

Gardner Newsletter

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Issue 72

Let Pastor Dan and Nancy Redefine the Meaning of "Home" in your Life

Recently, Nancy and I have been talking about where we would like to retire. It is probably too soon to be having those kinds of conversations; but as the birthdays stack up, the topic becomes unavoidable. This conversation is one among many that we are forced to embrace as we grow older.

As a pastor, I find myself asking uncomfortable questions of people I care about. "Do you have a will in force? Do you have a living will both written and available in the case of a serious accident or illness? Have you told your spouse your wishes for your funeral service or burial?" It is no fun to ask these kinds of questions, but they need to be asked, and answered.

One of the things that Nancy and I have discovered, when wrestling in this area, is that "place" plays an important role in many of these decisions. Place determines who you will live with and next door to. Place determines what activities you will endure or enjoy (snow or seashore, as in New England or Florida.) Place decides how much residual cash we will have, after we figure out how much of our fixed income we will need to spend on rent or mortgage. Place determines how much it will cost us to live, and whether we will have friends nearby to play cards with on a Friday night. I guess by then, we will be able to play cards on whichever night we choose, right?

There are some popular places where many go to retire. Phoenix, Clearwater, Myrtle Beach. I guess if you retire in a place where there are lots of seniors trying to find a new way to live, it might be easier to make some new friends. But finding a place to exist may be different from finding a new home. After all, that is what we are really after.

Many folks, perhaps most folks, retire where they have lived, because they have made a home for themselves in that place across many years. Home is defined by the house or apartment in which they live, combined with

the community in which they shop, eat, interact, serve, volunteer, further combined with the group of people with whom they do all these things. A place that allows you to live in relative comfort, in a setting that offers what you need and can afford, with people who esteem you and love you, that is probably a good definition of "home."



*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from Dan, Nancy, Jonathan and Greg*

But isn't "home" a little bit more than that?

When Nancy and I talk about retirement, or even when the conversation gets all the way to "Where would I like to be laid to rest?" we have to confess, we aren't sure we have a home.

Eastern Nazarene College and The Gardner Family

By: Kelsie Griffes

I heard all the stories...“Now I ask; Now I want to know,” said second generation Gardner cousin, Nancy Whitney, speaking of her desire to delve deeper into family history. This desire is shared by many in our family. It is one of the reasons this newsletter is so valuable. It has helped unite the “Original Gang of Ten” with their ever multiplying line of descendents. We have shared stories and learned of the common threads that unite us (beyond simply DNA), and no question about it, the Gardners are united in their love for family heritage, and a desire to keep history alive. Another common thread throughout the Gardner line is faith and trust in a loving God. Perhaps a third, and lesser known thread is the one that connects our story with the story of Eastern Nazarene College.



Aunt Ruth in her ENC days.

In the older days of the institution, located on the South Shore of Boston, Ruth Gardner was the first to make the trek to ENC. Having heard good things about the college from some Massachusetts locals, she decided to go. Little did she know the impact her choice would have on future generations. Shortly after Ruth, Elinor became Olive and Will's second child to

attend ENC. She became a biology major, and played basketball and volleyball, becoming a “star athlete.” However, Elinor's life was changed for the better when she met her sweetheart, Dick Cove, during her time as a student.

Beulah Gardner was the next to make ENC her home. She, like Elinor, was a biology major. Both attended ENC in an era when it was possible to pay their way through school. It was a time that some may call quaint today, but highlighted the community of this close-knit college. ENC has always been known for its small size, and the 50's were no exception. In 1953, Beulah graduated with a class of 65. One of the long held traditions was, and is, junior senior day/banquet. In the 50's, prolific Dean Bertha Munro (my dorm's namesake) would

familiarize herself with the students so that when it came time for the banquet, she would have a few words to say about each student. (Beulah's senior picture is pictured, containing some of Dean Munro's words.) She also remembers a yearly tradition for Prof. Babcock's science students. The professor would take a group to Quincy's Blue Hills to stay in his log cabin while they studied plant life, cooked food over an open fire, and enjoyed a chance to retreat.



