

Gardner Newsletter

Issue 64, Volume 16

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Fall 2013

DAN WHITNEY ANTICIPATES BOOK THREE OF "THE JESUS TRILOGY"



We really should have seen it coming.

Christmas comes every year, but so many things surprise us. We think of Christmas as a warm, family time. We work hard to orchestrate

events so that we have those cozy, feel-good moments. We strive to get the whole clan together again. We expend cash we don't have to give gifts we can't afford, all to make a statement, a statement about our feelings and our desires and our hopes.

Christmas is supposed to be the best time of the year. It is steeped in tradition and memories and expectations. But life changes. Suddenly, the kids who left for college are coming home for Christmas break, and we parents, who miss them ever so much, are full of expectations. We are expecting long conversations and meals together around the table. We are hoping for just a little slice of "how things used to be when we were all at home." We are not expecting our college kids to drop off their luggage in

their old bedrooms, and then head out of the house to spend time with their friends. We thought they were coming home to see us. But now they must divide their time with the families of that cute girl or handsome guy they are dating. We, who have been at the center of their lives for so long, are slowly being moved out of center. We should have seen it coming.

It's supposed to be the most wonderful time of the year. But change keeps coming. The kids are married and the grandchildren start to come, and now the years are flying by. How do you celebrate holidays like Christmas when death leaves big gaping holes in the traditions? Who should carve the turkey this year? Pops isn't around to do it. Who will bake the Raspberry Ribbon Pie? Is there any point in putting up the tree? We should have seen this day coming. It happens to every family; did we think we would be exempt? The ordinary, the common, the routine, it all surprises us.

When you think about it, the first Christmas was full of surprises. Who would have predicted the idea of a Creator joining his creation? The gospel writer John tells us that

our Christmas story means precisely that. God took on flesh, pulled on our humanity like a heavy winter overcoat, and became one of us. Jesus was announced by angels (we don't see that too often), threatened by an evil tyrant, and high-tailed it out of the country ahead of a mass slaughter of innocents.

After the fact we learn that the baby didn't have a human father, that wisemen followed a star to discover his whereabouts, and that the boy fulfilled Hebrew prophecy. There isn't much about this story that doesn't surprise us.

You don't have to read much of the biography of Jesus, as recorded in the gospels, before you realize that he isn't the kind of Messiah his people were expecting. They wanted political power, he spoke in parables. They hoped for military might, he healed the ear of the only person his disciples injured. They wanted liberation from Rome, he submitted to human authorities. This peaceful Jesus reminds his people that his Kingdom is of a different world. And I think, that is something we should have seen coming as well.

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ROBYN AND KATRINA, UNCLE RAYMOND'S AND AUNT MARGARET'S GRAND-DAUGHTERS, GIVE BIRTH TO BABY GIRLS ONLY MONTHS APART

Here is Uncle Raymond holding Eva Mae Jenkins - 4 days old. Eva was born on Monday, October 21, 2013 at 10:07 a.m. to Katrina and Kyle Jenkins.



Four generations are pictured here: Great Granddad, Raymond Gardner holding Jordan Joy Demand (who was born to Robyn and Frank on August 8, 2013). Robyn's mother, Gloria Parsons, is on Raymond's left, and the proud mother, Robyn, is on Raymond's right.

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CANAAN INSTITUTE HELPS THE LUDGATE'S FRIENDS AND FAMILY STAY ACTIVE

Reprinted from: IthacaJournal.com – October 29, 2013

BROOKTONDALE — “Make friends while you move!” could be Mike and Raylene Ludgate’s motto.

For about 15 years, the couple has been bringing outdoor enthusiasts together three times a week to mountain bike, hike, cross-country ski and socialize, all under the umbrella of the Canaan Institute.

Starting from the “club house” — a cozy workshop by their home, which also houses weekly fiddling jam sessions and the occasional concert — the Ludgates, of Brooktondale, lead small groups of regulars and new participants on tours of nearby Hammond Hill State Forest, varying their activity by season.

