

# **Memoirs**

Page 1 of 106

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

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He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who for their sake died and rose again.

II Corinthians 5:15

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Philippians 1:20

## PREFACE

*I don't presume to feel so important that I must impose my memoirs on posterity! However, I might have a descendant or two who one day will be interested in knowing a bit about this twig on the Baron family tree. And, totally apart from that, I think it might be fun to write down, in a manner more orderly than the helter-skelter way in which my mind re-visits the past these days, a running account of my life. I think it will enable me to give more thanks to God for His mercies and to better see the many places where I need His forgiveness, purchased for me at such great cost by His Son. So, for what it's worth, here we go:*

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1931 BIRTH & INFANCY

I, Donald William (middle name after my paternal grandfather) Baron, saw the light of day at the hands of Dr. Irwin of Irwin's Sanitarium, on Hollis Avenue, Hollis, Queens County, Long Island, New York, on May 6, 1931. I was brought home in the arms of my parents, Amelia Elizabeth Baron, nee Roeper, and Albert Louis ("pronounce it 'lewis!' " my Dad insisted) Baron. Home was at 86-21 232<sup>nd</sup> Street, Bellerose (the Post Office later changed that to Queens Village). I was their second child; the first, Albert Lee, died only several weeks after birth. He is buried at Grace Episcopal Church, in Jamaica, New York, where my parents grew up and were married, and where Dad as a boy was both organ-pumper and acolyte. I don't know why, but my parents delayed my Baptism, also at Grace Church, until I was three years old. I stood before that old baptismal font some years ago and contemplated the mark of ownership the Triune God made on me eleven years before I consciously came to know Him.

My very earliest childhood memory was "being put under" by Dr. Irwin who was about to remove my tonsils, but only after promising me that, afterwards, I could have some ice cream, to this day one of my favorite things. Another very early memory was waking up in the middle of the night before Christmas and seeing Dad stuffing stockings hung, not on the fireplace, but on a dresser drawer in my bedroom; I never told him that I saw him doing what Santa Claus was supposed to be doing.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## MOM & DAD

Something about Mom and Dad, those two constant and supremely formative presences in my young years. I knew that I was loved very much, though I don't think it was expressed much in words or hugs. Mom and Dad were post-World War I "flappers" (modern word: "swingers") and were always "with it" in modern trends. They were both sharp dressers - unlike their son. Mom was a classical pianist who often accompanied a Portuguese opera singer by the name of Cavaljo. She worked as a secretary before marrying. Dad was a clerk in the U. S. Postal Department. After marriage, Mom became full-time home-maker, kept a neat home, and was always there for me, until I entered high school, at which time she went into real estate. It was in that capacity that she located and facilitated the purchase of a very nice brick bungalow on 235<sup>th</sup> Street, "movin' right up" from our rather generic wooden house on 232<sup>nd</sup> Street, where all the houses were identical. Dad, too, was an excellent pianist, of a different kind from Mom; he played popular music by ear. I can still hear him playing such songs as "The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," and other such songs from the era when Mom and he were young. In bed at night, I often drifted to sleep to the soothing sound of his well-chorded music downstairs. (Following Mom and Dad, I began piano as a small boy, under Mr. Valente. But my second teacher, whose name I've suppressed, pressured me too hard one day. I got down from the piano bench, went to my room, locked the door, and refused to come out until she had left. That was the end of my short musical career – until my 'teen years when I learned to play "boogie-woogie" and my college years when I studied organ.

During the Depression, Dad never lost his postal job, but his hours were cut back to two or three days a week, so he organized a dance band and did a lot of moonlighting. All the other band members were of Italian descent, and they had many an Italian wedding reception to play for. He also did some night sales work at Bond's in Jamaica, a famous men's clothing chain that pioneered "two pants suits." Dad worked in the Money Order Department in the impressively pillared Jamaica Post Office, and he took the bus to work each day. As a little kid not yet in school, it was my delight to run down the sidewalk to Hillside Avenue, where he got off the bus at about 5:30 p.m., to welcome him home. However, during my elementary school years, I felt a lot closer to Mom than to Dad. I was afraid of his temper. I remember once I was sent down to the basement to shovel coal in the furnace and they broke out in an argument upstairs. Either I knew what the subject was and believed Mom was right, or I just automatically came to Mom's defense - I can't remember. But I made some remark that was loud enough to be heard upstairs, and suddenly Dad was at the top of the basement stairs, furious that I had taken sides and was interfering, and I got a "chewing out" that I never forgot. His anger never lasted long, however. I seldom went up into the "spooky" attic, but one year, just before Christmas, when I was perhaps seven or eight, I went up to see if I could discover where the gifts were hidden and "preview" them. To my shock and Dad's, I caught him working secretly on a new set of Lionel electric trains, with a large complex of tracks, tunnels, houses, and railroad station, all for his son, of course - his way of telling me he loved me.

By the time I was in senior high and as tall as he was, Dad and I seemed to reach out to one another to be friends, and one day he invited me, kind of adult-to-adult, to take a walk in the

# Memoirs

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nearby Alley Pond Park woods. I treasure photos of that walk. Somehow I felt that he had promoted me that day to be somewhere near his equal. Dad had a great sense of humor and I remember a lot of his one-liners to this day. For example, when people noted with admiration that he and Mom held hands when they went walking, but he explained, "That way she can't hit me." He used to tell people to hold up a hand when crossing a busy New York street; that way, he said, it's easier to get your shirt off when you arrive at the hospital. Dad was an intelligent and dependable worker, and worked his way up from postal clerk to superintendent of the Money Order Department and, in later years, to an executive position with the New York State Regional Office of the U.S. Postal Service, during which years he commuted by Long Island Railroad to the great central office in Manhattan. I felt a lot of pride in him and he was obviously liked and respected by his co-workers. He was loaded with honors, cards, and letters from high and low when he retired. I hated to be overseas at the time. I wrote a letter that was read at the retirement party; I still have a copy. How I wish I had taken the trouble to get to know him better. I realized too late that he was really a sensitive guy, and that I took after him in more ways than I had once thought. In later years, I became Mom and Dad's "excuse" for travel: first they ventured to Minnesota (the end of the world for New Yorkers), then to Hawaii (worse yet), and finally even to Taiwan. Who would have thought that they would become world travelers - twice to Taiwan, with stopovers in Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong, once by air, once by freight ship - and finally residents in the middle of the Pacific? One stay in Taiwan lasted for several months, during which time Dad even took some lessons in Mandarin, and learned enough to direct a taxi and to go to the market and buy food.

# Memoirs

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## HOME

My bedroom on 232<sup>nd</sup> Street was at the top of the stairs with a view out one window of the back yard and out the other window a view of the Chambers' house next door, which was only the width of a driveway away, as with all the identical homes in this modest, post-Depression neighborhood. There were two other bedrooms on the second floor, a larger one that was my parents' and the smallest one that was later occupied by Grandma McKee. The "warmest" spot in the house for me was "the breakfast nook" with benches on either side of the table where we ate all our meals. The table in the dining room, on which was a beautiful table covering crocheted by Grandma McKee, was reserved only for special occasions. (There was a small, pithy wall motto there that I memorized for fun but which became quite internalized as I grew up: "There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us that it little behooves any of us to talk about the rest of us.") There was a back yard, mostly lawn, with flowers along the fence that divided our property from the Chambers next door and the Buntings behind, and a beautiful line of peonies between us and the Webers on the other side of us. Beneath the dining room window was a small plot where I planted a "victory garden" during World War II. All of the above was my little world for the first fourteen years of my life.

# Memoirs

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## 232<sup>nd</sup> STREET

I had the dubious honor of being the smallest kid on 232<sup>nd</sup> Street, so when I was old enough to venture out on the street alone, I soon discovered it was a jungle out there and I had to move around circumspectly. I have a traumatic memory of Jean Mattern, a stout tomboy several years older than I, pinning me down and washing my face in the snow, for no reason at all except that she liked to bully other kids. Lawrence Kennedy, two doors away, wanted to play with me one day and I said no. So he went home, got his baseball bat, and came back and gave me a bloody nose. That battlefield atmosphere was further aggravated by the fact that, at one point as a very small child, I had had a heart murmur, and Mom tended to discourage me from getting involved in any active games or exciting adventures with the other kids. The outcome was that I was regarded as something of a "sissy" and didn't have any good friends on the street. I remember having several dreams where my deceased big brother Albert whom, of course, I had never seen, came to the rescue - undoubtedly my subconscious cry for a brother-protector. The thrill of my young life was when my parents gave me a beautiful two-wheeler bike, finest in the neighborhood, with headlight and even brake lights and horn - the envy, at least so I thought, of the whole street if not the world. That became the source of my pride and the center of my outdoor activities throughout elementary school. I didn't need friends to have bicycle fun. By the time I was old enough to leave our street, I often rode my bike to nearby Alley Pond Park where there were wooded hills and hilly paths to race along.

The Weber family next door had three children, Buddy, the oldest; "Sis" their daughter; and Albert ("Snookie" - what a nickname) who was about a year older than I. (As an adult, "Snookie" purchased the house that I grew up in.) I stood in awe of Buddy who was a Boy Scout leader, and took great caution around Snookie because he was wiry and tough. It was their influence that brought me into the Boy Scouts. The Chambers family on the other side had two children, each several years older than I. One was Ruth who, I think, was also known as "Sis," and who baby-sat me once or twice when I was real small. The other was David, who was considerably older than I, tall and lanky, and I kind of worshipped him from a distance. David later graduated from Gordon College (my own alma mater) and became a missionary to an American Indian tribe out west. Somehow he and I got in touch several years ago by email and we still write occasionally; he would be in his eighties now. There were about twenty houses on our block, and everyone knew everyone else and were friendly, especially during the hot summers when everyone came outside and sat on their front "stoops" and conversed while their kids roller-skated on the smooth, newly asphalted street. There were the "back lots," a triangular piece of land of perhaps two to three acres behind the houses on the west side (we lived on the east side), scattered with wild cherry trees, and ideal for kids to play their imaginary games like cowboys-and-Indians and hide-and-seek. It was there that I secretly smoked my first cigarette; it was awful. At the north end of 232<sup>nd</sup> Street was Hillside Avenue, a busy road, and on the other side of the road was a large patch of blackberries, which I picked when I was old enough to cross the street. Over there was also a clump of wild cherry trees that lent itself to Snookie's and my creation of a secret "club-house." We wrote up a little notebook full of stringent club regulations. You wouldn't believe the persnickety

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

rules: no spitting, no dirty language, no telling other kids about our "club-house," and on and on. (We are all by nature legalists.)

While I was in the lower grades of elementary school, Grand-aunt Mamie Maisel (Grandma McKee's sister) gave me her Mexican Chihuahua and she became my best friend. Dad was scandalized that a boy should have such a diminutive pet - and named "Faye" at that! When I felt misunderstood, that little lady followed me up the stairs to my room and snuggled down next to me in my overstuffed chair as if to reassure me that, if no one else understood, she did. Walking home from school, I entered the far end of 232<sup>nd</sup> Street, and Grandma McKee would be waiting outside the house to send Faye running down the street to meet me. Heaven help anyone who got in her way. That was a nice welcome home.



# Memoirs

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## GRANDMA & GRANDPA McKEE

Amelia Roeper McKee, nee Ungewiss, was divorced from her wayward husband, Albert Roeper, and later married the man I called "Grandpa McKee," from whom she later had a friendly separation (visiting each weekend, but strictly platonic), all presumably due to the pressure of his Roman Catholic children who were scandalized that he had married a Protestant, and a divorcee at that. (I never met my real grandfather, Albert Roeper, and I doubt if he ever saw me. I understand that he was tall and red-headed and lived well into his eighties, with ancestors from German-speaking Alsace-Lorraine, an area ceded to France after World War I.) Grandma was my best buddy, took me to the movies and played cards and (shall I confess?) "ouiji board" with me. Before moving in with us while I was still quite small, she had lived on 233<sup>rd</sup> Street in an upstairs apartment. I recall only one event in her apartment, on Christmas Eve, when Santa Claus came up the stairs to deliver gifts to me and to my cousin, Carol Roeper (daughter of Mom's brother, Albert, and his wife Mabel, nee Single). I was just old enough to put two and two together and to suspect that Santa's alias might be Grandpa McKee, since a) his place in the gathered family was vacant while Santa Claus was present, b) they wouldn't let Carol and me go downstairs to see him off in his sled, though we begged, and c) after Santa left, Grandpa just by coincidence walked in five minutes later. With a name like Ungewiss, you know that Grandma McKee had German ancestry. Not long ago, I discovered that there is a town by that name not far from Wittenberg, Germany, where Luther led the Reformation. I also learned from the German phone book that there are only about 40 people in Germany with that name. Wouldn't it be fun to make contact with some of them? Wish I could speak German.