Aunt Elinor, star basketball player

It was an era when “open house” in the dorms was a special occasion held

once a year. Students were taught to entertain their guests, and were expected to provide refreshment for their visitors. After the event, the best kept rooms were given a special award. The spirit of the community was evident in the fraternal nature of the campus societies, which continued into the late twentieth century. Being low in numbers, heavy participation from the student body



Aunt Elinor's ENC graduation photo



Aunt Beulah's ENC graduation photo

kept the campus wheels well-oiled. When freshman arrived on campus, they would be asked to join a society, which would compete with other societies in sports, organize different social events, etc. In many ways, it was a simpler time.

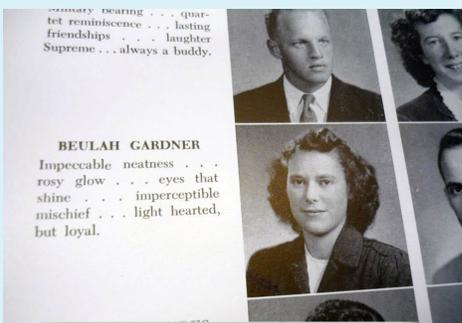
The second generation of students began with cousin Teresa, followed by Geri, Nancy, Christopher, Sharon, Len, Jay, and Sheryl, attending from the late 60's to the early 90's. Geri speaks fondly of her college years, and how she grew as an artist through the direction and opportunities that ENC provided. She recalls how one of her major professors, Dr. Howard, forced her to sight read on the piano every time he saw her, until it became second nature, and how she was given the opportunity to play for church worship services.

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Geri also has fond memories of rooming with Sharon. Asked about the experience, she laughs. "Sharon was a great roommate. She made things fun. I had all these musical neuroses, and she had to put up with it." Around the same time, Dan Whitney was a fellow music major. He recalls many opportunities that he and Geri had to jam together. Len remembers how Geri was sort of like a big sister when they were in school together. "I had a lot of good talks with Geri," he recalls. "Unbeknownst to me, she was looking after me. She kept an eye on me." It is also worth noting that Sharon's husband, CJ, first became friends with Len



Aunt Beulah's ENC yearbook picture

during their time living on Ground Floor Shields. ENC is truly all in the family.

Sharon remembers enjoying new experiences that came with the city of Boston, as the city was relatively new to her. Geri and Sharon also spent a summer working on campus together, which was a positive experience.

Even so, ENC serves a special purpose in Gardner history beyond simply happy memories. Nancy recounted, "My mom met her husband and I met my husband there." "Family heritage...is what keeps the Gardners coming back," believes Dan. In large part, this heritage results from the common ground we share with ENC's Christian heritage and its connection to the Nazarene Church. You may recall that Will Gardner later started a little Nazarene church in East Charleston, VT. To the best of our knowledge, Ruth's experience at ENC was his first experience with the Nazarene church. Obviously, he liked what he saw.

Nancy recalls many happy memories, as well as growing experiences, during her time as a student. She jokes, "When I graduated, I thought, 'this is the end of the really fun part of my life.'" She was an education major, and her gift and passion for teaching continued to grow and develop into a lifelong profession, long after she graduated. Greg Larkin, professor and director of Acapella Choir, was a spiritual leader for his students. When Nancy hears choir melodies even today, they bring back a flood of emotions and memories.

My own story is also intertwined with ENC. My dad,

Jay, was introduced to my mother during his time at ENC. It's funny to think about, but I owe my existence to this crazy place. One of my main professors in my music classes remembers going to school with Nancy and Dan. Things have certainly come full circle.

ENC was especially crazy during what I like to call the golden age of pranks. Len remembers his freshman class initiation, the last of its kind. Freshmen were forced to wear the freshman beanie and to cater to upperclassmen whims. However, Len was not without pranks of his own. He recalls (among other things) the time when he rigged his camera to go off with his toy gun, so that when he pulled the trigger everyone would see the flash. This was also a time when science majors could get away with creating a slightly hazardous solution which caused unsus-



Author Kelsie Griffes with her grandmother (Beulah Griffes) and her great aunt (Lois Cardwell)

pecting students to slip and slide on their way to chapel. Geri remembers hanging out on the library roof, and coming to chapel to find that the pews had been turned backwards.

