure page after page of numbers and names of people we know nothing about.

I have read and I respect men like John Stott who say:

Christians who neglect the Bible simply do not mature. When Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy to the effect that human beings do not live by bread only but by God's Word, he was asserting

that the Word of God is just as necessary for spiritual health as food is for bodily health. I am not now thinking of remote Christian tribes people into whose language the Bible has not yet been translated, nor of illiterate people... I am thinking rather about ourselves. Our problem is not that the Bible is unavailable to us, but



January						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	X
6	7	X	X	X	X	12
X	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

I don't have the energy for any of this and since I've read Job quite a few times in my life, I just read chapters one and twenty-two. I check off all the dates.

that we do not take advantage of its availability. We need to read and meditate on it daily, to study it in a fellowship group and to hear it expounded during Sunday Worship. Otherwise we shall not grow. Growth into maturity in Christ depends upon a close acquaintance with, and a believing response to, the Bible.

[Source: *God's Book For God's People*, John Stott, IVP p. 76]

So, even though I am tired from celebrating until midnight on the 31st of December, I prop myself up in bed. Denis brings me a cup of tea and I plunge in, reading Genesis 1-4. Creation accomplished! It feels so good to check off the square.



January 5th. Got a phone call from Mom yesterday morning. I was in the midst of reading and forgot to finish. Today I have

five chapters to read and they are long. Half-way through the chapters I move to my favorite chair in the living room and Denis comes in with the calendar and says we must plan our schedule for next fall and winter. It takes a long time. When we are finally done, I am in a bad mood. I don't like planning dates and trying to imagine whether I will want to fly to Anchorage with him in January and do a workshop on 'Why Young Girls Love Britney Spears' or 'Cooking up Hospitality' for the women. (I am not an easy person to live with. All the more reason, of course, that I should read through the Bible.)

I am not done reading, but I decide it's time to shower and get moving.

January 8th. Am supposed to begin reading in Job. Turns out it is one of

the oldest books in the Bible so for this reading program it comes in the middle of Genesis. But I woke up with a bad headache. I can barely focus enough to find my clothes. In fact, I don't find them because everything I own needs to be washed. I pull something out of the dirty clothes hamper which makes my headache worse. I decide to skip the ritual for just one day. It seems important to start the laundry. I can make it up the next day.

January 9th. I forgot to wake up early. Denis and I need to make a quick trip to Minneapolis and must leave right away. I take *Prayers of the Puritans* and *Daily Light* and we read and pray together in the car on the way. The Bible reading will keep.

January 10th. Oops. Now I need to read 22 chapters in Job. When am I

gonna find time for that? We have guests coming and I have to change the sheets, do this huge grocery shop—one of the hateful little duties of home-keeping—and clean the bathrooms, which strangely I do enjoy. Like crows and pack rats I value shiny things like chrome and porcelain. I don't have energy for any of this and since I've read Job quite a few times in my life, I just read chapters 1 and 22. I check off all the dates.

January 11th. Read Job 23-31. *Nine chapters for one day? No kidding? I look at the book on my night stand: J.I. Packer's Never Beyond Hope and wonder if I am. I decide to read as much of Job as I have time for since our Board of Director's meeting begins today and since Denis and I are in vocational ministry shouldn't I at least make an effort to grow in godliness? I have time for two chapters and then I need to get downstairs and put out breakfast for eight.*

 **January 13th.** School has been canceled. Ten inches of snow fell last night and this morning it's blowing so hard the wind chill index is sixty below. The kids are elated and rather than stay inside and quietly go back to bed like thoughtful children would do, they insist on going outside to begin construction of snow tunnels and forts. Which they do. For about the space of time it takes to brew a pot of coffee. Then they are back in, flinging boots and sopped mittens on the radiators where they smolder and smell like wet dogs. Then they beg for Swedish pancakes. The weather has ruined my routine.