They announce their outings through a listserv with nearly 700 subscribers, of which at least 100 make it to the various exercise events throughout the year.

What compels the couple to offer their time, space and skills for free to both friends and strangers?

“I grew up in a household with an agriculture-related business and a farm store,” said Mike Ludgate, referring to Ludgate Farms, which was sold and then closed a few years ago.

“When we were kids, my dad was very friendly to strangers, very welcoming,” Ludgate said. “At various times, we had people there living in little yurts in exchange for weeding or working in the store. I grew up in an atmosphere of a constant influx of well-educated and interesting people. I’m trying to keep that going.”

The Canaan Institute is named in this spirit. While “Canaan” has historical significance to the group’s neighborhood — and is not used as a religious reference — the use of the word “Institute” grew out of the Ludgates’ desire to share their skills with others, while having fun.

It all began over a decade ago when Raylene bought her husband a mountain bike. Quickly bored with riding alone, he invited friends along.

“We started building a little group and coming up with a schedule” he said. “Every time I met somebody new, I just kept adding them to the email list. At first, we rode mostly on blacktop, but at some point, someone said, ‘Hey, Mike, you live right by a big state forest. Why don’t we go ride our mountain bikes in the woods, like mountain bikers do.’”

Soon, the budding group added cross-country skiing to stay active through the winter, and hiking to bridge the seasons.

“When we were younger and maybe a little more foolish, we would just keep biking until the snow got deep, but there are some safety hazards,” Mike said. “After one of my friends fell mountain biking at night in November and broke his upper femur, we’ve been a little more conservative.”

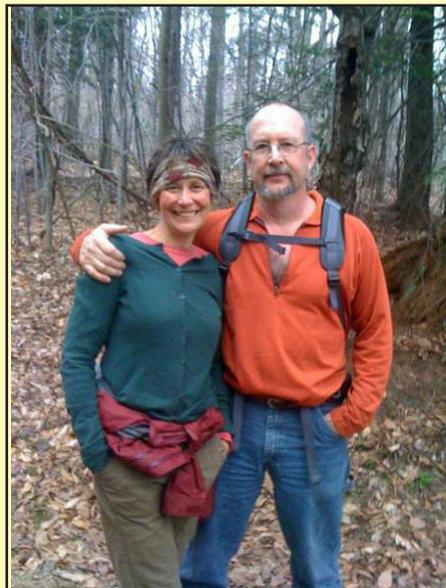
Safe and non-competitive

Participants value this safe and non-competitive atmosphere, where 20-year-olds to 60-year-olds find common ground.

“We don’t feel we have to out-do anyone,” said Marilyn Dispensa, who has been joining the Ludgates a couple of times a week throughout the year since 2005. “No one is ever left behind because they are too slow. Mike’s safety-conscious and always urges people to have lights at night, and he sometimes has walkie-talkies during the night skis.”

Nick Trier, a firefighter EMT and friend of the family who started coming to mountain biking sessions earlier this summer, agreed.

“We’ll bring in any skill level, help you along, give you pointers if you need them,” he said. “It’s just overall a lot of fun.”



Raylene and Mike Ludgate, founders
of Canaan Institute

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CANAAN INSTITUTE HELPS THE LUDGATE'S FRIENDS AND FAMILY STAY ACTIVE (CONTINUED)

Even when biking is on the schedule, Mike often stops to point out wildflowers, mushrooms, birds or trees.

"I've always been a bit of a naturalist," he said. "Plus, I think that if you're going to exercise outside in the woods in a natural area, you need to understand and appreciate the ecology of where you are in order to better preserve and protect it. It bothers me when I see folks who just think of a state forest as a personal playground. It's way more than that."