Grandma McKee was a lady of simple faith in Jesus - if not terribly well-informed, evidenced by the fact that there was a period of time when she was reading Christian Science literature and not aware of its cultic nature. When I went away to college, every letter she sent closed with Psalm 27:14: "Wait on the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait on the Lord." After I came to a living faith in Christ, I think I had a little something to do with her becoming clearer on the Good News of salvation by faith alone in Jesus and His death and resurrection.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## GRANDPA & GRANDMA BARON

My paternal grandparents, Bill and Edna, rented the second floor of a gingerbreaded 19<sup>th</sup> century house in Jamaica, about a twenty-minute drive from our home. Mrs. Krumacher, the kindly landlady, lived downstairs. When I visited there as a boy, the sidewalks in that neighborhood were so old that they were made of slate. Grandpa was no longer able to walk and sat all day in his rocker by a window in the dining area which, because of his disability, really served as living room as well. He had worked for the water works when younger. I never knew what crippled him and put him out of work, making it necessary for Grandma to go to work. They had had much better days. In the middle of the dining room was a large, round oak dining table, and on the center of that was a large antique brass swivel oil lamp with the light on one side of the stand and the oil reserve on the other side (was it called a "student lamp"?) that had been electrified by my great-grandfather who had been in the brass business. I still own and treasure that lamp although, sadly, the beautifully shaped green glass shade was accidentally shattered, replaced, shattered again, and now the lamp awaits my purchase of a third, if one can be found. The parlor was never used and was left unheated in the winter time, but I liked to go in there as a child, cold or not, because of the interesting furniture and artifacts, mostly Chinese, that piqued my imagination. After my grandparents were gone, those things were inherited by Mom and Dad. When they retired to Florida, they had to get rid of most, since I was overseas and not in a position to take them. Today I have from that living room only two things: a beautiful, carved wooden stand, made without nails, from the Ch'ing (Manchu) Dynasty and a candelabrum that incorporates a Chinese vase.

I have one vague memory from the days when Grandpa and Grandma were better off and in good health. They came one day and picked me up as a small child for a ride in their new shiny car, and we drove eastward into the Long Island countryside. I remember stopping at a fruit stand and being dazzled by the largest apples I had ever seen, one of which they bought just for me. Grandma Baron used to call me "Skeeziks" - I don't know what the word means - just an endearing term, I guess, taken from the "funnies" that appeared in the daily newspaper. It's only in the writing of these memoirs that a question has come to my mind: Where were Grandpa and Grandma Baron on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day? They were never with us, and yet Dad was an only child. I know that Grandma Baron, for some reason, didn't like Grandma McKee. Is that why they were absent? I guess I'll never know.

I'm still very curious about the Baron ancestry. Grandpa used to say - was he serious or joking? - that his grandfather was hung in Russia for stealing a pig! Grandma Baron belonged to the Wood clan, with roots in England, and I have a Wood family tree that goes back to pre-revolutionary days. One of the Woods was a member of the Continental Congress. On the basis of that family tree, our son Christopher received a college scholarship of \$500 a year from the Colonial Dames of America. Besides having good grades to qualify, we had to provide evidence that our ancestors were in America before the Revolution. Thanks to a distant relative, I have a Wood family tree to prove it.

# Memoirs

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## THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

Thanksgiving and Christmas were extended-family celebrations. Thanksgiving was always at Aunt Mabel and Uncle Al (another Albert!) Roeper's house in Baldwin, Nassau County, Long Island. Christmas was always at our home. The celebrations included the Roepers three, the Schnecks ("Aunt" Grace, who was Mabel's sister, and "Uncle" Bill), the McKees, the Barons three, and, in later years, the Singles (George, who was Mabel's and Grace's brother, and his second wife, Amie). Grace baked scrumptious pumpkin and mince pies for both holidays. The turkey was baked by the local hostess. The rest of the feast was brought by others. There was no giving of thanks at Thanksgiving, nor anything Christian at Christmas until, in my 'teens, I volunteered. There was no resistance and everyone admitted it was a "nice" thing to do. Mom and Dad, by that time, were church-goers; the Roepers and Schnecks were not. That didn't happen until they had all retired to Ormond Beach, Florida, and had responded to Mom and Dad's invitations to the Lutheran church there. Thanksgiving Day was mainly a huge meal, followed by a nap, with people stretched out asleep all over the house, followed by a second attack on the poor turkey. Christmas Day was more elaborate. Gifts were piled high around the tree. After dessert, the ritual was to open one gift at a time, one person acting like Santa Claus. Each *family* brought a gift for each *individual*, so this took lots of time, full of comments and jokes about each gift. Despite the superficiality, those two days were very special times of bonding for our extended family, and for good memories. Amazingly, Aunt Mabel, Uncle Al, and "Aunt" Grace all lived into their nineties.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## P. S. 33

It was about a 20-minute walk to Public School 33 on 222nd Street, Queens Village. It was a 5-storey brick building, built, I believe, by the Depression era "WPA" which provided work projects for unemployed men. You began with Kindergarten Class and other lower grades on the second floor (first floor provided tables and benches for lunch) and worked your way up to the Eighth Grade on the fifth floor. I have no doubt that my formation was heavily influenced - second only to my parents - by those teachers, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Fertig, Mrs. Heath, Mrs. Terwilliger, Mrs. Schatzel, Mrs. Stahl, two Mrs. O'Connors (one of them feared by all but, in retrospect, the one who succeeded in teaching us the most), Mr. Kelly, Miss Kramer (the fearsome librarian), Mr. Weiss (who unsuccessfully tried to force me onto the basketball court when I had never been initiated into the sport in the "proper" place, namely, my neighborhood). On the other hand, Mr. Weiss helped me immensely - unbeknown to me at the time - in eighth grade. When I couldn't decide which language to study the following year in high school, he suggested, since I didn't have a preference, that I take French, "because there are lots of French words in novels." That, of course, has proven to be true, and I still enjoy coming across those French words and breathe a word of thanks to Mr. Weiss. I minored in French in college, though never became fluent. However, it was handy for reading signs and menus years later in France, and for driving into a gas station and saying "Faites a plein, s'il vous plait" ("Fill 'er up!"). We had Assembly once a week, and I can still hear dignified, white-haired Mrs. Thomas, Principal, reading the Beatitudes after we had sung a hymn. Mrs. Schatzel used to read Scripture to us in the classroom daily. Can you imagine? But that was before the curse of the ACLU.

Graduation from P.S. 33 in 1945 was a great day. The girls made their own long white dresses; the boys wore dark blue suits with loud yellow knit ties, reflecting "the Blue and Gold" of our school colors. We marched into the auditorium to the tune of "Pomp and Circumstance," played on the piano by classmate Arnie Weinstock. Just before the procession began, Bob Hayes taught me how to tie the newly popular "windsor knot"; today I can only remember that one way to do my tie. Thanks, Bob.

In 1995, I initiated a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary class reunion. Out of about 150 people, I located perhaps fifty after all these years, and I think about thirty turned up for an afternoon meeting at the school, a dinner that evening, and a picnic the next day. That afternoon, I walked through the halls that once seemed so vast to this little kid, but now were quite narrow, and dropped in on my Kindergarten room. It had a distinct smell that I immediately recognized after all those years. It was amazing to see those 64 year-olds coming down the old auditorium aisle to meet below the stage. No way to recognize them until I saw their name tags! Also amazing was that most had not changed much, personality-wise. The class nerd was still a nerd. The bright kids were sharp adults. Exceptions: Helen, the class sweetheart, once pursued by all red-blooded males, was very unattractive, in depression and, in general, psychologically-challenged. Yet another girl, Margaret, who had been overweight, awkward, tom-boyish, and not at all pretty, was now slim, very feminine, and vivacious. It was an uncanny trip into the past.

# Memoirs

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## ART

My love for art blossomed at P.S. 33, and I contributed several covers to the rather nice literary-art magazine that came out twice a year. My art was already recognized and encouraged by Mrs. Brown in First Grade and pretty soon I had a reputation as "the class artist" - a great boost to my self-respect. My competitor was Grace Hildebrand, but it was mostly friendly competition. In about the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, we studied China, and I was "commissioned" to paint large portraits of President and Madame Chiang Kai Shek, who were World War II heroes in America, in the very center of a mural with pagodas and Great Wall that covered the entire back wall of the classroom. I could not have known that this was somewhat "prophetic" of a large part of my future. I think it was during 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades that Mom and Dad arranged for me to take Saturday art classes at the famed Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. By that time, I was pretty sure I wanted to become a commercial artist. Bill and Wilma MacDougall, long-time friends of Mom and Dad, had a son, Bob, a year older than me, who was also headed in that direction, and he was further incentive for me. My focus on art continued all the way through Andrew Jackson High School where I was active with both the literary-art magazine and the weekly newspaper called "The Hickory Log," (reminiscent of Jackson's nickname, "Old Hickory.") In my pastoral work, what survives of my art skills has been very useful in creating posters, designing Sunday bulletins, and planning other p.r. pieces.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
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## SUNDAY SCHOOL

My parents taught me the Lord's Prayer when I was quite little, although there was no church-going or other recognition of God in family life. At about age seven, Mr. & Mrs. Ed Reiners across the street asked if they could take me to Sunday school. My parents approved and I ended up, of all places, in the "Christian Science" Sunday school. For some strange reason, both my grandmothers had been reading Christian Science literature, and that might have influenced Mom and Dad's willingness that I go there. It was terribly boring. All I remember is a sign in gold letters on the wall behind what looked like a "judge's desk" where the superintendent lady sat, high and lifted up, policing the little class circles below. The sign read, "God is love; love is God." That didn't do a thing for this little kid, who took the cue from the switching of subject and predicate in that sentence to do his own reversing of things, such as "evol is dog; dog is evol" and other such creative thoughts that protected me and my classmates from learning anything about that strange religion which, despite its name, is neither "Christian" nor "science." It's a wonder that I didn't learn *something*, because I was taken there every Sunday, summer vacations included, for a full five years. The Holy Spirit was protecting me for something better.

# Memoirs

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## SUMMER CAMP

My parents decided that I, at age seven, ought to have a summer camp experience. That's when our Christian neighbors, Mr. & Mrs. Chambers, who undoubtedly had been praying for the spiritually-challenged Baron family, stepped in. They suggested Camp Shadowbrook in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, a Christian camp for boys. And off I went. I loved every moment, begged to stay another week, and went back for two additional summers. We had a young college-age counselor in each cabin, Bible time daily, church on Sunday, and fun-filled days, including handcrafts (I learned how to weave a colorful lanyard that I treasured), catching red salamanders in the nearby stream, and a hike to the Delaware River for a daily swim. Mom and Dad sneaked up at the end of that first week for a look, worried that I might be homesick. The thought had never entered into my mind. They arrived during the outdoor Sunday worship service, just as their son, who had not yet noticed them, was raising his hand in response to an altar call. While I doubt that much of anything "took" at that time, the camp may well have been the Holy Spirit's first step in reclaiming me as His baptized child. I'm grateful to the Chambers family. I spotted Mom and Dad after worship, said a casual "Hi" to them as if their presence was no surprise, and scooted off with my buddies. (We did get together before they went home - a trip of several hours.)

# Memoirs

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## FAMILY VACATIONS

Ordinarily, we were a pretty good family and I have many special memories, like summer trips to Long Beach out on Long Island. I can still smell the tantalizing aroma of "Wimpy's Hamburgers" located on the causeway going toward that South Shore beach. We never failed to stop and buy some burgers. While I was five or six, we three went tenting at Taconic State Park in upstate New York, a thrilling experience for a young kid. I remember Mom being chased down the path by a bumble bee, and lying in the tent at night listening to the cicadas screeching up in the trees. We went to the Pocono Mountains and stayed at the Wilson Farm, which was absolutely exciting for a suburban kid - jumping into the hay below from the loft, getting up in the dark to accompany the farmer to call the cows in and, ah yes, resisting the odorous outhouse with the deep, dark, threatening hole, for almost a week. On a later trip there, I was in my 'teens and old enough to go to the local tavern with the adults to square dance. Another unforgettable trip was to Quebec where I had hoped to use my high school French for the first time. It was a total failure; couldn't understand a word.



# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1943 - ON TO LUTHERANISM

At age twelve, I had "had it" with the Christian Science Sunday school. Matter of fact, during the last year there, at the tender age of 11, while Ed and Marie Reiners went up the stairs for adult service, I only went halfway down the stairs to the basement Sunday school. Then, making sure they had disappeared, I made a bee-line back up the stairs and walked 217<sup>th</sup> Street until church and Sunday school were out, at which time I rejoined them for the ride home! They never knew. My complaints were two: 1) the Christian Science Sunday school didn't start until 11 a.m., which meant that I was just leaving home with the Reiners while other kids on the block who went to the 9 a.m. Lutheran Sunday school were already home and out on the street playing "stick ball," and 2) the Christian Science Sunday school met all year 'round, while the Lutheran Sunday school closed for the summer. At the tender age of twelve, and with such high and holy motives, I announced to my parents that I was switching. They had no objections. (In fact, Mom had been baptized in a Lutheran Church somewhere in Brooklyn and, I believe, her parents were married there.) So the following September, I walked for the first time with the Weber kids, the Mattern kids, and the Petzold kids to the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. I was duly registered for Sunday school, then was shocked to be informed that I was at the age to begin two years of Confirmation class! But I had switched and wasn't about to back down. Sunday school involved very interesting text books, my first year there on heroes of church history, the following year on the life of Christ, the latter written by George Aus, ten years later my favorite seminary professor. I had a fairly young and enthusiastic Sunday school teacher. I was glad that I had made the change. Much later, when I understood better the cultic nature of "Christian Science," contrasted with the biblical riches of Lutheranism, I was not only "glad" but thanked God that He loved His baptized child and delivered me from the former.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
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## CONFIRMATION CLASS

Well-meaning Pastor J. Edward Vesper just didn't know how to communicate with his eighteen confirmands. We were to memorize Luther's Small Catechism, bit by bit, and I was not in the least motivated. I had a fifteen-minute walk to Confirmation class on Wednesdays after school, and it was during those few minutes that I crammed the memorization assignment into my head, clung to it long enough to recite it and have my name checked off, and promptly forgot it all. If anyone had asked Pastor Vesper which of the boys in his class was least likely to become a pastor, I'm sure I would have been at the top of the list. Confirmation Day was two years later, on Palm Sunday, March 25, 1945 and I was nearing age fourteen. Two months earlier I had experienced, for the first time in my life, the death of someone close to me, namely, Grandpa Baron. I remember standing with Dad in front of the coffin before they closed it and hearing Dad say, "So long, Pop." (Thirty-two years later, Chris would hear me say, before another coffin, "So long, Dad.") Experiencing death so close up had a profound impact on me, and I brooded over it for weeks, seeking meaning in it all. God used it to prepare me for a crucial turning point in my life, when I confirmed my faith in Christ.

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## 1945 - NEW LIFE IN CHRIST - CONFIRMING MY FAITH

On Confirmation Day, the church was crowded with regular members along with droves of relatives who had come to celebrate us. We eighteen stood at the altar and the pastor came to us, one by one, looked us in the eye, and asked us certain questions. We were asked if we put our trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior and our God, and if, with His help, we would be faithful to Him to the death. As Pastor Vesper came closer and closer to me, repeating the same questions, I had the distinct sense that this was serious, and I was very moved. The Holy Spirit was at work. By His grace, my answers came from the heart. I left the altar knowing that something profound was going on in my life. That was followed by my first reception of the Body and Blood of my Lord in Communion on Maundy Thursday - deeply moving - and then Good Friday, when the Sunday school viewed a film called "King of Kings." The film was an oldie, a silent one as a matter of fact, produced by Cecil B. DeMille, the great filmmaker. Viewing Jesus' healing of a blind boy, and experiencing his first sight of Jesus as if through the boy's own eyes, had a great impact on me. Somehow, I identified with him. Viewing Jesus' death and resurrection and now knowing it was *for me*, I was glad that the place was dark enough so that no one could see my tears. And then I celebrated Easter Sunday, thrilled that the one I saw dying for me on Friday was - and is - alive. To say it was a decisive week in my life is extreme understatement.

# Memoirs

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## 1947 - GOD'S CALL TO MINISTRY

I grew a lot over the next few years, and so did Mom and Dad, who came back to church, and it wasn't long before Dad was a member of the Church Council. Just one year after Confirmation, at the tender age of 15, I was pressed into service as a Sunday school teacher. I had six boys, eight years old, and I rose to the challenge. At 16, the Ladies' Aid set their sights on me with a "scholarship" to attend the Luther League Bible camp for 'teens at Pinecrest Dunes in Suffolk County, on Long Island Sound. I resisted, feeling apprehensive about spending a week with a bunch of kids I didn't know, but the women persisted and I finally gave in. The courses, the worship, the camaraderie, the fun were beyond my wildest expectations, and I returned for two additional years to join the many new friends from Lutheran churches scattered across Long Island, upstate New York, and Connecticut. The experience motivated me and equipped me to get started with daily devotions.

Most importantly, during the second year at Pinecrest, at age 17, they talked a lot about the need for pastors. I struggled with that for a full week after returning home, sensing God's hand on me. I had planned for some years already to become a commercial artist, and I fought the Call. I tried to picture myself standing in a pulpit preaching, and could not conjure up such a sight. But a week later, lying on my bed, the Holy Spirit got the best of me. He brought to my mind Moses' objections when God called him to speak His Word to Pharaoh. In paraphrase, Moses said something like, "Lord, You know I'm not a public speaker. Send my brother," and God said, "Who made your mouth? Go! I'll be with you." I felt all my excuses falling to the ground like dead leaves, and I rose up from the bed at peace about His plans for me. Those were heady days. When I finally got the courage up some days later to tell my mother, her first reaction was, "Oh NO!" But Mom and Dad never once expressed their disappointment about my not going into commercial art and, in later years, they were very proud that their son was a pastor.

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## CHOIR EXPERIENCES

I joined the church choir after Confirmation, and that began a series of choir experiences that I treasure. Having learned some piano as a young boy, I could read music. The choir director sponsored me to join the Long Island Choral Society, which participated in the experimental filming of the very first groundbreaking "Cinerama" movie, involving a very wide screen with a three-dimensional effect. At the Episcopal Cathedral in Garden City, we were filmed singing Handel's "Halleluia Chorus." Later, we sang Brahms' "Requiem" in concert there. Several years later, I was accepted in the Gordon College Choir and toured in Canada twice with them. At both Gordon College and at seminary, I was the baritone in men's quartets.

# Memoirs

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## 1945-1949 - ANDREW JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

I graduated from P.S. 33 two months after Confirmation and that autumn began studies at Andrew Jackson High School in St. Albans, Queens. It was quite intimidating to join a student body of several thousand, most of them bigger and older than me - and all strangers, because my parents found a way to send me outside our designated school district to AJHS, instead of to Dad's alma mater, Jamaica High School, where most of my classmates went. The reason they gave me for this diversion was the excellent "major art" program they had at AJHS. I think that an additional reason, unbeknown to me at the time, was that they wanted to spare me the increasing violence at Jamaica High. My AJHS career became the "golden age" of my youth, as I matured and my academic and social worlds expanded. Leaving behind all my elementary schoolmates with their fixed opinions about me meant that I had a clean slate to start over with! I could remake myself, and that's what I went about doing. In elementary school, I had tended toward introversion, and was definitely not a leader. At AJHS, I worked on the extrovert side of my personality and judging by the welcome I received as a stranger, and the friends and social activities I was caught up in, I seem to have succeeded very well. The crowning triumph was my election as president of the Senior Class, one of the greatest possible extra-curricular honors at AJHS.

Academically, I surprised myself by excelling in geometry, earning a 96 in the statewide "Regent" exams - I who had never done well in math at P.S. 33. Being a visual person, geometry was right up my alley. Creative writing class was one of my all-time favorites both because of the subject and the vivacious teacher whose name, sadly, I cannot remember. I got into French (thanks, Mr. Weiss), and even had a pen-pal in France. My art continued, and once more I got to create two or three covers for the literary-art magazine, as well as illustrations for a number of articles. It was a very long, daily trip from home to AJHS, requiring three buses during the first year, reduced to two during the ensuing three years. It meant getting up early and returning late. But it was worth it all.

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## WALTER A. MAIER

Major Art, as it was called at AJHS, was most enjoyable. We had art assignments to do over the weekend, so every Sunday afternoon I sat at the handsome big drawing board Mom and Dad had lovingly given me. It was that use of my Sunday afternoons that led me to turn on the radio for music or whatever, and "whatever" turned out to be the Lutheran Hour, with Dr. Walter A. Maier and his intense, sermonic dynamism such as I'd never heard before. It didn't surprise me when years later I read that, when he recorded his sermons, he had to preach in his undershirt because he sweated so much.

Throughout high school, Dr. Maier was really my pastor and teacher, and I looked forward each week to hearing him. Mom and Dad took me to one of the popular Lutheran Hour rallies one summer to hear Dr. Maier in person. It was in the huge auditorium at Asbury Park on the New Jersey coast. It was a thrill to run into P. S. 33 Vice Principal, Mrs. Kramer, there and to know she was a fellow Lutheran. Later, I went to a Lutheran Hour rally at Madison Square Garden in Manhattan, and heard Dr. Maier again. This man loved people, and so there he was at one of the gates afterward to shake hands personally with thousands of people as they exited. I was among them, and asked him to sign my pocket Testament. He wrote "Romans 8:31 and 37" and his signature, then put his arm around me and asked me what I wanted to do with my life. By this time, I had sensed God's call to be a pastor and told him so. He slapped me on the back with such joy that I nearly flew across the floor. While I was a college freshman, Dr. Maier died at the young age of 52 or 53, and I wept. Two of my prime heroes, Dr. Maier and Dr. George Aus, were a unique and rare combination of fine theologians (professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, & Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, respectively) and powerful evangelists.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## THE SOCIAL SIDE AT AJHS

Socially, I had many friends at AJHS. I dated vivacious Mary Helen Hintz for a year or two ("dating" was a rather platonic thing back then). Her father was a very liberal Presbyterian minister of a church in Manhattan, and Helen was very influenced by him. Her challenges to my simple faith drove me back to Luther's Small Catechism and I began an intense study of the Bible. My own studies, although stimulated by liberal Helen, only further confirmed me in the historic Christian faith that I had confirmed at the altar. Thanks, Helen, for the disturbing challenges! I saw Helen in Honolulu several years ago. She is widow of a Unitarian minister and, sadly, still holds to her unbiblical views. My best buddy was Alan Calajoe (now Dr. Alan Raine, ophthalmologist, retired in Sarasota, Florida). We had a lot of fun together, including a camping trip with Dad up to Taconic State Park and another camping trip to the lakeside home of Al's friend in New Jersey. I greatly admired him as a highly self-disciplined person, academically and physically (gymnastics). We drifted apart after high school for various reasons, one simply being geographic separation, but also because of diversion of viewpoints and interests. It's amazing to me that, after fifty years' separation, we are back in touch almost daily via email and good friends once more, dialoging constantly on theological issues.

Senior Prom was climax to social life at AJHS. I invited Dottie Knubel, daughter of the president of the New York Synod, ULCA, whom I knew from Pinecrest Dunes. The prom was held at the prestigious Pierre Hotel on Manhattan's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue facing Central Park. After the prom was over we joined four other couples to go down to the southern tip of Manhattan and take the Staten Island Ferry over and back, just to watch the sunrise, then traveled by subway and bus back to the Baron home where Mom had breakfast waiting for us. (Can you imagine such a bunch of innocents walking the streets of Manhattan at night in later years?) In 1997, I took the initiative for a 1999 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion, found about half of our classmates despite the fact that there isn't one of them living in the AJHS area any more, and about fifty showed up for the reunion in a hotel out on Long Island, followed by a brunch at Jones Beach the next day. As Class President, I had the privilege of addressing them briefly, including a word of witness for my Lord. The reunion was far too short and we hardly had opportunity to re-connect and it was all over. Later, I sent what I hoped was a winsome letter of witness to every classmate whose address I had found, offering them a copy of C. S. Lewis' Mere Christianity and/or the "Jesus" film. Will we ever meet again? I doubt it - though I might be tempted to try for a 60<sup>th</sup>.



# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1947 - TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Back at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Queens Village, I had become president of the teenagers' Luther League. I had not the slightest idea how to lead an effective Christian youth group and had no help from the pastor. Our weekly meetings merely consisted of about five minutes' "canned" devotions and two hours of dancing! One time I decided to initiate a "Life Service Rally" which aimed at making young people aware of church vocation opportunities. We invited Luther Leagues from the area. The whole program was very "canned," if well-meaning. During refreshment time, a young guy came over to chat with me and, to my surprise, began talking with me about my personal relationship with Jesus. I had never before met someone my age who could do that. His name was Roy Nilsen and, though actually younger than me, he was advisor to one of the Luther Leagues present that night. I had to know more. I found out that he was already out of high school, and was a student at the newly opened Lutheran Bible Institute, meeting at Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church in Manhattan. His home church was in St. Albans, but I'd never heard of it: Trinity Lutheran Church, on 200<sup>th</sup> Street. Perhaps due to my obvious curiosity, he invited me the following week to a "Pocket Testament League Banquet" for the youth at his church. I had to go. I met about 40 youth, all as committed as Roy himself. A number of them gave testimonies as part of the program; others led in prayer. They all carried pocket Testaments as a form of witness. I can't remember how long the process took, but I was soon worshipping with this warm congregation and became a member. (I failed to mention earlier that I was already disillusioned by the United Lutheran Church - ULCA - of which the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer was a member congregation, for its tolerance of evolutionary teaching, and also for its rather cold piety, neglect of evangelism, and its lack of doctrinal, sin-and-grace preaching.)

Trinity Lutheran Church was my home church for many years, though I was away at school and on overseas mission most of the time. As a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), I would be going to their seminary, Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. Pastor and Mrs. Arthur Gronberg welcomed me warmly, and I found him to be a great pastor who loved young people, loved to teach the Bible, and preached meaty Law and Gospel sermons. One day he was kind enough to invite me to go with him to the used-book area of Manhattan, and he introduced me to two books, which I purchased. They became my first theological reading, and I treasure them to this day: Here We Stand by Herman Sasse and I Believe in the Holy Spirit by Fredrik Wisloff. Interestingly, those two books and their authors represent two Lutheran foci, which to this day are of high concern to me, the former being confessional Lutheran theology, the latter being the warm piety of Scandinavian Lutheranism.

# Memoirs

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## 1949-1951 - GETTYSBURG COLLEGE - ACADEMICS

During my senior year at AJHS, the catalog of Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, a school of the United Lutheran Church, impressed me with its Christian "look," and so I applied and was accepted. I should have known better; I was in for a rude awakening when I got there. The school's social life was dominated by national fraternities and sororities, which left me out in the cold because I had the (admittedly rather narrow) conviction at that time that I should call guys my "brothers" only if they were Christians. Academically, I was shocked at the two required "Bible" courses. Prof. Ed Stipe, took every opportunity to debunk the history of the Old Testament, beginning with an attempt to be funny by acting out the story of Noah's son backing in to his father's cave to cover his drunken nakedness. I didn't laugh. The New Testament course focused on the life of Christ, and there the supernatural elements related to Jesus' birth - the virgin birth, the angelic announcement, the arrival of the wise men, etc. - were dismissed as "oriental embellishments" (Professor Wagnild's very words). By the end of that year, I knew that I wasn't going to major in Bible at *that* school as originally intended, and instead declared myself a psychology major. But then that department head called me in and cautioned me that, as a pre-seminary student, I might not be comfortable with the Determinism that was the basis for all psychology courses at Gettysburg College! Then there was the freshman biology course, at the first session of which the professor announced that macro-evolution was the basic assumption of the course and there would be no discussion of that topic. (This is "science"?) Required chapel (they took attendance) was an awful waste of time. Aging College President Hanson, for example, a high-degreed Mason, waxed eloquent about our climb up the mountain of life, the view getting better the higher we go, and other such banalities. Nary a word about Jesus Christ, God and Savior, or about His cross and resurrection, or about justification and sanctification.

One of my encouragers while at Gettysburg was Bob Beckstrand, a student at Gettysburg Seminary who was equally unhappy with that school. I told him about Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, at that time a solidly evangelical school, and Bob transferred, writing to me later how pleased he was with his experience there. Fifty-six years later, after losing total touch with one another, we are now exchanging emails.

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## GETTYSBURG COLLEGE - EXTRACURRICULARS

I invited some guys in my dorm to join together for a Bible study once a week, and was promptly called on the carpet by the school chaplain, to whom Ed Stipe had reported my "fundamentalism." He told me that I was "upsetting" the boys and ordered me to cease and desist. What an initiation this first year was! What kept me going spiritually in this unfriendly climate were the Lutheran Bible Institute's correspondence courses, which I exhausted before my two years at Gettysburg were up. By this time, knowing what I would find there, I did not care to join the large Student Christian Movement on campus (SCM, the liberal international student organization). However, there was a very small Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship that met on campus, and I became active in that, serving as its president during my Sophomore year. Other than that, my Christian activities focused off-campus with the county Youth for Christ (YFC), where I became director and the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF), for which I taught a group of children at the local African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church on a weekday night. There being no Lutheran churches in Gettysburg other than ULCA ones, I ended up teaching Sunday school in an Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB - the denomination has since merged with the United Methodist Church) in a small farming town called Biglerville, home of Schmucker's jellies, etc. (Remember the ads? "With a name like Schmucker, it's *got* to be good!"). The young pastor there, Laverne Rohrbaugh, a student at Gettysburg Seminary, and his wife were very kind to me as were all the friendly rural people in the church. Looking back on that era in my life, I was quite an "ecumaniac"! One Sunday, hungry for the Sacrament, I hitch-hiked eastward to the city of York and worshipped at a Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod congregation. It was like coming home. I was so impressed to hear some members actually discussing theology rather than the weather on the steps after worship.

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## COLLEGE SUMMERS

My summers during these years were many-splendored. I had had a friend, Arthur Nelson, (whom we visited in Washington, PA in the late nineties, meeting for the first time in 50 years) at Andrew Jackson High School who was headed for the Presbyterian ministry. While at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, his pastor there was helping out a little orphaned Lutheran congregation in Forks Township, a farm area outside Easton, who had no pastor and who, because they had left the ULCA, did not know where to turn for one. Art Nelson suggested that the pastor contact me, as a Lutheran pre-seminary student, to serve them for the summer. He did, and I did, for two summers, 1950 and 1951 - another important step in my preparation for future ministry. I knew nothing about preaching, and had to develop some skills quite rapidly. My first sermon was so short and so bad that the leaders decided they would "give me notice" when I returned the following Sunday! I worked harder on my second sermon. The leaders met again after that one, and reversed their decision of the previous week. The first year, I commuted by bus from New York each weekend. The second year, I stayed there all summer, living with the Illick family. It was at that time that we invited Pastor C. O. Granlund of Teaneck LBI to come and do a Bible conference for this little congregation. That experience only confirmed my desire to one day study at that school. At the end of my second summer, I directed the congregation to the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod to apply for a pastor and, today, they are a thriving LCMS congregation and school in what is now a thriving suburb of Easton.

Mom and Dad Illick were special and treated me like their own son. Their son, Fred, a year younger than I, was special, too, and we became fast friends, brothers, until Fred went Home to his Lord in 2001 - 51 years of precious brotherhood for two "only child-rens." Under God, I was instrumental in Fred coming to a living faith in the Savior. Fred did two years of studies in engineering at nearby Lafayette College, but soon felt called to the ministry. He beat me to LBI, then proceeded into the LCMS educational "pipeline" (Concordia College, Bronxville, N.Y. and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis). Later, I also had two great summers at Camp Norge, north of New York City, a Lutheran summer camp for deprived, tough, young city kids who cried when it was time to go home. One of them asked me if I would be his father. I was cabin counselor the first year, chaplain the second. Fred joined me for the second year. Great experience.

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## 1951 - SO LONG, GETTYSBURG

As my second year at Gettysburg rolled along, I began to wonder if I was in the wrong place. A seminarian, Rudy Harms, related to Trinity Lutheran Church back in St. Albans, was studying at Gordon Divinity School in Boston where he was being tutored in preparation for going on to study at Concordia Seminary (where, years later, he became professor of practical theology). He talked to me during Christmas vacation about the sister school, Gordon College, and recommended I consider transferring there. There was a battle in my mind. Had God placed me at Gettysburg? And if I left, it seemed like no one would be willing to take the leadership of the InterVarsity Christian Fellow-ship. Would it die and, if it did, would I be responsible? On the other hand, I was not receiving the kind of preparation that I wanted for seminary. I began to think that, if Bob Beckstrand could in good conscience transfer from a bad school, why couldn't I?

The final confirmation came in the strangest way. I was walking down to the town center one day, where there were always many tour buses parked, waiting for passengers to return from walks on the Gettysburg battlefield. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a banner on the side of a bus. It read "Gordon College Choir"! I nearly jumped out of my shoes, rushed on the bus to find two students, John Keith with his girlfriend, Grace Lambert (who later married John's best friend, Bob Berry, also a member of the choir). Grace had felt ill, so they had stayed back. The choir would return soon, they said, so I waited. Soon about 40 enthusiastic and friendly kids arrived back and made a fuss over me - especially when they learned that I was thinking of transferring to Gordon. Then Prof. Charles Matheson, choir director, appeared and practically guaranteed to receive me into the choir if I transferred. It was hard to see them go and leave me to my Gettysburg isolation, but I came to regard that exciting little coincidence as the Holy Spirit's smile upon my move to Gordon. And so in the fall I began the other half of my college education in a new location.

# Memoirs

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## 1951-1953 - HELLO, GORDON

There were many contrasts between the two schools. Gettysburg has a beautiful, spacious, and history-laden campus. Gordon's campus was just a public park on the Fenway, with three connected buildings lined up along the sidewalk. Gordon has long since moved to an exquisite campus northeast of Boston, with 200 acres and a lake, and a thousand students. But in my time, there were only about three hundred students, compared to Gettysburg's 1,100. But the most significant contrast was the one that brought me there - the courses, whether biblical studies or history or philosophy or psychology, were all carried on in a Christian atmosphere engendered by committed Christian professors. I did join the choir and had two wonderful years under Prof Matheson's directorship, including two unforgettable choir tours up into Canada, one year in Ontario, the other in the Maritime Provinces. Prof. Matheson went on to teach voice at Iowa State University, and I'm still in touch with him. He's 94 and doing fine. Another contrast between Gettysburg and Gordon: At the former, being forced to grapple with the rationalism that dominated the religious scene, I became a confirmed evangelical. At the latter, in the face of the baptistic challenges of the student majority and the Reformed bias of the faculty, I became a confirmed Evangelical Lutheran. Strange, but opposition seems to be a tool that God has used repeatedly to shape my faith and life.

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## 1951 - ORGANIST

I had studied organ at Gettysburg, and found myself serving as organist at the only ELC church in Boston. Located in highly *Italian* East Boston, the church was an anomaly known as Our Savior's *Norwegian* Lutheran Church. Once a month the service was in Norwegian, a language of which I knew not a word, but I managed to play through the service anyway. Old Pastor Heggum, father of Gordon classmate Ruth, was most kind to me over that year.