January 14th. I am sick. I look at the reading plan and check off the last three days without cracking the Bible. Instead I read Packer's book subtitled *How God Touches and Uses Imperfect People*.

 **January 15th.** I begin with confession of sin. Pride—I thought I was better than

this, but daily life proves I am not. And lying—it's still a sin. Even if I'm the only one who looks at my Bible plan. I erase the checkmarks where I cheated, and decide just to begin with the current date, be honest and maybe if I have time, go back and catch up. Some Saturday I'll spend the whole day reading. Meanwhile I will live with the gaps. As I begin reading in Job again, I hear a light tap on the door. It is one of my kids. Nine year old Sember says softly, 'I know you told us not to bother you unless we can show you blood, but Jerem is sick. He's throwing up in his room. Does this count?' I leap off the bed and run down the hall. It is worse than I imagined. He must've drank a quart of grape juice just prior because a viscous purple liquid with white things floating in it is everywhere.

**Mysteriously, despite all,
I am among his chosen.
It is sheer grace.**

The force of it has splashed up the bedroom door and onto the baseboard—which were once white but are now permanently stained a pale lilac. It's hard not to think he did this on purpose since the bathroom is only about five steps away from his room. In that moment I know I am really evil. I forgot all about Job that day.

February 4th. Not doing so well with the Bible reading. It's hard to keep it going when we are out of town. There are more gaps in the past two weeks.

February 13th. The book of Numbers is mostly that. And names, names, names. Maybe I could find one like Jabez and write a best seller. I skip ahead to I Kings and read two days worth.

February 18th. Deuteronomy 12 - 18. I think I might begin to read the

book of Luke. I like the idea of reading it with an eye for the questions Jesus asks people. Why does he do that? What do they mean?

March 3rd. I look at my checkered plan sheet with smudges and erasures. It isn't working. I am doomed. A failing immature rat of a Christian. Barely two months and I am ruined. I quit. I decide to read what I can when I can and quietly slip into First Peter where Jesus says to me through the dear Apostle: But you are a chosen people... Mysteriously, despite all, I am among his chosen. It is sheer grace.

The Read-Through-the-Bible-Program for Shirkers and Slackers.

Sadly, this has been my experience for much of my life. Until about six years ago, I NEVER made it through the Bible on one of those programs. In summary: I got sick. Traveled. Married. Raised children. The weather was bad. Or beautiful. My aunt had brain surgery. My in-laws dropped by for a day. The taxes were due at midnight, we were eating Chinese take-out, and still trying to figure out Turbo-tax. The engine fell out of the car while I was driving (That was hard to explain to my husband who sort of believes some of our car repairs are due to my wild driving. Thankfully the Ford Company came to my aid when it recalled that year's Taurus for bad motor mounts.)

So when Denis discovered a read-through-the-Bible-plan which he called 'Reading for Biblical Literacy,' I was cautious about it. After all, I was a veteran who'd tried everything.

It first came to his attention through Douglas Kelly's book *Why Pray?* The basic plan dates from the time of the Puritans. It was given to him by Venus Brooks, a pastor from the Lumbee Indian tribe. Dr. Kelly writes, 'Its special value is that it gives you a varied diet by exposing you to different parts of Scripture each day while providing continuity

by causing you to return to the same section on the same day of the week all through the year.'

So throughout the year you read the following. On every:

Sunday: The books of poetry.

Monday: The Pentateuch

Tuesday: O.T. history.

Wednesday: O.T. history (There is a lot of it.)

Thursday: O.T. prophets.

Friday: N.T. history.

Saturday: N.T. epistles.

So while having a fit of resolutions on a January 1st some years ago, I pulled it out, cut down the margins, folded it in half so it would fit in my Bible, and began.