Dan Whitney recalls his college experience, noting that it was a whirlwind. "I did everything," he said. However, all his activities paled in comparison to when he met Nancy. At first, she wouldn't entertain the idea of a relationship, but then Dan began to work on her. One night, after Man of La Mancha, a show in which Dan acted and Nancy stage managed, Dan gave Nancy roses. That display of affection was "the straw that broke the camel's back," or so he says. Nancy told Dan all the things that she couldn't stand about the way he acted, and he told her all the things he loved about her. She agreed to give him a 30 day trial.

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When Dan came back from Thanksgiving break, he found her letter answering in the affirmative. Of course, the rest is history.

Dan remembers his share of pranks, but one of his favorites was played on a close friend, who was a major procrastinator. The night before finals, Dan and friends were hanging out, and Terry, the procrastinator, fell asleep when he was supposed to be studying. It was then that Dan and friends began scheming. They decided to reset Terry's clock and watch so that when he awoke, it would appear to be morning. Imagine the horror when this college student woke up to look at the time. Terry awoke and panicked, gathering his stuff to sprint out the door. One can only

imagine the surprise, anger, and relief that ensued when he got to the door and came face to face with the black of night.

Asked about his favorite part of ENC, my Dad recalls how he enjoyed "carrying on with the guys" and "doing pranks in the dorm." He remembers stacking hundreds of aluminum cans outside the doors of his floor mates while they were sleeping. When they attempted to exit their room, they were in for a rude awakening. Both he and his brother Len were business majors; however, their experience was definitely not all business, as you can see.

Fast forward 30 years, and members of all three generations, fifteen in total,

have attended ENC. As I write this, I am a senior at ENC, staying in the same dorm my Grandma Beulah lived in as a young college student. There is a certain joyfulness in walking the same paths and gazing out the same window your grandmother did sixty years ago. Greg Whitney, son of Nancy and Dan Whitney, is also a current student. He speaks of the same community living camaraderie of old. When asked of his favorite spot on campus, he jokes about his beloved floor, Third Memorial, and its claim to fame (the only remaining community shower on campus.) As their shirts say, they are "a floor closer to heaven." *So the tradition continues...*

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
See you this winter!**



Located on Boston's historic south shore, within walking distance of Quincy Bay, Eastern Nazarene College (ENC) is a fully accredited traditional liberal arts college. ENC has over 1,400 students distributed across a traditional residential undergraduate program, adult studies, and a graduate program. ENC is known for its success in getting students into top graduate and medical schools and has a 100 percent acceptance rate for its students into Law School. While many faculty are active in publishing and research, and some are leaders in their fields, the emphasis is on the teaching and mentoring of students in a nurturing, spiritually informed, and academically supportive environment.

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There are many places on earth that we love, some we even have a sense of longing for. Our children were born in Upstate New York. It feels to us now that those were simpler days than the ones we routinely experience. We had good friends, a place of meaningful service, and all the adventures that new parents enjoy.

New Hampshire was a wonderful place to live, green, verdant, unexplored. Again there were wonderful friends, challenging jobs, new experiences. But now, sitting here in Connecticut, those places continue to grow and change without us. By moving to a new place, we have taken ourselves out of the continuing road of evolution and growth that all places naturally experience. The stream flows on, without us. So when we go back, the things we notice are the things that have changed.

I think home is where you change with your surroundings, so that you don't become disjointed, discontinuous with the community or family that surrounds you.

We love our families, and we work to stay connected; but honestly, we don't know our nieces and nephews, our cousins, the way we would like to, the way we would if we lived in the same town and experienced life together.

Nancy and I, we don't know where home is.

"Where do you want to be buried?"

"I don't know."

"Where would you like to retire?"

"I don't know. Someplace that feels like home."

"Someplace with seasons; someplace with a little snow, but not too much."

"Someplace near our grandchildren."

"If we move near our kids, there is no guarantee they will stay put. We might relocate to South Carolina, and then they would get transferred back up north."

"Could happen." Does happen.

What does it feel like to be without a home?