In keeping with this attitude, stewardship of Hammond Hill State Forest is an important part of the Canaan Institute's activities. "A lot of people don't realize it, but (the state forest) isn't managed like a park," Mike said. "There are no state employees that go out there and take care of the trails."

Instead, the institute's participants join other outdoor groups such as

the Cayuga Nordic Ski Club or Cycle-CNY for annual trail maintenance sessions, and they are encouraged to remove obstacles such as fallen trees whenever they come across them.

The shovel-and-hoe work in the fall gets the multi-use trails ready for the Canaan Institute's best-attended activity — cross-country skiing, something that Raylene Ludgate is eagerly anticipating.

"Cross-country skiing in the dark with the snow falling is my favorite," she said. "The snow absorbs the sound; it's a magical quiet. Especially in a certain kind of snow that coats all the trees, everything is white, it's just such a beautiful time, and I guess a time that you don't often get out."

This winter, as every year, Raylene and Mike are looking forward to sharing this magic with their friends, old and new.

GERI ROSSER LANDS JOB AT GRANDPA GARDNER'S OLD COMPANY

Congratulations to Cousin Geri Rosser for landing her new job!

Most everyone realizes how the abysmal economy has affected the job prospects of thousands of fifty-somethings across the United States. Unfortunately, Cousin Geri Rosser found herself in that group and has spent many months looking for employment. Chronic unemployment comes with many heart-breaks. But because Geri has such an unbelievable network of friends, a very supportive family, and an unwavering faith, she more than survived — she flourished. Now her long dry spell of

being without a full-time job has ended. According to her Facebook page, "Monday I start my new job! I feel so blessed to have found a good one!"

Geri is going to work in Administration for a major national insurance company. This is not just ANY insurance company; it's Nationwide Insurance Company — the insurance company where Grandpa Gardner launched his enviable insurance career back when the company was called "Farm Bureau."

The *Gardner Newsletter* featured the story of Grandpa Gardner's career at Nationwide

in the Winter 2002 issue (Issue 17). As Geri begins her new role there, it might be fun to re-read that issue.

There's something that feels "full circle" about Geri beginning a new career at the same company where her grandfather began his second career those many years ago.

Julia Roberts, the spokesperson for Nationwide, is famous for saying, "Nationwide is on YOUR side." Well, now, Geri is on Nationwide's side! And, boy, are they lucky!



Geri and Greg Rosser



Congratulations are in order for Greg too!

He defended his doctoral dissertation successfully before the Committee without having to undergo even one edit - a very rare event indeed!

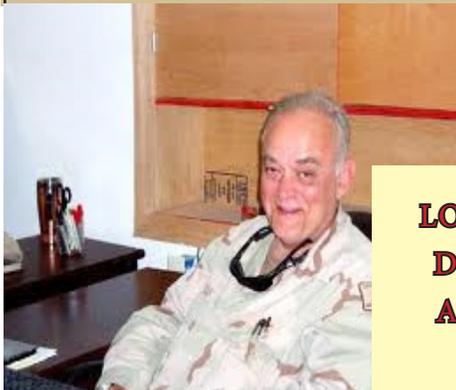
Greg matriculated from Asbury Theological Seminary on December 6th. CONGRATULATIONS!

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LOOK WHAT APPEARED ON COUSIN DICK METCALF'S FACEBOOK PAGE ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT SHUT- DOWN!



Subject: Storming the Barricades in Washington

I have worked in the government on and off for 40 years. During that time I became quite familiar with requisitions, bidding, awarding contracts etc. It is a time consuming process with bean-counters and pencil-necked bureaucrats every step of the way. The simplest request takes months - not days or hours.

Now follow me please. Let it sink in of what it takes. In less than eight hours of the shutdown, miraculously, professionally printed 3x4 foot signs appeared all over the country in the tens of thousands saying this park, facility, etc. (with custom logos for EACH parks' name on it) was closed due to government shutdown. Let THAT sink in!