The big difference between this plan and any other I had tried was that it was not tied to any particular date. On any day of the week, say it was Friday, I read the assigned portion and happily checked it off. Fridays were good days and it is true I finished all of

them before I finished the Saturdays, but then I simply read wherever I was behind. I was not tempted to cheat, because there were no unsightly gaps. I knew it was going to take me longer than a year. And, after all, what is so inspired about doing it in a year? Nothing. I

also liked not having to look up five different references in one day, you could just settle in and read an entire assignment which came from one book.

It also had the advantage of giving more context because you read a whole chunk at a time rather than a few verses here and there.

Clearly another advantage in the arrangement was that it helped me see the remarkable unity and interconnections that run through the entire Scripture. On Monday I would be reading about the covenant God made with Abraham and on Saturday Paul

would be talking about the very same thing in Romans.

And I figured out at least one thing about Numbers. If God cared enough about all those tribes and clans to count the people and to name them so we could look at them in the year 2002, then it is a certain kind of evidence that God is mindful of every one of his people no matter how anonymous or insignificant we think we are. But the best thing by far was simply checking off a day's portion not a DATE.

I got through the whole Bible. It only took me a year and six months. x



Ransom Notes

Looking Back.

In early January we hosted Ransom's Board of Directors annual meeting. We love this time and group of people for so many reasons. For their work and support: they help make decisions for our budget and general direction. Accountability: they are not a rubber stamp board and have been known to say: That is a *stupid idea!* Evaluation and vision: They bring a collective wisdom and more new ideas to our ministry than we would have alone. They pray: apart from caring for us as friends, they pray for Ransom and the impact it might have on people who cross our path.

Our board includes:

President: Henry Tazelaar. Rochester, MN. As a local member, Henry keeps an eye on our finances and is always willing to help with torturous budget decisions and government forms. Both he and Denis are elders in our church (Trinity Pres.) so our lives are naturally in sync. Henry is a pathologist at Mayo.

Vice President: Donald Guthrie. St. Louis, MO. Some of you know that before Donald became academic dean and vice president at Covenant Seminary he was part time staff with Ransom (his real claim to fame). He often brings crazy impossible ideas and then puts legs on them.

Treasurer: Craig Chambers. Rochester, MN. Another local board member. Craig has known our ministry from the inside out, having been in our home for many meals, discussions, and small groups first in medical school, then internal medicine residency, and finally as a member of the community.

Bonnie Liefer. Pittsburgh, PA. She not only brings expertise in publishing, design, and art, but an honest cut-the-fat attitude that keeps discussions on track. Being in vocational ministry herself gives her a unique understanding of our own.

Steven Garber. Washington, D.C. Steve has been a part of our lives dating back to when we were on Inter Varsity staff together. Over the years he has brought a steady gentle wisdom and shares our love for this generation of post moderns. Steve is author of *Fabric of Faithfulness* and is Senior Fellow at the C.S. Lewis Institute.

Continued on page 7

Read through the Bible Program for Shirkers and Slackers

Sunday

O.T. Poetry

Psalms

- 1,2,3,4,5
- 6,7,8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14,15,16
- 17,18,19,20,21
- 22,23,24,25,26,27
- 28,29,30,31,32
- 33,34,35,36,37
- 38,39,40,41,42
- 43,44,45,46,47
- 48,49,50,51,52
- 53,54,55,56,57
- 58,59,60,61,62
- 63,64,65,66,67
- 68,69,70,71,72
- 73,74,75,76,77
- 78,79,80,81,82
- 83,84,85,86,87
- 88,89,90,91,92
- 93,94,95,96,97
- 98,99,100,101,102
- 103,104,105,106,107
- 108,109,110,111,112,113
- 114,115,116,117,118
- 119
- 120,121,122,123,124,125
- 126,127,128,129,130
- 131,132,133,134,135
- 136,137,138,139,140
- 141,142,143,144,145
- 146,147,148,149,150

Proverbs

- 1,2,3,4,5
- 6,7,8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14,15
- 16,17,18,19,20
- 21,22,23,24,25
- 26,27,28,29,30,31