I guess it is one thing to have options, to be living in an acceptable place, knowing that one day you will need to

move elsewhere. Nancy and I have time to make plans, to consider, to evaluate, to find others to join us on the journey.

But what if something happened, and change were required immediately?

We live in a parsonage. If I were unable to continue my duties, the congregation would expect my family to find a new place to live in a reasonable amount of time.

But what about when the job goes away and the bank forecloses? Or when catastrophe strikes and there is no way to rebuild? What happens when nations crumble and communities are destroyed?

Ancient Israel understood this problem. In fact, Moses gave the Israelites this message from God, centuries ago:

"Our world is frighteningly full of folks running away from something."

"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt." (Exodus 23)

What does it mean to be a foreigner? I think it means being a person who is far from home.

You may be asking, is this the start of a political rant? No, ranting doesn't accomplish much; and I prefer to keep my political views to myself, for a variety of reasons.

But it is hard not to notice all the displacement going on in the Christmas story.

Mary and Joseph get caught up in the political scheme of Caesar Augustus to tax the conquered Jewish people. They must travel from their current homes to their ancestral home in order to be counted in the current census. Whether they knew any of their extended relatives in Bethlehem very well we doubt; otherwise, why did they attempt to stay in the Inn?

A trip of 70 miles doesn't seem like much to us, but I suspect back then it was more of a barrier than we imagine today. Horseback or on foot, this isn't a trip you make without considerable planning, especially when pregnant. Were they worried about the kind of reception they would get in a new town, among new people? Were they worried about finding a place to live for those months, about finding enough work to feed the growing family? Were they worried about finding friends with whom to live?

Bethlehem was probably frightening enough for a new mother, but what about Egypt?

By the time Mary had figured out where to keep the spices in her kitchen, the young family was on the move again. There was no time to plan, no time to consider. This was simply flight; leave as fast as you can, get to safety, avoid those who seek our lives.

How does that feel?

How does it feel to flee for your lives, leaving behind all that you know, leaving behind family, and moving to a place like . . . Egypt?

The Hebrew story is full of images of Egypt. "For four hundred years you were slaves, strangers in Egypt. Out of Egypt I have brought you . . ." And now, here, Mary and Joseph and Jesus are headed back, back down to Egypt, as strangers.

Was it easy to find a place to live there? Was there enough work for a carpenter who didn't speak the local dialect? Would there be trouble harboring a person who was wanted by a foreign government? What cover story did they use? Did they find the food in Egypt strange?

Joseph wrestled with all of these things. So did Mary.

When you think about the normal difficulties of life, can you imagine adding to them all the frustration of having to leave what you know and trying embrace what you don't?

I'd like to think that I would have been one of the Egyptians who made life easier for Joseph and Mary. I'd like to think that I would have baked lasagna, wrapped it in papyrus to keep it warm, and taken it to my new neighbors in order to introduce myself. I want to believe that I would have offered to baby sit Jesus while the young couple took

an evening stroll around the pyramids to have a little alone time.

That's how we treat strangers, new to the neighborhood, right?

Our world is frighteningly full of folks running away from something.

There is a sense in which their struggle, and the way we respond to them when our worlds collide, reveals who we are.

Perhaps at Christmas, more than at any other time of the year, we can be courageous enough to break free from our fear of the unusual, the different, the strange or unknown, and exercise the hospitality that we hope will define us.

Hebrews 13:2 says: Do not forget to show hospitality to **strangers**, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

The poor folks in Egypt didn't have chance, did they? How could they have ever known that Jesus and his parents were moving into their neighborhood? But maybe they didn't need to know. Maybe all they needed to know was this:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

So if you care for one of the least of the refugees of the world, you are caring for Jesus?

Yup. That's what the good book says.

Perhaps in helping someone else create a home, we will find one for ourselves.



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Correction

On Page 6 of the last issue of the Gardner Newsletter (*Summer 2015*) we see a wonderful picture of Megan Ludgate (*left*) inviting us to explore FINLAND with her.

Of course, that should have read ICELAND. It has been corrected on the on-line version at http://www.gardnernews.org/greta's_new-Interactive_page.htm.