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## 1952 - CARL JOHANSSON

The highlight of my two years in Boston, however, was not on the Gordon campus. Due to my high school visit to New York's LBI with Roy Nilsen, I had been receiving their newsletters, including one announcing that Pastor Arnold Stone, LBI teacher, would be doing a Bible conference in Quincy, a Boston suburb. Of course I had to go. The Bible conference was at Salem Lutheran church, known in Quincy as "the Church on the Rock" because it was literally built on top of a high rock formation by Swedish immigrants who worked in the local quarries. I was introduced to Carl Johansson, their dynamic 28 year-old pastor. A big guy, full of energy, driven, always a mischievous smile and twinkling eye that indicated he had an agenda that he was pursuing with alacrity. I was fascinated by him. He was very much in need of a youth worker, so he and one of his elders, Allen Kyler, came to Gordon to see me one day to tell me that their "vision" was that I was to be youth director that very summer at the Church on the Rock. I begged to differ, since four of us at Gordon were talking seriously about forming a gospel quartet to travel to Africa and evangelize during the summer months. As it turned out, the Africa plan disintegrated, and Carl and Alan were right. I had never done youth ministry before, but Carl encouraged me and I was very drawn to being a part of his church. So I agreed, spending each weekend as well as two summers living at the parsonage. I got to know Carl and his wife, Alice, and their little boy Karl - now, I believe, a lawyer in Minnesota - as a beautiful Christian family. I'm still in touch with Alice and with their daughter, Esther who later was my student at Seattle LBI. Parsonage life left a deep impression on me. The home was quiet, strong Alice's cathedral where she faithfully did her ministry to her children, to Carl, to me, and to Paul Pecce, a teenager who had been evicted by his mother and had gotten involved in Boston gangs. Through Carl and his family, Paul made an amazing turn-around, later went to Teaneck Lutheran Bible Institute with me, along with Clem Gedutis, Paul's converted gang leader. It was observing the Johanssons' strong, Christian marriage and family life that gave me the courage to want to marry and have a family some day. The daily singing, after meals, of "Jesus, Still Lead On" still echoes in my memory, and remains one of my favorites.

Carl was the kind of pastor I was unconsciously seeking as a model: a solid Lutheran, roots in the warm Lutheranism shaped by spiritual awakenings in Scandinavia, not bound by tradition for tradition's sake, innovative, courageous, a man of vision. I was eight years younger than he, but had a hard time keeping up with him; he was always on the move. Even the time required to drive into Boston for his weekly radio broadcasts was not wasted; it was spent in prayer - his eyes open as he drove, mine closed, with some nervous trepidation, as he veered through the traffic in his usual hurry! My concept of being a pastor was transformed by observing Carl. His passions were Bible study, evangelism, and missions, and they became my lifetime passions, too. He met one on one with his confirmands, with the goal of making sure that they trusted Jesus as their personal Savior; the Confirmation rite would be no mere "graduation" ritual for them. Saturday nights he gathered in the sanctuary any who would come - up to ten of us - and we studied the sermon text for the next day, so that he had a team "pulling" with him in the morning. He told us that very often he had to revise his sermon as a result of the Saturday evening joint study of the text. Then we knelt at the circular altar



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written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

and prayed for conversions, often for people by name, and for missionaries that we supported under the World Mission Prayer League. There was real spiritual battle going on in this congregation for the Kingdom. We prayed for twenty-five full-time workers to go out from that congregation within the next ten years, and I think the goal was exceeded. The first one to go was Betty Anderson, later my schoolmate at Lutheran Bible Institute, who went to serve in Hong Kong, where I again met her during my seminary internship years there.

I worked with senior high kids and loved the work and the planning so much that I found it was on my mind every single day, competing with my need to study. Sunday mornings, after teaching the teens' Bible study, I was robed with Carl in the chancel and we sang the old Augustana Synod's choral liturgy in duet form. By contrast, Sunday evenings were "Hour of Power," where we sang gospel songs, with me at the piano playing in tandem with the organ. His preaching was a simple unfolding of the Bible text, with a single thrust that he used to confront the hearers and lead them to Jesus. Carl made no bones about many church people needing to be saved. In the sacristy before Sunday worship began, he used to peek through a peephole in the door to the sanctuary and pray for the salvation of spiritually needy individuals as he saw them coming in. Evangelism was even on his mind at his father's funeral where he preached a powerful message directed to the lost among the attendees, using his pastor-father's faithful life as a witness to the Gospel. He was impatient with Lutheran pastors who prided themselves on being proper "shepherds," as contrasted with being evangelists to their people - as if the former were preferable to the latter - and who, in Carl's perceptive eyes, failed to seek the needed conversion of many of their members. His "magnificent obsession" with Bible study, evangelism, and missions as the heart of a healthy church imprinted me for life. I have sought to duplicate that wherever I have ministered through the years. Like Ted Ellingboe later in Elizabeth, New Jersey, under whom I worked with youth while at Teaneck LBI, Carl and family were later called to Africa. After graduation from Gordon, I proceeded to Teaneck, New Jersey, with Carl's encouragement, to keep the promise I had made to myself, to spend at least a year at L.B.I. before proceeding to seminary - taking with me four others from Carl's church, two young women and two young men. Carl died several years ago of complications related to Parkinson's disease. Carl became my lifetime model and I love him as my mentor. I have used a lot of space to write about him, and that's because the older I get the more I realize what a towering influence he was on my entire life, as a result of one short year under his leadership.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1953 - THE LUTHERAN BIBLE INSTITUTE

Roy Nilsen played an important part in my life in 1947 due to his being a student at the Lutheran Bible Institute. LBI was an American product of Scandinavian Lutheranism, founded as it was by pastors and people of Lutheran churches in America with Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish roots. The school in Manhattan, just opened that year, was a daughter of the mother school in Minneapolis, founded in 1919. Other daughter schools were planted in Seattle and Los Angeles. While I was a high school Senior, Roy invited me on a public school holiday to come with him to class. I discovered that he was the first and only full time student, though there were several part-time students. They met in the nursery, humbly sitting on tiny pink chairs in the basement of Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church. (G. A. Church was a church of Swedish origin, the name of which memorializes the Swedish king who saved the day for the Reformation when he brought his troops down to Germany to successfully resist the Roman Catholic counter-reformation forces). I learned that there were two full-time teachers at LBI. One was Pastor Henry Bergren, who was teaching Acts that day and with whose son, John, I would be co-worker one day at Seattle LBI. The other was Pastor Edward Hansen, who would be one of my teachers when I came to study at LBI four years later. Roy had already studied for a year at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota, but dropped out for a year at LBI because he felt he was not well-equipped for witness on campus. I would gladly have gone to LBI immediately after high school, but my parents didn't think too highly of the idea. They told me to plan on that after they had seen me through college. Fair enough. In my heart I committed myself to at least a year at LBI after graduation from college. That indeed was what I did, supporting myself that year by working as a cashier at a supermarket in Teaneck, New Jersey, where LBI had re-located.

It was a year steeped in the Word and I treasure my class notes to this day, representing my studies under Pastors C. O. Granlund (the dean), Ed Hansen, Ted Maakestad, Arnold Stone, and Henry Nielsen, the five full-time teachers (plus a number of adjunct teachers). As of 2006, I'm still in touch with Ed Hansen and Ted Maakestad. The basic approach to the Scriptures was the inductive method, involving the three steps of observation, interpretation, and application. Observation via overview, discovering the overall structure of a Bible book before zeroing in on chapters, then on paragraphs, only then on verses and words - this was the newest and most exciting aspect of Bible study for me. The inductive approach was championed at that time by Biblical Seminary in New York, where quite a few LBI teachers had studied and where I once took a summer course. I was to go even more deeply into it later at seminary, thanks to Dr. George Aus who even taught his Dogmatics courses inductively. During that year at LBI, I worked as youth director on weekends at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey, under Pastor Ted Ellingboe. I was very moved when, a year or two later, Pastor and Mrs. Ellingboe were called to French-speaking Cameroun, Africa, the second pastor under whom I worked who later was called to that continent.

I remember that year at LBI as my one year of total peace - no controversies, no opposing theological issues, no personal problems either; just immersion in the Word. Entering students at Luther Theological Seminary were given a Bible knowledge test, and I came out on

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

top of all 125 students in my class. I give the credit to that year at LBI. I sorrow deeply that the LBI movement has faded away and no longer impacts the Lutheran churches in America, and that at a time when its emphasis is needed more than ever.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1954-1959 - LUTHER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

When I told Mom and Dad that I was going all the way to Minnesota for seminary, they thought I was going over the outer edge of the planet - typical New Yorkers. However, love conquers all, and in my second year, they drove their handsome Mercury all the way to Minnesota, gave it to me as a gift, and flew home. Seminary was demanding, but I loved the full-time study of the Scriptures and related courses. My all-time favorite prof was Dr. George Aus, a native of Brooklyn and "patron saint" of students from the east coast, a minority group in this highly mid-western Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC). Because his dogmatics classes were taught inductively, beginning with open Bibles rather than with doctrinal loci, and ending with intensely personal and deep-felt summaries by Dr. Aus, one came away from his classes feeling that one had been at worship. During my first year, I witnessed Dr. Gullixson turning the presidency over to Dr. Alvin Rogness, with a heart-felt admonition to guard the school from contemporary theological dangers, especially from the Protestant "left." It was prophetic, for Dr. Rogness, despite his evangelical heart and his exquisite preaching, was "neo-orthodox," that is orthodox in doctrine but tolerant of a liberal view of the Scriptures - and the history of neo-orthodoxy shows that one cannot remain long with such a self-contradictory stance. The orthodox doctrine is undermined and eventually surrendered. In the few years that I was there, I saw the view that we don't need to quibble over small inaccuracies in Scripture such as numbers, develop into the view of at least one prof who regarded belief in the virgin birth as something that might legitimately be questioned. This subject of the inerrancy of Scripture is an area that I have had to grapple with all my life.

On the whole, though, I had a rich experience at Luther, where the genius of Lutheran theology came across clearly, even while the foundational doctrine of the Word was weakening. Relatively speaking, Luther Seminary still harbors some of the more conservative theologians in what later became the liberal ELCA.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1955 - GRANDMA McKEE'S HOMEGOING

At Christmas-time of the first year at Luther, I rode home with four other east coast seminarians, taking turns at the wheel and driving straight through without stopping, about 1,100 miles. Exhausted, but glad to be home. Grandma McKee was not well, and when I was about to return to school two weeks later, she was in the hospital in an oxygen tent. I read Scripture and prayed with her, then had to say goodbye and leave for Minnesota. By the time I arrived back at the seminary, I learned that Grandma had gone Home to Jesus, whom she trusted. So back I flew to New York for the funeral, at which I had the privilege of preaching the Word in honor of my precious Grandma. She is buried in Lutheran Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, next to her sister, Mamie Meisel. Afterward we lost track of Grandpa McKee, and his family didn't even bother to notify us when he died on November 15, 1958.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1956-1958 - HONG KONG INTERNSHIP

After two years of theological studies, students were to do a year of internship. I was only the second student ever to be sent overseas. I had been assigned to a church in Stoughton, Wisconsin, until I learned that the pastor there used interns as "office boys." When I told Dr. Aus, my advisor, he wouldn't hear of it and insisted that the faculty re-assign me. Fifty-one years later, I received from Pastor Bob Beckstrand (who figures in my Gettysburg College years) these sobering words: "How wise you were not to come to Stoughton. The pastor of First Lutheran was a very autocratic and domineering person-ality."

However, all internship openings had been filled. But Dr. Andrew Burgess, missions prof, said he had just the place for Baron - Hong Kong. I was delighted at this surprise and accepted without hesitation. I had always leaned toward world missions. Thanks to my French minor in college and Pastors Johansson and Ellingboe, my focus had been on Africa. But now I was headed to East Asia. Dr. Aus arranged with the Norwegian seamen's pastor in New York to find me a "work-away" job on a freighter, and so I was off on the greatest adventure to date in my life. Sailing through the Panama Canal and with stops in San Pedro, California, as well as in the Philippines, it was several weeks to Hong Kong. One incident in mid-ocean that I'll never forget: I began to experience a knife-like pain in my side and when it persisted for a couple of days, I went to the First Mate who handled medical things. He said, "It sounds like your appendix." I asked what was to be done if it persisted. He said, "I operate." I tried to picture this untrained man, surgery manual in one hand, scalpel in the other, about to open me up, and I returned to my cabin to pray! Next morning, the pain was totally gone, and I thought nothing more about it, except for gratitude to God. It was fifteen years later, in Florida, that the exact same pain sent me rushing to Emergency where they diagnosed it as a kidney stone. After a few days, the stone passed (as it must have on board ship without my knowing it), and I was discharged. Precisely another fifteen years later, this time in Hawaii, it happened again and this time it required surgery. (That was 21 years ago, gratefully with no recurrence since.)