There has not been a government shutdown in 17 years. These signs were designed, specifications were determined, the signs were then requisitioned, bids were posted and vetted, government contracts were awarded..... in 8 HOURS!!

The materials were then ordered and the signs manufactured and then distributed by the US mail or by freight companies. The fastest they could possibly have had them would be overnight - ALL of this within EIGHT HOURS!!!!

Something as simple as a sign PROVES this shutdown was orchestrated and planned well in advance, - at least six to eight month ago. Millions of tax dollars were appropriated and spent in this process in eight hours

There is a paper trail a mile long leading directly to the White House. Like that's a big surprise! However, something as simple as a freshly painted sign being made AND SHOWN in just a few hours raises suspicion. It seems like a simple overlook to everyone else; but after 40 years of government work, I knew the TRUTH was right there driven into the ground or posted at the main gate. Let me remind you, tens of THOUSANDS were made - WITH the parks' names on them!! Common sense must kick in at some point. At LEAST six to eight months ago.

Sincerely,
Anonymous

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DAN WHITNEY ANTICIPATES BOOK THREE OF "THE JESUS TRILOGY" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

We've read the Lord of the Rings, three books. Maybe you've read the Hunger Games stories, three books. Don't forget Dante's Divine Comedy – The Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise, three again.

I'm sure you've heard that "Advent" means "coming." Jesus came to earth: the Advent of Jesus. Christians also believe the promise of Jesus, affirmed by the words of the men who were present when Jesus returned to heaven: "This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back." (Acts 1:11) None of Jesus' followers expected Jesus to leave; so none of them gave a moment's thought to the idea that he might return.

Every year when we celebrate advent, we think of both of Jesus' trips to earth, the first advent, arrival in Bethlehem, and the return trip to come at the end of this age, final landing point still up for grabs. We should have known that there would be three books here, too.

Book one is the story of the way God slowly, painstakingly, revealed himself to his creation. Using Israel as his example, God shows all humanity that they are valued and loved. Book two begins with Jesus. Here we understand just how far that divine love will go, in order to preserve as much of the family as possible. Book three? Still to be written. But just as book two starts with the introduction of Jesus, book three begins with his return to center stage.

Every Christian who recites the Apostle's creed says this about Jesus, "from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Modern translation: "And he will come again to judge the living and the dead." That's what the majority of us believe, or so we say. But I wonder if this is one of those things we have said so often that we forget what it really means. Or perhaps, we've never really thought about it, just mouthing the words as they slipped by.

Matthew says, "No one knows the hour that Jesus will

return. Two will be working in the field, one will be taken, one will be left. Two will be grinding wheat, one taken, the other left (Mt 24:36ff). The point of Matthew's instruction is simple – you better be ready for Jesus when he returns. It's the only chance you have to appear in book three.

I asked some friends recently what they would like to be

caught doing when Jesus returns. You know what I mean. Imagine your wife giving you a long list of chores for you to accomplish while she is away for the day. You are thinking "football on television;" she is thinking, "wash those second floor windows." Without question, the best outcome for you would be this: your wife returns home a little early and finds you atop the ladder, scrubbing the window shutters, the windows already gleaming from your earlier work. Caught going above and beyond! We men fantasize about moments like that! It probably doesn't matter how much television you watched during the day, as long as the list is done when she returns. And to be caught in the act . . . does it get any better than that?

What would you want to be doing on the day that Jesus returns to earth? Perhaps working at the local soup

kitchen, feeding the homeless? Volunteering in a nearby nursing home? Wouldn't it be great to be caught entering a burning building to rescue a trapped child?

Of course, the premise of all of this fantasy is that we want to be caught doing things that we don't normally do. At a deep level, we want folks to think better of us than we really are. I wonder if Jesus will be fooled. I suspect not.

