

By Stewart Collin

August 25, 1972: A date with vivid memories and striking contrasts for me. I was four months short of my 18th birthday, my future ahead of me

The graduation ceremonies for our class of forty-two Foremost High School students were held that day. Apparently, the band playing for the grad dance had bare feet! Shocking, in our farming community, at least. I was to have given the class history. I possibly could have predicted that six couples on the stage would have gotten married and settled down in the area (they did, as have most of their children). I could have predicted that most of the boys in the class would take over their family farm - they did, and are still farming today. I could have

The honour of class historian had to be filled by one of my three cousins graduating with me, as I was not able to be there. That day was also the day of my first airplane flight, from Calgary to Vancouver on a Canadian Armed Forces' plane (their only 727). After my first ride on a ferry, to Vancouver Island, I began officers' training at Royal Roads Military College with more than 200 strapping young men from all across Canada, only one of whom I had briefly met before. Somehow, the military didn't respond to my appeal to delay my arrival so I could attend my high school graduation. (Actually, they did, by a letter I received in September, denying my appeal.)

Home-sickness set in early and hard. I carried the first letter from Mom in my pocket for a week or two. After getting somewhat adjusted to the idea that someone only one year older than me had such authority over my every action, or non-action, I quickly settled in to the rigorous routine. Military college, like my previous twelve years of schooling, went well for me. I would have stayed enrolled in the program, except that my poor vision severely restricted the career options I qualified for. Besides, dad had just expanded our farm, moving to a newer farmstead five miles closer to town. Besides, I liked farming, and as the first born of five, it could have been safely predicted that I would marry, take over the family farm, settle down in the area, raise a family, take them to church, send our children to that same school, attend their graduation ceremonies, have grandchildren, and It all turned out that way, except the one part about "send our children to that same school."

Oh, it's still there: the same buildings occupying the first block on the west as I drive into town. In fact, it could have been predicted that I would have entered civic politics as a school board trustee

But I answered an appeal, just barely in time. It was an appeal from my Heavenly Father, Whom I had met just before our first child was born, one year after Corinne and I were married - in the church in my home town.

Our parish priest was a vibrant, born-again believer. During our marriage preparation sessions, he casually recommended that I attend a series of meetings to be held "about this time next year." I so respected him, that when it was announced, I signed up right away, not even knowing what it was I was signing up for. Now, I'll admit that I was (was!) a bit of a male chauvinist, and there was a lady teaching the fourth session. I was almost to that stage, you know: "I'm here, sort of, and I am hearing you but," when something she said, ("how would you catch a monkey?") so intrigued me that I quickly and resolutely overruled the distractions (to the devil's chagrin). As I boldly accepted Christ as my Saviour the next week, Mary Lockie then became a respected and valuable mentor in the first dozen years of a vibrant exchanged life. Trading the predictable (actually, dull and drab) for the excitement of the Holy Spirit taking up a dwelling place in me. Wow! Who'd 'a thought?

That appeal from my Heavenly Father came through my wife, who had expressed a desire to home-educate our children (three girls, so far). I had never heard of homeschooling, and if it did occur, then it must be for some "radical types" who moved to remote little towns to get away from the city. I had pretty much deflected (to my chagrin) her appeal; besides, we drove my Dad's school bus while he and Mom were in Arizona, and . . . and well, it would be expected of me, a native son, to send our children to school in our home town. Then He, not being One to give up easily, redoubled His efforts at another vividly memorable occasion. It was one of those "otherwise" casual moments, namely, "my hand is on the doorknob, I'm trying to leave, but what you are saying has my full attention." Our good friends, Dale and Lisa Jost, a local pastoring couple, were strongly considering home educating their boys. The Holy Spirit directed our conversation so that their appeal of "God wants us to train up our children's spirits" firmly trumped any further resistance I may have had.

Their spirits! In public school, it would be a fight even to remotely maintain any of our efforts made in that direction at home and in church. Even though I might have relished the opportunity to present the school officials with a well-thought out apology of the Spiritual ramifications of continuing on in their secular course, it would likely have fallen on deaf ears, to closed spirits, and to no avail. I had one recent situation with them where I was revoked as an "approved" school bus driver, stemming mostly from my insistence on playing the Christian radio station enroute to and from school.