I remember the excitement, as we approached Asia, of seeing, for the first time, a Chinese junk out on the water, in full, red sail. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, I was assigned by my supervising missionary, Palmer Anderson, to Truth Lutheran Church in Kowloon, working closely with parish worker Ruth Yuan, whom everyone called Yuan Chieh-chieh (Ruan Jie-jie - "Big Sister Yuan"), and with David Chao (Jao Wei-ran), student from Taiwan studying at Hong Kong Lutheran Seminary and, like me, assigned to Truth Lutheran Church for field work. These two wonderful people, along with Pastor James Hu, when he returned from studies at Luther Seminary, became my closest friends. (It had been while sitting in the back row of a seminary class that Pastor Hu thought up my Chinese name: Pai Ta-en (Bai Da-en) Pai for Baron, Ta-en for Don, the latter meaning "great grace.")

My assignment was to begin English worship at Truth Lutheran Church, as well as to teach English Bible at some local middle schools and at Chu Hai College, a "refugee school" from Canton. I fell in love with the Chinese people and their culture. At first I stayed at the hostel run by Lutheran World Service for temporary residents, who were all foreigners. We ate

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

Western food every day and I felt, in general, cut off from the people I was there to serve. Then I was given the privilege of moving into Lutheran World Service's student hostel for refugee students who had escaped from Communist China. It was an apartment flat without room divisions and one bathroom, shared by 15 men. Our double bunk beds were at one end of the flat, with screen dividers between them and tables and chairs located at the other end for studying and eating. I was fully immersed in Chinese everyday life for two unforgettable years.

Among the refugee students was Peter Tuan, a friendly, wiry young guy whom I liked very much. The only expensive item I owned was a German camera, and one day Peter asked if he could borrow it over the weekend, something I was glad to do. However, after the weekend was past, Peter did not return the camera. After a few days, I asked Peter for the camera and he sheepishly replied that he had loaned it to a friend who would soon return it. A week went by, and no camera. When approached again about it, Peter explained with some embarrassment that his friend had hocked it at a pawn shop, but his friend said that he would get it back soon. Again I waited for some days, then told Peter I wanted him to get the pawn ticket from his friend so that I could redeem my camera, and if his friend did not do so immediately, I would have to report him to the police. Then Peter disappeared for a few days, and I felt I had no choice but to go to the police. I was afraid that Peter was being used by his friend. Their investigation revealed that it was Peter himself who had pawned the camera! Now I felt terrible about going to the police. They arrested Peter, put him in a cell, and set a day for court appearance. I went to the courthouse at the appointed time, feeling very awkward in the highly formal British courtroom atmosphere, where one addresses the judge as "your worship," bows in the judge's direction before exiting, etc. Peter was brought up from his cell below and placed in the "dock" (holding area for prisoners). Peter, of course, could only admit guilt. The penalty was a fine that was far beyond Peter's ability to pay. In the absence of payment of the fine, he was to be jailed for a certain length of time. Case closed. They began to lead Peter out. I had to act. Heedless of British court protocol, I jumped up, ran up to the judge's desk, explained who I was, and asked if I could pay Peter's fine and take responsibility for redeeming my camera. This was accepted. Peter and I met outside the courthouse and embraced as good friends. I felt a bit like a "redeemer" - even more so when Peter explained that his elderly refugee father lived in a one-room hut. He had no income to survive on, and Peter's purpose in pawning my camera had been to get enough funds to add a room to his father's hut that he could rent out for income. In a recent reading of a little classic by James Denney entitled The Death of Christ, I came across this statement: *"Something that I experience in a particular relation, in which another has borne my sin and loved me through it, may help to open my eyes to the meaning of Christ's love."* I think Peter got the Message.

After my first year in Hong Kong, David Chao organized a gospel quartet, made up of Chao You-yuan, a Taiwanese seminary student; Li Shu-kuang, a Cantonese middle school student; David, originally a mainlander from Honan Province; and myself, an American. We spent a month traveling and singing all the way around the island of Taiwan, and somehow I knew that one day I would study there. There was a cultural pride and national fervor that one did not experience in colonial Hong Kong. That first internship year sped by so fast that I asked for an extension, and a second year was granted. Saying goodbye at the end of those two years

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

was one of the toughest things I've ever experienced. Chinese people know how to win friends and I was really bonded. I stood for hours at the stern of the ship looking back toward the people and place I didn't want to leave.



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1958 - STOPOVER IN JAPAN

I was on a small British freighter going to Japan to join the Norwegian freighter that had a work-away job awaiting me in Tokyo for my trip home to the States. Pay: free room and board plus one token Norwegian kroner (union requirement). I was able to travel some in Japan between ships, beginning with Kyoto (toured by rented bike because I was broke), then joining a work team of university students from the Tokyo Lutheran Student Center who were fixing up an old building as the location for a new mission outreach on a peninsula near the city of Toyohashi. That was another unique experience, sharing life with those Japanese students for a week. The Japanese were still poor even thirteen years after the War, and I thought I'd starve to death with the meager food. Our first job was fixing up the grounds, digging with pick-axes, which drew hundreds of curious kids from the primary school across the street to watch with wonder the two "gai-jin" ("foreigners" - missionary Bo Sorensen and me) actually doing hard labor. One friendship lasted long, that of Buntaro Nishimura, student leader, who later studied in Pittsburgh and visited our home in New York, and in whose parents' home Mom and Dad stayed, as well as I, at different times. I regret that we have lost contact. I still remember his words on a post card preceding his visit in our home: "I'm looking forward to shooting bulls with you."

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1958-1959 - HOME AGAIN AND SEMINARY GRADUATION

Travel across the Pacific was uneventful but pleasant. Unlike my first "workaway" job where I worked daily below deck in steaming hot and smelly holds under a steward who didn't like me, on this trip my assignment was to paint the ship's deck, so I was out in the balmy Pacific sun and breezes and could watch the deep blue waves roll by and the porpoises cavorting around the ship's bow. For some legal reason, I had to disembark in Vancouver, B.C., taking a bus to Seattle where Mom and Dad had flown to meet me. We drove together down the west coast to San Francisco and it was a beautiful trip, then flew home. I had one more year at Luther Seminary, where I found that my hands-on ministry in missions had made me much more intense about learning, so as to be equipped. I had a straight A year, then graduated with a Master of Divinity degree at Central Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, with Mom and Dad present along with the Johanssons.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1959-1961 - YALE UNIVERSITY

The ALC mission board wished to extend me a Call to the China field, but I declined. I felt that a missionary to the ancient culture of China, with its difficult language, needed far more preparation than the one year the board was prepared to provide. So my decision was to proceed to Yale University's Institute of Far Eastern Languages for a couple of years, totally steeped in the language. To help with expenses, I found a little Danish Lutheran Church in Newark, New Jersey, to serve on weekends, though I knew that wouldn't be enough to pay the high tuition. That was provided by God in an unforeseeable way. The head of the Institute was a former missionary and he took personal interest in me. On his own initiative, he arranged for me to be available to the Institute's Chinese instructors who were writing textbooks and needed help with the English side of those texts. The remuneration was in the form of full tuition (remember, this was *Yale!*) plus a stipend. I found a free room next to the campus, in the attic of a retired professor of architecture and his wife, in exchange for just "being there" for security purposes. I earned free dinners at a little Chinese restaurant in New Haven called "Heavenly Blessings" ("Tien Fu" - yes, they were Christians) in exchange for picking up "dou-fu" (bean curd) for them in New York's Chinatown each weekend on my way through from Newark. What more could I ask for! The Institute had been founded during World War II to train American pilots, in the space of twelve weeks, believe it or not, to be able to adequately communicate with their Chinese counterparts in the Republic of China Air Force. Their teaching methodology, along with the famous Yale spelling system, was extremely well developed, and my fluency increased rapidly. We had five hours of class each day, six students to one instructor, then were given records to listen to at home. We were not to try to speak without the corrective of a teacher or a record nearby. It was intensive. I even took a stab at Cantonese one summer, but didn't get very far with that. I must mention Miss Daisy Kuo, my favorite teacher, who really gave herself to training her students, most of whom were young Air Force men who would be going to Korea to listen in on Chinese military broadcasts. She was such a patient teacher. I helped her develop an advanced conversational Chinese textbook aimed at building vocabulary in everyday life areas, such as shopping, travel, medical terms, military terms, weather, sports, etc.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1959-1961 - NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

The little Danish-American Bethesda Lutheran Church in Newark belonged to the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (AELC), a synod with historical ties to the Gruntvigians in Denmark, also known as the "Happy Danes" (in contrast to the "Holy Danes" of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (UELC), with roots in the Inner Mission and spiritual awakenings in Denmark). My duty was to lead worship each Sunday and generally to be available for pastoral needs over the weekend. With five intense days of classes plus my weekend ministry in Newark, there was no time for leisure, but my intense interest in both of these dimensions of my life kept me going. Newark is almost totally black, including the neighborhood immediately around the church building. None of the church members lived nearby, traveling long distances for church. I had two summer months before Chinese classes started, and I lived above the church. I watched the kids on the streets and was troubled that, as a congregation, we were ignoring them and the entire neighborhood. Then I learned of a group of Lutheran college students who were available to do vacation Bible schools on the east coast, and I scheduled them for two weeks with us - one week to deliver door-hanger announcements about VBS, the second week to teach VBS. Forty black kids turned up, and that was an exciting week. More exciting yet: half of them came back in the fall, far outnumbering the three "Danish" children who had constituted the Sunday school - kids dragged in from distant places by their grandparents. There was great nervousness at first in the congregation as we worshipped upstairs and the noisy kids had Sunday school downstairs, taught by a couple of church ladies who were thrilled with the mission opportunity. The tension got worse when the lovely mother of one of the black kids began coming regularly to worship, and downright crisis broke out when she asked to become, and did become, a member. A small minority of members insisted that this was a church for Danes. However, the leadership stood up to them, and the majority went along, with some pride that they were really doing what God would have them do. Another black family came in, and I had the privilege of baptizing the 12 year-old son and 11 year-old daughter. Later came also a Russian family and the father, of Muslim background, was baptized. Needless to say, it was an exciting two years, climaxed when, in 1960, our congregation and Roseville Lutheran Church, a ULCA congregation two blocks away, also languishing (and still "lily white"), decided to merge to become a single, hopefully stronger congregation. Sadly, a recent look at the Lutheran directory shows that Bethesda-Roseville Lutheran Church no longer exists. I wonder what happened?

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1961-1963 - BACK TO TAIWAN

As my two years at Yale drew toward its end, I again had to consider accepting a call from the mission board. However, the availability of a two-year scholarship from the Republic of China government to study at the National Taiwan University (NTU) in Taipei lured me, and I applied successfully for that. Now was my opportunity, having made rapid progress with the language, to immerse myself in courses in Chinese history, literature, and philosophy at Taiwan's best university. The scholarship was barely enough to take care of food and pocket money, but did include free tuition. I advertised for, and found, a young guy looking for company on his car trip across the American continent. Then I found cheap passage through a Taiwan shipping company with a long history called "Chao-shang Chu" (Zhao-shang Ju), for travel across the Pacific. It was "a slow boat to China" - an old World War II "liberty ship" and took several weeks to arrive, including a scary time on the tail of a hurricane whose waves nearly capsized us. A stopover in Japan included an all-night climb to the top of Mount Fuji (with a Chinese student returning to Taiwan on board my ship and a student I knew from the Tokyo Lutheran Student Center's work camp). It also included a fast slide by the seat of the pants down the volcanic ash the next morning in order to get back to the ship in time! After a stopover in Okinawa, I arrived in the port of Keelung (Jilung) at the north end of Taiwan and received a letter from Dad saying that Grandma Baron had died. I sorrowed that I couldn't have been with Dad at such a time.