Matthew tells us simply that no one knows when Jesus will return. His second coming will be unexpected. The only way to be ready for this advent is to live in a constant state of readiness. Only those who are always what they seem to be will be ready for the Kingdom when it comes in completeness. Yikes! That sounds like I have to be perfect all the

In Memoriam

Aunt Margaret Gardner, Uncle Raymond's wife of over 60 years, passed away on December 2, 2013. She was a long-time resident of Melrose Care Center in Melrose, MA.

Aunt Margaret's funeral service was held December 6th at the First Baptist Church in Reading, MA.

Please send Raymond Gardner and his family a note of condolence. If you choose to do so, you may include a donation in memory of Aunt Margaret made payable to the First Baptist Church of Reading, Woburn, Street, Reading, MA.

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DAN WHITNEY ANTICIPATES BOOK THREE OF "THE JESUS TRILOGY" (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

time!

I don't think that is what Jesus had in mind at all. I think "being ready" is living faithfully within the family. As we love others consistently, as we demonstrate our love for God by caring for the people He loves, we live into the next book.

Almost every trilogy I have ever read follows a similar trend. At the end of book two there is a problem that isn't resolved until book three is completed. We never bother to pick up book three if everything is resolved in book two. Book two sets the stage, but everything gets tied together in book three.

As grand as life is here on earth, as wondrous as the Christmases of our childhood

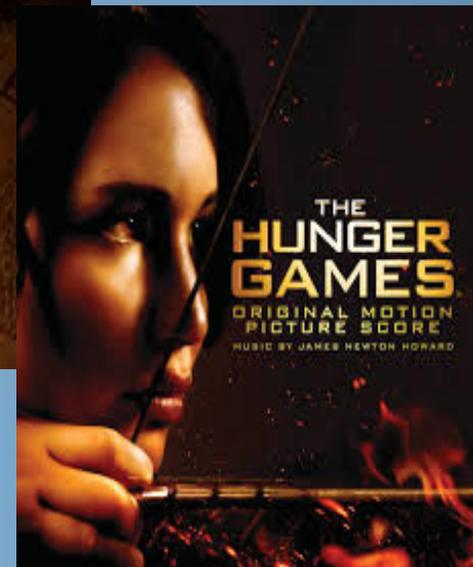
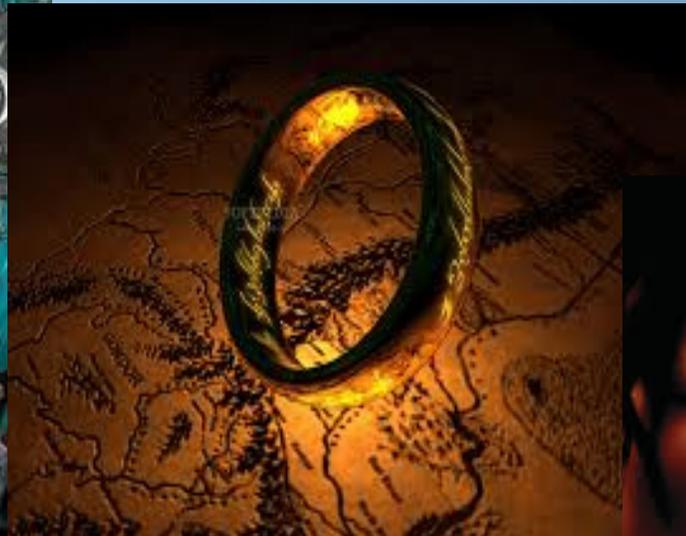
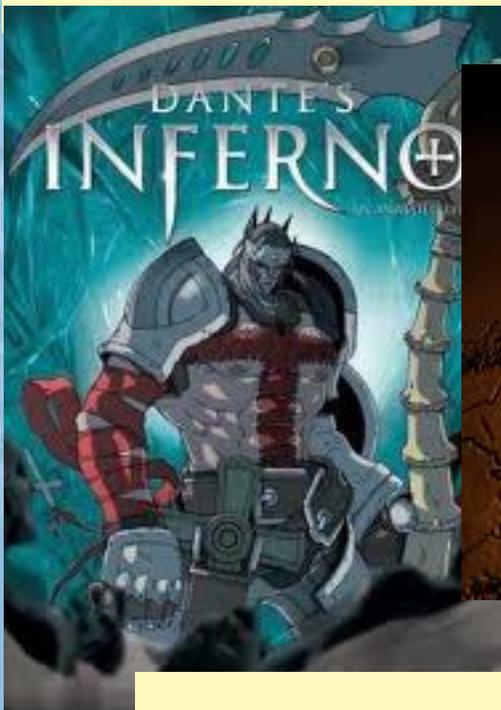
seem, there is no way of escaping the fact that loss is just over the horizon for all of us. We are going to have to cope our way through a whole bunch of junk before it is all over. But don't give up! This is just the end of book two!