Ecclesiastes

- 1,2,3,4,5,6
- 7,8,9,10,11,12

Song of Solomon

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7,8

Monday

Pentateuch

Genesis

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6,7

- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13
- 14,15,16
- 17,18,19
- 20,21,22
- 23,24,25
- 26,27,28
- 29,30,31
- 32,33,34
- 35,36,37
- 38,39,40,41
- 42,43,44
- 45,46,47
- 48,49,50

Exodus

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13
- 14,15,16
- 17,18,19
- 20,21,22
- 23,24,25
- 26,27,28
- 29,30,31
- 32,33,34
- 35,36,37
- 38,39,40

Leviticus

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27

Numbers

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33
- 34,35,36

Deuteronomy

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33,34

Tuesday

O.T. History

Joshua

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14
- 15,16,17
- 18,19,20,21
- 22,23,24

Judges

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10,11
- 12,13,14
- 15,16,17,18
- 19,20,21

Ruth

- 1,2,3,4

I Samuel

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14
- 15,16,17
- 18,19,20
- 21,22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30,31

II Samuel

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14
- 15,16,17
- 18,19,20,21
- 22,23,24

I Kings

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10,11
- 12,13,14
- 15,16,17,18
- 19,20,21,22

II Kings

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10,11
- 12,13,14
- 15,16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23
- 24,25

Wednesday

O.T. History

Job

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33
- 34,35,36
- 37,38,39
- 40,41,42

I Chronicles

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29

II Chronicles

- 1
- 2,3,4
- 5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13
- 14,15,16

- 17,18,19
- 20,21,22
- 23,24,25
- 26,27,28
- 29,30,31,32
- 33,34,35,36

Ezra

- 1,2,3,4,5
- 6,7,8,9,10

Nehemiah

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7,8
- 9,10,11
- 12,13

Esther

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6,7
- 8, 9,10

Thursday

O.T. Prophets

Isaiah

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33
- 34,35,36
- 37,38,39
- 40,41,42
- 43,44,45
- 46,47,48
- 49,50,51
- 52,53,54
- 55,56,57
- 58,59,60
- 61,62,63
- 64,65,66

Jeremiah

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18

Read through the Bible Program for Shirkers and Slackers



- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33
- 34,35,36
- 37,38,39
- 40,41,42
- 43,44,45
- 46,47,48
- 49,50,51
- 52

Lamentations

- 1,2
- 3,4,5

Ezekiel

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26,27
- 28,29,30
- 31,32,33
- 34,35,36
- 37,38,39
- 40,41,42
- 43,44,45
- 46,47,48

Daniel

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12

Hosea

- 1,2,3,4,5
- 6,7,8,9,10
- 11,12,13,14

Joel

- 1,2,3

Amos

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9

Obadiah

- 1

Jonah

- 1,2,3,4

Micah

- 1,2,3,4
- 5,6,7

Nahum

- 1,2,3

Habakkuk

- 1,2,3

Zephaniah

- 1,2,3

Haggai

- 1,2

Zechariah

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14

Malachi

- 1,2,3,4

Friday

N.T. History

Matthew

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25,26
- 27,28

Mark

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15,16

Luke

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24

John

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21

Acts

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6
- 7,8,9
- 10,11,12
- 13,14,15
- 16,17,18
- 19,20,21
- 22,23,24
- 25, 26,27,28