American Lutheran Church Missionary Clara Jones, founder of the Lutheran Student Center and Student Hostel across from the university, was glad to let me live in the Hostel free. And what a boon that was, once more submerged in Chinese life with forty students, eating with them, playing with them, talking over the Faith with them. I had a fine Freshman roommate, Li Wei-tsung (Li Wei-dzong, English name Bill), an electrical engineering student and quite well-known for his articles in the literary supplement of the Central Daily News (pen name Lu-tien – "Green Electric"). Only recently, after a gap of 45 years, we met again, in California where he is retired after a very successful life in electronics. I also became immediately acquainted with Yu Chi-pin (Yu Ji-bin; English name Thomas, because he had been a doubter and had resisted the Gospel), an engineering student at NTU and a new Christian, and we became fast friends. If Fred Illick was my American brother, here was my Chinese brother, to this day very special to me: my Best Man when I was married and godfather, along with Fred, to our son, Christopher, when he was baptized. Partly due to his relationship with me, I think, Tom matured rapidly in his newfound faith and later felt God's call to become a pastor. We had many hours talking over the Scriptures and getting into Lutheran theology, and I introduced him to a number of solid theological works, such as Here We Stand by Hermann Sasse and The Quest for Holiness by Adolf Koberle, and The Structure of Lutheranism by Werner Elert. He eventually graduated from Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, and then earned his doctorate in pastoral theology at Boston University. He is now President of the China Lutheran Seminary in Hsin-chu (Xin-zhu), and is held in high respect in Taiwan and throughout the Lutheran theological education world.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

Life for me revolved around the Lutheran Student Hostel, the Lutheran Student Center and Truth Lutheran Church, all on the same piece of land. I became active in all three and so was heavily in ministry even while I was studying. There were plenty of student-catering eating places in the NTU area, and that's where I ate each day. My favorite was the Ch'ing-chen Chiao-tzu Kuan (Ching-jen Jiao-dzi Guan), a Muslim meat dumpling restaurant on a narrow street opposite the main entrance to NTU. The Hostel gate was locked at 10 p.m., but Tom and I often broke the rules and climbed the fence to go and eat "hsiao-yeh" (xiao-ye) - evening snack - at various stands down the local lanes.

One Chinese New Year vacation, I was invited by a student friend, Liu Jung-sheng, to come home to his country village in the south to celebrate. After getting off the train, we trudged through many a rice field before reaching this traditional village. No paved roads; hay stacks everywhere; traditional "U"-shaped rural homes with entrance hall and altar to gods and ancestors at the bottom of the "U"; chickens and dogs everywhere. That was a wonderful experience of Taiwanese life. In another vacation period, I traveled with some schoolmates on the small gauge railroad up to legendary Ali Mountain. Early in the morning we gazed down on the gorgeous "yun-hai" - "sea of cloud" - as a brilliant sun rose behind it. Another trip took me up the Taroka Gorge, made of solid marble, all the way up to T'ian-Hsiang where we stayed at a youth hostel. (Years later, la Mei, young Chris, and I took a bus up to Tian-Hsiang, stayed overnight, then hiked all the way down this same gorge of awesome beauty; it took a full day and was worth it.)

My favorite beach was Fu-lung, and one summer vacation, I went there alone and rented a cheap room with Japanese tatami floor for a week, spending the time reading, walking, and swimming, eating in the one local restaurant. One night I saved a young man's life. Opposite the beach is a sand spit, and the tide comes in and goes out between the beach and the spit, sometimes moving quite rapidly. That evening, as I walked along the shore, there was no moon and there were no lights near the beach - it was pitch dark. The tide was flowing out to sea. Suddenly I heard a voice from the direction of the water: "Chiu-ming!" ("Jiu-ming!" - "Help!") It was too dark to see anything, but the call was repeated again and again, in a voice that indicated great fright. There was a rowboat & oars on the shore, so I pushed out toward the voice, rowing hard against the current. There, standing in water almost up to his neck, afraid to move lest he lose his footing and be swept to sea, was a young man from the fishing village on the spit who had underestimated the current and the depth and had tried to walk across to the beach. (Amazingly, he didn't know how to swim.) I helped him into the boat and rowed back to the beach. He was speechless with gratitude. Next day he came back to thank me again and asked if he could go back to Taipei with me and be my servant! He was quite serious and very insistent. I gently but firmly declined. And I thought of myself, saved from eternal separation from God by my Lord Jesus, and I wondered if my gratitude and my readiness to be His servant came anywhere near that of this young man.

## CLASSES AT NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY

At that time, there was only one other foreigner, an American, on the NTU campus, so we were something of an oddity. Courses were not easy for me. My classmates were all Chinese students who, of course, were far, far ahead of me in language and in general

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

knowledge of Chinese history, literature, and philosophy. The professors couldn't slow down just for one foreigner in the class. During the first year, I carried a tape recorder with me to record the lectures, so that I could go home and listen over and over again.

I particularly remember old Professor Mao Tzu-shui (Mao Zi-shui), who wore his full-length scholar's robe to class where he taught us Confucius' Lun-Yu (Analects). I felt that I was sitting at Confucius' feet. I learned that Professor Mao was actually an accomplished mathematician. Then there was Professor Fan Shou-k'ang who taught the history of Chinese philosophy. His dialect was heavy Che-chiang (Zhe-jiang) Province, which even the Chinese students couldn't understand very well. He was aware of that, so as he lectured, he simultaneously wrote his lecture on the blackboard. I raced to copy it all down, including his t'sao shu (cao-shu; "grass" writing or long hand) which I tried to copy even when I didn't recognize the characters. I have heard that Professor Fan, in his old age, returned to his home on the China mainland to die. I treasure a beautiful scroll of his calligraphy. Then there was Professor Wu Hsiang-hsiang (Wu Xiang-Xiang) who taught Chinese history. He was an accomplished scholar and years ago on the mainland had been among the first to gain access to the imperial records in the Forbidden City. He was a stimulating lecturer and humorous. I'm told that, in later years, he got into trouble with the government, was silenced, and ended up driving a taxi. Studying at "the Harvard of Taiwan" was a privilege and a challenge I'll never forget.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1963-1965 - EAST-WEST CENTER

Two years flew by and again I was faced with "what's next?" The other American student on campus met me one day with information about a new thing called the East-West Center, a U. S. State Department-sponsored program on the campus of the University of Hawaii. (Some said it was the USA's answer to Lumumba University in Moscow that the Communists were using to draw in the African intelligentsia.) There were very generous scholarships for Asian and Pacific graduate students, as well as for Americans desiring to earn graduate degrees relating their discipline to the Asia-Pacific area. The scholarship included tuition, room, board, travel, and pocket money - everything. Tantalizing. I thought I'd apply and just see what happens. What happened was that I was accepted for a two-year Master's degree program in East Asian studies. By this time, Dad was joking that his son would be the only student ever to qualify for Social Security immediately after graduation.



# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1963 - "PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS VS. PUBLIC MORALITY"

Before leaving Taiwan, I sat down to write an article on a subject that had been bothering me. With tremendous admiration for the naturally high skills of Chinese people in the area of interpersonal relationships, I was bewildered by the failure of many of them to practice those skills when in public places. Just a few examples that I observed: people line up nicely waiting for a bus - until it arrives, at which time chaos and elbowing often breaks out; open cheating at exam time - hidden notes for oneself as well as passing notes to others; lending personal bus passes to friends. I submitted my article to the Central Daily News, whose literary supplement was considered the best in Taiwan and, to my surprise, it was accepted for publication. I called it "Jen-ch'ing Wei yu Kung-teh Hsin" ("Ren-ching Wei yu Gung-de Xin" - "Personal Relationships and Public Morality"). I used a pen name, Ti Jen-hua (Di Ren-hua). Never could I have anticipated the response. Many related articles were published in the papers. It was discussed even in the Hong Kong newspapers, where Ruth Yuan guessed that I was the author. In response to the article, students at NTU initiated a movement that spread throughout Taiwan, in both universities and middle schools, called the Tzu-chueh Yun-tung (Dzi-zhueh Yun-dong - the Self-Awareness Movement). This was gratifying to me, at three levels, one, that I could express myself clearly enough to appear in the Central Daily News literary supplement; two, that I could make a little contribution to life in Taiwan and, three, that, after people learned that Ti Jen-hua was a Christian, it became a form of witness for Christ.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## LIFE IN HAWAII

On to Hawaii I went, to the East-West Center. The East Asian Studies foundational course was absolutely fascinating, bringing in professors from various departments (political science, history, sociology, etc.) to apply their discipline to an understanding of East Asia, embracing China, Japan, and Korea. I was able to work some more on my Chinese language as well. Life in Hawaii was, of course, idyllic. I got involved at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, "the penthouse church" at the top of Lanialu, the Lutheran retirement high rise at Waikiki Beach. That included getting to know Pastor Norm Hammer, a dynamic pastor and preacher who was behind the founding of this unique church and retirement home. Little did I know at that time that Mom and Dad would one day live - and die - in that home.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## CHIANG IA-MEI

One of the first people I met in Hawaii was a young lady who flew in the same plane from Tokyo to Honolulu. We were introduced by a mutual friend after coming out of customs. Her name was Chiang Ia-mei (Jiang Ya-mei), her major was horticulture, and she too was on her way to the East-West Center. We had been on the same campus in Taiwan but, given the twelve thousand students on that campus, it's no surprise that we had not met, being in different colleges - although she had heard of me due to my Central Daily News article. We met on the UH campus occasionally, and she always had something friendly or humorous to say. I found out that she was a Christian when she turned up at a Bible study for graduate students sponsored by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and held at Hale Manoa, the men's East-West Center dormitory high rise where I lived. Dumb me, I set her up for the other guy - my Navy friend, Wes Mortensen - on a double date. He fell head over heels for her, and that was the end of my chance to get to know her better! However, nothing came of that, since Ia Mei was not interested in Wes, and Wes was young and changeable. More about this lady later.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1964-1965 - BACK TO TAIWAN - AGAIN

Because I had transferred some credits from National Taiwan University, my Master's courses were completed in a year. For the second year, the East-West Center agreed that I should go back to Taiwan, with the intent to learn the Taiwanese dialect. So back I went to Taipei and the Lutheran Student Hostel and to the study of Taiwanese. Sad to say, I didn't get very far before I contracted hepatitis, and the doctor ordered complete rest. So that it shouldn't be a total loss, I decided to move down south to comparatively quiet Chiayi to live with a Taiwanese medical doctor and his family, where I could build, in an informal way, what little I had learned of Taiwanese and, in exchange, help their daughter learn English conversation. We agreed to alternate English and Taiwanese days. It didn't work out too well and today, though I can understand a lot of Taiwanese, I can't speak it. That was a real loss, especially in the light of the fact that I was to end up with a Taiwanese wife and in-laws!

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1965 - A SORRY EPISODE

Shall I include here something I'm ashamed of? Why not? God has forgiven me. During that year in Taiwan, I met a young lady who was returning from a short-term mission experience in Africa. She was emotionally "on the rebound" due to a romance with a young African man who had been forced by his parents to break up with her. I myself was somewhat on the rebound after meeting and liking a nurse at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Honolulu, who suddenly packed her bags and disappeared from Hawaii without explanation to me or anyone else. I think that helps to explain why this lady from Africa and I did a crazy thing: after two weeks of acquaintance, we got engaged and, to make it worse, we had a public engagement ceremony, according to Chinese custom. Then she had to leave, and we had to depend on correspondence for several months before meeting again. Via our letter-writing, it soon became quite clear that we did not see many things the same - especially in the volatile area of politics, and with a hot presidential election drawing near. It was unthinkable to her that I would vote for Barry Goldwater. We were, in fact, quite incompatible.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1965-1966 - ON TO FLORIDA

I returned to Hawaii to finish up my Master's degree and was delighted to run into Chiang la-Mei who had just returned to Hawaii from a semester's study at Cornell University. Ships passing in the dark. I had arranged for Ruth Yuan to come to Hawaii and from there we flew to the U.S. mainland, then traveled on the ninety-nine dollar, travel-anywhere-you-like-for-ninety-days Greyhound Bus ticket. We traveled all the way up the west coast, then eastward via Yellowstone Park to Chicago for the fateful meeting with my "fiancée." It was a disaster. It turned out that we had almost nothing in common, and the sparks flew. The engagement ring was returned, and I continued on the journey a very ashamed, relieved, and depressed man. Ruth and I traveled on to Niagara Falls, down to New York, on to North Carolina to stay for a few days with Pastor Fred Illick and his family, where I first got acquainted with my little godson, Jim. Finally, it was on to Ormond Beach, Florida, where my retired parents had purchased a beautiful home. That year it was hard living with myself. I lived a double life, by day serving, with a smile, my parents' pastor-less church, by night sunk in depression and feeling that I had been a terrible failure in my witness to the church in Taiwan, and that I probably could not go back. Fred came down and confronted me with the fact that, in my repentant state, God had forgiven me, and if He has forgiven me, who did I think I was not to forgive myself? That absolution and encouragement from my brother began the turnaround, and I began to realize that going back as a known, forgiven sinner might actually be a better witness than going back as an impressive, saintly missionary.