Christmas is great because every time we celebrate it, we remember that Jesus really is coming again! Book three is more amazing than anything we can imagine. Words fail us, in part because we only have snippets of information regarding the outcome of the story. But we do know that tears, pain, sorrow, these don't appear in book three. And we are also led to believe that book three is loose-leafed, unbound, with the possibility of adding an unlimited number of pages. It seems hard to believe, but I think we should have seen it

coming.

The challenge then, I think, is to live today, this Christmas, confident that (in spite of unrealized expectations and more gloom than we anticipated) our story is not over, nor even waning. This is a day for hope! Sure, there will be tough times, but this is just the end of book two. Book three will be off the presses before you know it.

Given the kind of God we serve, given the meticulous attention to detail of the creation in which we live, given the character of a God who endured death just to prove that he had power over it . . . yeah, we should have seen that coming all along.



THREE (3) FAMOUS TRILOGIES: DANTE'S INFERNO, LORD OF THE RINGS, AND THE HUNGER GAMES

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RAYLENE LUDGATE SPEAKS FROM THE HEART AT HER MOM'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

Lessons From Our Mom

Spoken by: Raylene Ludgate

Margaret Gardner's Memorial Service, December 6th, 2013, at the First Baptist Church of Reading MA

Thank you all for coming today. I am Raylene - Mom's middle daughter.

Years ago, when Mom was having trouble walking, she asked Dad not to sell her bike - and there it still sits. That's what makes Mom and Dad special. I wanted to ride that bike here today for Mom, but the tires were pretty flat.

Mom's bike is a nice place to start. Back in the days of one car families, I would think the bike gave Mom some freedom, and she would often ride the 8 miles to her Mom's house.

This is something that she gave to us, - the love of exercise. Mom had us all riding bikes. Money was tight, but she still found money for downhill ski lessons. We all had skates and hiked together as a family. Today we all still find fun in exercise, climbing mountains, skiing, and hiking.

I like to try and think about what life was like as a young mother in the 50's. Dad worked two jobs, -one that took him away day and night for a week at a time; and on his off week, he worked for my Mom's bother, Ira. Mom, with her six kids, had no preschool, no kindergarten; she held it together and gave us a loving start.

I never really appreciated what my Mom accomplished until I had my own kids. I only had two kids and had trouble juggling, so it's hard for me to imagine six young kids. Mom didn't use TV as a babysitter either. We didn't get TV until I was a teenager.

Love of Adventure

We had freedom to play, to be creative - both inside and outside. As kids, we built forts over the dining room table,

buried jewelry in the back yard while playing pirates, made clover salad with mayonnaise in the bulkhead. We got to run around the creek and woods.

This creative freedom in deciding what to do and when to do it, mostly outside, helped us all become independent responsible adults who love nature. The adventuresome spirit was born in us from Mom. Steve hiked the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. Ellen biked across the country. I took an outdoor wildlife job in the boonies of Minnesota.