Saturday

N.T. Epistles

Romans

- 1,2,3
- 4,5
- 6,7
- 8,9
- 10,11
- 12,13
- 14,15,16

I Corinthians

- 1,2
- 3,4,5
- 6,7,8
- 9,10,11
- 12,13,14
- 15,16

II Corinthians

- 1,2
- 3,4
- 5,6,7

- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13

Galatians

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6

Ephesians

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6

Philippians

- 1,2,3,4
- ## Colossians
- 1,2
 - 3,4

I Thessalonians

- 1,2,3
- 4,5

II Thessalonians

- 1,2,3

I Timothy

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6

II Timothy

- 1,2
- 3,4

Titus

- 1,2,3

Philemon

- 1

Hebrews

- 1,2
- 3,4
- 5,6
- 7,8
- 9,10
- 11,12,13

James

- 1,2,3
- 4,5

I Peter

- 1,2
- 3,4,5

II Peter

- 1,2,3

I John

- 1,2,3
- 4,5

II John

- 1

III John

- 1

Jude

- 1

Revelation

- 1,2,3
- 4,5,6,7
- 8,9,10
- 11,12,13
- 14,15,16
- 17,18,19
- 20,21,22

Source:

Adapted with the help of Luis Veiga and Christine Harwood from *Why Pray?* by Douglas F. Kelly (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt; 1989) pp. 191-195.

Ransom Fellowship
1150 West Center
Rochester, MN 55902
e-mail: Ransom_Fellowship@compuserve.com

Continued from page 4

Other things you should know from the board meeting:

1. All of us were awed, (I think that is the word) that God met our financial needs at the very end of last year. I know I should not say, I couldn't believe it. But there it is. We are thankful to the Lord and to all of you who gave to this ministry.
2. We have the funds to proceed with a WEB site. Marsena is in the process of designing it. It should be up and running later this year.
3. Pray as we consider adding a new board member who is a pastor. We need the perspective and input a pastor would bring.
4. The biggest item, to us: the board proposed that Denis get a graduate degree in theology. This was a complete surprise. Imagine. At our age? Covenant offers a degree in Theological Studies done via extension, courses from near-by institutions, and on-campus class work a week at a time throughout the program. It can be finished in four to six years. Denis hopes to do it in less. This does mean some readjustment in priorities and schedule. We're both very charged about this.

J-Term at Covenant.

In January Denis taught a course at Covenant Seminary in St. Louis. Titled 'Film and Theology,' it was the first of its kind, so it was a surprise when 77 students signed up (including some already in the pastorate or other ministry positions). Denis' goal was to help students understand film as art—not merely entertainment or sermon illustrations. Popular film represents a 'Babylonian' culture and can be a window of insight and point of contact to help us understand and relate to that culture, giving an opportunity to share the hope of the gospel. Denis created interactive lectures, watched and discussed four movies (*Chocolat*, *Run Lola Run*, *In & Out*, and *Wit*), and then in small groups the students watched a film and put together a presentation based on the film. Finally they wrote a reflective paper on what this could mean for their own ministry.

Here are a couple responses from the class:

'It was, I think, the single most shaping class I have taken at Covenant Seminary. We talk a lot about connecting theory to practice. But this class took this connection to another level for me.' R.R.

'I would like to be creative in ministry helping people become more



informed and better equipped to interact with the Mannis and Lolas of the world. [Characters from *Run Lola Run*] I would like to help other believers not be so far removed from the culture in which they live that we do not understand and cannot interact with them.' K.A.

'Denis's modeling of how discussions can flow from a film and touch the great issues of life pointed a way for me. I, too, want a home and a life that appeals to others, believers and unbelievers alike.' A.C.

Coming up.

March 1-2. Covenant Seminary, St. Louis. "Yearning for Glory: Reflecting God's Truth in All of Life." Denis will join Steve Garber, Charlie Peacock, Al Edney, and others who have expertise in fields ranging from medicine to law as they consider how God's truth and faith connect in the workplace. This is a conference where pastors can hear Christians in various professions reflect on the pressures their particular work poses for their own faith.

April 4-8. Angelfire, NM. This will be the 16th time this small group of people meet in the mountains for an intense retreat with Ransom. Bonnie Leifer will come from Pittsburgh to share what the creative process looks like for someone in graphic design. As always, Denis has a manuscript Bible study, a movie/discussion, and other readings. I am also joining them and hope to be on task and coherent.