So, we signed up, not even knowing what we were signing up for. The home education program we enrolled in sought to train whole families "to give the world a new approach to life." The world! Apparently that includes our extended family, neighbours, and yes, church friends. The resistance to our decision came from many

expected, and some unexpected, sources. The various opinions fell roughly into three equal-sized groups: 1) "you probably can, but I'm glad it's you and not me"; 2) "I've never heard of it before, and frankly, I don't want to hear about it"; and 3) (roughly stated), "You foolish, misdirected . . . (along with the rhetorical follow-up). "What's wrong with what you were brought up with?" And likely, all of them thought, and some said, "It'll probably last about six months," which was also said by many of these same people about my being born-again - and that was twenty-seven years ago this November!

My dad drove the school bus that September morning, not needing to stop and pick up Erin. (I often wonder what he must have thought on that day!) No, I'm not a school board trustee, but now I am the principal of our home school.

Just in time, in fact, while I was on the combine the night before we started the first day of home education, the Holy Spirit gave an answer to my wife and daughters' question: "What are we going to do for Wisdom Search?" (a father-led time in our home education day). The next morning, we set out from Genesis 1, studying together, sometimes only a paragraph at a time, eventually through the end of the Proverbs. The girls drew conceptual pictures almost every day, and still have them as keepsakes. The role of primary teacher was (is) joyfully filled by Corinne, and I would quite regularly supplement a small tenth as I was available. In the active farming seasons, our two-way radio became the favourite "search engine" (to borrow the recent vernacular) as I was sought out for dictionary, thesaurus, Bible concordance, and "How do you do this?" queries. (All of which I thoroughly enjoyed, plus a few learning opportunities I initiated from my observations of nature, or meditations on the Word.)

Enough appeals? Not quite! Our daughters were all born by caesarean section and we decided (okay, I decided, Corinne submitted) to have a tubal ligation when our third child was born. The risks of multiple caesareans, the unsettled farming future, the . . . on and on those "and besides" would go. I rejected several appeals against the ligation, even an impassioned one the night before from a bushy eye-browed anaesthetist whom I had never met before or since. And so, (in another of those "to my chagrin" scenarios), we now had a family of three daughters. We were boldly home educating them, they were being trained, their "spirits" were being trained. Good enough? Not quite! Oh, how many times is true victory within reach except for just one compromise?

One notable leadership family in our home education program who had "cut off godly seed" underwent a reversal operation and were blessed afterwards with a daughter. I hadn't heard of such a thing before; it must be for radicals that (oh, you've heard that line of thinking before?). Appeals for a reversal operation came strongly from Corinne and our daughters. The appeals were supported by the same positive forces (many of them the very same persons) and were opposed by the same three groups of people in curiously the same fashion. (If the devil does not have to be creative because what he has used in the past is still working, the

Holy Spirit does, and is, and will continue to be). The unabating conviction in my own soul would only be sated by my decision. My - by faith, out-of-my-hands-into-His - decision. Great joy! Conviction stops when remedial action is initiated. I could truly state that "whether we had more children or not" I was right with God, knowing I was fully forgiven for forsaking His best - recommitting "my future" to His capable hands.

October 18th 1989: The tubal ligation reversal operation was completed, an emotional and prayer-filled day.

October 23, 1990: Luke Fortunatus Collin, our son, was born. He had forty-two visitors in the hospital (a coincidental number? For me, knowing the Holy Spirit's creativity, I think not). It was a graduation celebration like no other - this side of heaven. We named him Fortunatus, which means, "fortunate one," and it is actually my paternal grandfather's given name.

Wow, look at the time! There are other stories to tell, yet not all with the word "celebration" adjoined. Perhaps another time?

Luke graduated last year. He enjoys his expanding role here on Sabbath Rest Farms. His younger brother, Avery, "statement of truth," has Corinne's full teaching attention for the next three years until he graduates - and beyond. (I would add, as would Erin, Chloe and Lydia, their sisters). On February 27, 2009, Erin and her husband Joshua Langemann blessed us with a granddaughter, Hope Alberta.

So, "gentle listener" (to borrow another phrase), what are the appeals being made to you? Answer them - today! What are the appeals you are making? Make them wisely. What of the supporting people God is using? They are many; open your eyes and look unto the hills. What of the opposing forces; are they like mine? (I thought so.) Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. What compromises are in the way of true victory? Don't continue in them.

And so, before that Day that we even now see approaching, (another date with vivid memories and striking contrasts), I am glad for the genuine love of a wife not unlike the one spoken of in the last chapter of the Proverbs. I am blessed to have a "full quiver." I have lived to see my children's children. And as for my future— it is no longer in my hands, but in those of Him who made me, redeemed me, and in Whose presence I shall spend eternity. Great joy!

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