Love of animals

Mom loved animals and shared this passion with us. She especially liked dogs. She had Derry and, more recently, a Chihuahua named Teddy, who was her companion after all of us left the house. But we didn't grow up in a traditional family of just dogs and cats. Steve had his room full of fish tanks. We had parakeets, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and more. Gloria was allowed to have a skunk, which we had de-scented. I fondly remember the baby raccoon we also had. My Dad and sisters reminded me of the pet pig we had for a summer. Now, all of us have shared our house with animals.

Happy Attitude towards work and play

Our vacations were often up in Vermont at my uncle and aunt's camp. It was located in the woods by a pond. Us kids loved it. It was outside. It was adventure. We played among the mosses, swung in a hammock, fished all day, walked the ponds at night to see beavers, boated and swam.

My cousin, Teresa, pointed out to me that the camp was no vacation for Mom and Dad. You had to walk in a 1/2 mile or so on narrow wet paths with all your food, clothes and gear. Gear for six young kids. There was no running water. So we took trips to the spring for drinking water. We hauled up buckets from the pond to flush toilets. We had to heat all the hot water to wash dishes. In the camp logbook, Mom wrote many entries in a flourishing style



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RAYLENE LUDGATE SPEAKS FROM THE HEART AT HER MOM'S MEMORIAL SERVICE

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about the adventures, mishaps, and sickness- all with a positive bend.

Love of Music and Dance

Mom somehow got us a big piano. We didn't have money for lessons, but Mom found us books to help us learn. None of us six kids ever did much with music, but we made many opportunities for our own kids to take lessons and play instruments. Mom and Dad square danced for ten years and two families, Sharon's and mine, do contras, squares and other dancing.

As a token to remember Mom, I have a Tennessee Dancing Gourd for all of you. Mom had her mental health issues, so friends and families helped our family over the years.

I remember Aunt Betty and Uncle Andrew hosting the baby shower for Cheryl's birth, but found out about it just the day before. They also took care of her for the first two weeks of her life.

Aunt Lois helped our family in a myriad of ways including babysitting and celebrations.

Aunt Austie helped us with the plumbing. Uncle Homer and Aunt Elizabeth provided our vacation spot. Christmas at Uncle Adelbert's.

My cousin Paul has kept the entire Gardner family connected through 16 years of the Gardner newsletter and has supported my Dad in many ways.

And there are so many more that have helped us throughout the years.

These gourds are a small token of our appreciation. Just like Mom, they dance. *(Here Raylene spins the gourd.)*



Mom also gave us the love of nature crafts and flower gardening. She did tote painting on rocks, made hook rugs with nature scenes, and found time to maintain roses and a few gardens. And all of us love gardening in various forms today.

These gourds can be dried and then made into other things. I've made a few into special ornaments. The first goes to my Dad. *(Raylene walks from the pulpit and hands her father, Raymond, a gourd.)* He's my hero. He kept his dedication to Mom through all the hard times of her mental illness.

And he did it with grace and humor.

I want to give one to thank my brother who visited Mom religiously every Sunday for years. *(Raylene hands her brother, Stephen, a gourd.)*

One for Sharon who has had her own health issues; and after dealing with them has been a regular visitor and helper to Mom. *(Raylene hands a gourd to her sister, Sharon.)*

One goes to Ellen and one to Cheryl, who, like me, visit when we are in town and come as often as we can. *(Sisters, Ellen and Cheryl, each get a gourd from Raylene.)*

And finally, one to my sister, Gloria, who has been the backbone of Mom's care. She was the one who brought Mom to her house for all the celebrations and holidays for ten years. She visited Mom weekly, bought her clothes, did her nails, and more. We are all so grateful to Gloria for her dedication to our Mom. *(Raylene hands her sister, Gloria, a gourd.)*

I'm hoping that when you unpack your Christmas ornaments each year, these dancers remind you of Mom. I love my Mom and wouldn't trade her for any other. Thanks.