April 18-20. Festival of Faith & Writing, Grand Rapids, MI. This is sheer joy for me. I go to listen and learn. Among this year's featured authors are Kathleen Norris, Jan Karon, and Oscar Hijuelos.

April 19-21. Montgomery, AL. Denis and Greg Grooms (Probe Ministries, Austin, TX) will do a weekend seminar for parents on cultural discernment versus reactionary fear.

May 22-June 1. Camp Red Cloud, CO. Like last year, John and Day Hodges, and Denis and I will join Greg Grooms and his students for a time to reflect and examine issues of faith and culture. ✨

Final Notes

Gardens.

We have included a brochure from Bonnie Liefer again in this issue. (Bonnie is also on Ransom's board of directors.) All the cards are written and designed by her, and the proceeds go to the Coalition for Christian Outreach, a campus ministry based in Pittsburgh. I happen to know that Bonnie is a gardener (her last name is not Liefer for nothing) and that may be why we find her often illustrating the gardening themes that rise from Scripture and the Christian life. She has one card (not in this brochure, alas) that uses Rev 22:2-3. 'And the leaves of the tree (the tree of life in heaven) are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse...'

A person has to be completely numb not to long for healing among the peoples of this world especially when we see how badly human efforts fail at peace. We wonder, how can a few leaves from this tree make the Afghans, or the Palestinians, or any peoples well again? Although this refers to something miraculous and eternal I can catch the littlest ray of this possibility now and then. I noticed this item in a magazine: It reported that Battery Park City Garden was overwhelmed with dust and debris when the towers were destroyed on 9-11. Volunteers hauled away 5,000 bags of debris and trash each weighing about 50 pounds. A month later it was reopened. People poured into this place to enjoy a touch of healing and beauty in the midst of destruction. (Source: Fine Gardening, Feb. 2002)

Anyway, we like Bonnie's cards and so do others. Someone told me recently that there was nothing like them on the market—she tells the truth with beauty but doesn't sink into sentimental, smarmy trash.

Technology.

I have a new phone on my desk—a techno upgrade to a cordless set. This allows me to do things like pace into other rooms, clip my toenails, and talk on the phone at the same time. This sort of multi-tasking makes me feel young and current. Despite this, every time it rang I was becoming increasingly hostile. When I picked up the receiver, I could barely resist barking WHAAAT!?

Denis was in my office yesterday when it rang. 'You know it doesn't need to sound that loud and irritating. It can sound like this.' He said as he pressed a button. 'Or this.' And he pressed it again. Now I have a tiny sweet bell ring that almost gives pleasure. I'm still saying with surprise, 'That's my PHONE! Oh, let me answer it!'

Dust.

And then recently I went to Office Max and asked a clerk where they kept the cans of spray dust, you know, the kind you use to clean your computer key board. (I've been eating too many biscotti while answering email.) He gave me a look of you are a certifiable idiot and said, 'Why spend the money? Instead of using dust you could just drop kick your computer through the window.' When I looked a little hurt he relented with, 'I guess you want a can of compressed AIR.'

So much for staying current.

We continue to place our hope in God who is able to fashion gardens in the most unlikely lives. That's it from Toad Hall.

Warmly,

Margie
Margie Haack



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 our children, a midwestern Gothic four-square looked amazingly like a mansion. Possibly even as great a house as Toad Hall.

Notes from Toad Hall and Critique, a newsletter written by my husband, Denis, are sent to those who regularly support Ransom Fellowship. All gifts to Ransom are tax-deductible.

Ransom Fellowship, 1150 West Center Street, Rochester, MN 55902

e-mail: Ransom_Fellowship@compuserve.com

Order Books From:



Distinctive Books and Music

www.heartsandmindsbooks.com
read@heartsandmindsbooks.com

234 East Main Street
Dallastown, PA 17313
(717) 246-3333

All books mentioned in *Notes from Toad Hall* may be ordered directly from Hearts and Minds. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Ransom Fellowship.