After a few months, I was ready for a Call from the mission board. Upon acceptance of that Call, I was ordained by American Lutheran Church Pastor Otto Schmidt of Orlando, assisted by Pastor Fred Illick. Later I flew to New York to be commissioned for Taiwan at my home church, Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Albans. Among others present to lay on hands were Ted Ellingboe, home from Africa, Dr. Andrew Hsiao, later President of the Hong Kong Lutheran Seminary, and Pastor Ted Maakestad, one of my LBI teachers. In the congregation that day were Pastor J. Edward Vesper, my confirmation pastor, and Lutheran Pastor Arthur Hennig, a classmate at P. S. 33. The crowd was large and, sadly, they had to leave before I could get to talk with them. I hadn't seen either of them for two decades. A few years later, I heard that Arthur had drowned.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## **1966-1969 - BACK TO TAIWAN - YET AGAIN**

On my way back to Taiwan, I flew to Honolulu in order to see friends, then boarded a President Line ship to finish the journey. I was assigned as assistant to Pastor Tung Shang-yung (Dung Shang-yong, English name Stanley, and President of the Taiwan Lutheran Church) at Truth Lutheran Church, right beside the Lutheran Student Center and Hostel where I had so many good memories. My assignment was to focus on adult education (the Bethel Series), upper middle school youth, and occasional preaching, all of which I thoroughly enjoyed, though I admit that I was very disappointed not to have been appointed to administer the Student Center ministry when Clara Jones retired.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1966 - CHIANG IA-MEI - BACK IN TOUCH

One day I was walking past the downtown Chung Shan Auditorium and ran into Liu Ju-sun, a friend from the East-West Center. In the process of catching up on news, he asked me if I knew that Chiang Ia-Mei was back in Taiwan. I did not. She had returned as a lecturer in the Botany Department of our alma mater, NTU. He gave me her address, and one evening I dropped by to say hello. Ia Mei wasn't in, but I got to meet some of her friendly family - actually my future in-laws! When Ia Mei and I finally met again, we found we had two common recreational interests: swimming and eating. So we headed for Fu-lung Beach on the east coast, followed by western dinner at Mei-er-Lian Restaurant on Chung Shan North Road, Taipei. At the beach, we actually spent far more time talking than swimming, and soon we were very relaxed and telling one another all about ourselves. All in all, it was a delightful day, and it was followed up quite regularly with additional times together. I found Ia Mei to be an intelligent, understanding, and witty person to be with, one with whom I felt totally at ease and with whom I could readily share whatever was on my mind. With her, I had no need to put my best foot forward; I could be totally myself and transparent. In a few months, we both sensed that this was developing into more than mere friendship, and the following spring we were engaged. The traditional engagement service was at her home, with her pastor-uncle presiding, and with Dr. Yang, an elderly lady doctor friend, representing my absent family. There was the traditional exchange of Chinese wedding cakes, and dinner at a restaurant afterwards. I had written my parents about our engagement and, for some reason, had never gotten a response, which troubled us to the point that I telegrammed, "Why the silence?" They had not received my letter and were thrilled when they learned the news.



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1967 - THE BIG DAY

The wedding was on June 23, (chosen because my parents were married on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month) at la Mei's Eastgate Presbyterian Church, with both our pastors presiding, and with la Mei's sister, Chao-Mei, serving as Bridesmaid, and Tom Yu being my Best Man. The church was packed with her friends and mine. I'll never forget watching la Mei coming down the aisle, a vision in white, slim and beautiful, so tastefully dressed. I was a little self-conscious of the worst haircut I'd ever had in my life, but with la Mei standing beside me, who was looking at *me*? There was a bustling reception at the Lutheran Student Center, with missionaries Lenorah Erickson, Mrs. Herman Bly, and Clara Jones doing a beautiful job as hostesses. Ruth Yuan had come all the way from Hong Kong. And most wonderful of all, Mom and Dad had flown in from Florida. Needless to say, they were thrilled to get acquainted with their new daughter-in-law. Unbeknown to us, la Mei's father couldn't be satisfied with a mere reception, and after we had left for our honeymoon, he put on two full-blown wedding feasts that he felt he owed family and friends, one up north and one down south, with the bride and groom in absentia! la Mei's parents were, of course, now my "Baba" and "Mama" and they were wonderful to me - even though it wasn't easy at the very beginning for Baba to accept a foreign son-in-law (and I had a hard time learning to call him "Baba"). la Mei's entire clan, though some were initially opposed, followed clan head A-kung's (la Mei's maternal grand-father) unconditional acceptance of me ("So long as he's a true believer," he said). They all could not have been more welcoming and warm. (Chris, too, when he came along, was received with great love by all.) And, of course, my own parents and relatives unconditionally loved and received la Mei.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## HONEYMOON

In order for la Mei to be able to exit Taiwan as my wife (for our honeymoon), we had had to have a civil marriage ceremony a couple of months earlier, but we didn't count it as "the real thing," and I don't even remember the date. After the wedding reception, we left for the airport and arrived in Hong Kong in the dark, picked up by a limousine, and delivered to the venerable old, but pleasantly situated, Repulse Bay Hotel on the ocean-side of Victoria Island. Mom and Dad flew into Hong Kong also, and we saw them a few times. On Sunday, I took la Mei and my parents to Truth Lutheran Church, where I had interned a decade earlier. They now had an awesome new sanctuary seating about a thousand, as contrasted with a mere apartment flat when I interned there. After several days there, we were off to Hawaii for the bulk of our honeymoon. Two Hawaiian friends from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, who worked at the 5-star Halekalanani Hotel, graciously gifted us with an outrageously expensive room there for two nights, with a lanai directly overlooking all of Waikiki Beach. Then we moved to an affordable hotel two blocks from the ocean. I developed a terrible impacted tooth, was referred by Pastor Hammer's wife, Virgie, to the dentist she once worked for, and he was a butcher. My jaw swelled up like a football and I was delirious for a couple of days - poor new wife! I couldn't open my mouth to eat and could only suck some nourishment through a straw, and that was still the case when we flew to Hilo on the Big Island and stayed at the Plumeria Motel. However, it didn't kill our marital bliss and it was a beautiful honeymoon.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## OKINAWA INCIDENT

The problems weren't over, however. We were scheduled on the way home to Taiwan for a stopover in Okinawa, where Ia Mei's beloved A-ma (grandmother) and Uncle Michael (Mama's little brother and a doctor to the American military) and his family were all anxiously awaiting us. The travel agent had assumed that Ia Mei, like me, had an American passport and hence didn't need a visa. When we arrived in Okinawa, we discovered that, because she was traveling on a Republic of China passport, she wasn't allowed to disembark without a visa, and would have to fly on immediately to Taiwan. I said, in that case I would leave with her, only to be told that I could *not* leave because someone else had my seat to Taiwan! Ia Mei's swashbuckling uncle wanted Ia Mei to refuse to get back on the plane, which would result in her arrest. He said he would have her out of jail in no time. Somehow I couldn't see my bride sitting in prison, and she and I sadly agreed that she would have to go. So I walked tearful Ia Mei out on the tarmac to the plane, to the sound of jeers from people sending others off, because we had held up the plane for over an hour, trying to reason with the immigration authorities. She flew off and I returned with Michael to a house-full of strangers and to a feast that no one felt like eating. Poor A-ma stood by weeping for her favorite grandchild whom she hadn't gotten to see. Ia Mei returned that day to her parents' apartment and shocked her mother when she opened the door and saw Ia Mei standing there forlorn and alone. Mama cried out, "Where's Don?" I managed to catch a plane the next day, and we moved into our "love nest" which was an old Japanese-style house. Ia Mei resumed her teaching responsibilities at NTU and I returned to my ministry at Truth Lutheran Church. Ia Mei joined me in the youth work, and was a great asset, especially in relating to the girls. We loved those kids. Each Wednesday evening, they packed our living room, most sitting on the floor, for Bible study and informal sharing time where they could bring up any subject they wanted to discuss - a new kind of freedom for them, and they loved it. In later years we learned that many of them are still faithful to their Lord.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1968 - IA MEI BARON, U.S. CITIZEN

Just one year later, Ia Mei, being wife of an American on overseas assignment, was qualified to become an American citizen. We wanted her to have an American passport in case one day, for whatever reason, we might need to leave Taiwan together quickly. We planned to vacation in Guam, where the only U.S. Federal Court in Asia is located, and one morning she was duly sworn in as a citizen, along with a large number of people from many ethnic backgrounds. We spent part of our vacation up north on little Saipan, site of one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the war with Japan. There I gave Ia Mei her first driving lesson, on a very wide, deserted Japanese airstrip, with nothing to run into. While we were there, the northern half of Saipan was opened to the public for the first time since the war. There had been so much live ammunition left there, that it had not been safe. We got to see the cave that served as Japanese headquarters and the sad Banzai Cliff, where many Japanese civilians (sugar plantation workers), taught that the Americans would abuse them, threw their children to their deaths and then followed. At the Lutheran church on Guam we met the chaplain who had been on a nearby ship offshore witnessing that tragedy.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## RE-ENTRY TROUBLES

Visa trouble again. We wanted la Mei to re-enter Taiwan using her new American passport. We flew to Manila to apply for a visa at the ROC consulate, but they refused to issue one, saying that she must use her Chinese passport to re-enter Taiwan. This would have defeated our very purpose for her becoming a US citizen, so la Mei flew on to Hong Kong to stay with Ruth Yuan while I flew back to Taiwan to try to straighten things out. It took a few weeks and a lot of effort at the Foreign Ministry, including a little "gift-giving" and some "la kuan-hsi" ("la guan-xi" - "string-pulling") but finally la Mei could fly to Manila for her visa and then come home.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1969 - CHURCH-MISSION TENSIONS

Things were not going well with church-mission relationships. At the same time, I was reading the manuscript of a book being written by friend and Lutheran missionary Allen Swanson, about the problems that churches planted by paternalistic missions have, as contrasted with indigenous Christian movements, and this greatly increased my concerns. A not unrelated thorn in my side was that each month I was required to bring Communion to the people in a suburban chapel, people whom I did not know personally and hence I could not bring Communion to them with real pastoral care and oversight. At the same time, they had their own full-time "evangelist" or "chiao-shih" (jiao-shi - an unordained seminary graduate) who was really their pastor in everything but name and thus far more qualified than I to responsibly administer the Sacraments to them. I balked against being what I called a "Communion-dispensing machine," and finally, on principle, refused to do it. Unhappy Pastor Tung complained about me to my friend, Pastor David Chao, who called me on the carpet and chewed me out mercilessly. It seemed like no one understood. In the context of the entire church-mission tension, I began to think about returning home - as were, I found out later, several other young missionaries. I finally submitted my resignation to the mission board and to the Taiwan Lutheran Church, pleading an additional problem, namely, that as an only child I felt responsible for my mother who was seriously ailing with physical problems that her doctor said would seriously shorten her life. At the time, it seemed to me best for us foreigners to get out of the way of the Chinese leadership and let the Taiwan Lutheran Church discover itself as Christ's Church in that place, entrusted by God with the mission to Taiwan. That is exactly what happened over ensuing years, and today the Taiwan Lutheran Church is fully a self-supporting, self-propagating, self-governing church - and self-respecting to boot. (The "3-Self" movement, though exploited by the Communist government on the China mainland, was/is a very legitimate movement.)

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1969 - CHRISTOPHER ALBERT BARON

By this time, our family had a new arrival, Christopher Albert. La Mei and I had "practiced" for weeks on end, aiming at a natural birth with me present in the delivery room. All that was in vain when, on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1969, it was discovered that a caesarian delivery would be necessary and, in keeping with practice at that time, I was excluded from the delivery room. Chris was the only kid in the hospital nursery who didn't have a full head of thick, black hair, so we know we took the right one home. He was baptized into Christ at one month, at Truth Lutheran Church, by Pastor Tung. Tom Yu was his godfather; Fred Illick was also godfather, though not present. At that time, we decided to fly up to Okinawa so that A-ma could see her great-grandson. It was a beautiful reunion for A-ma and La Mei, and it was moving to watch Great-grandma and baby Chris bonding. That bonding was important, for about four years later, A-ma came to Hawaii and spent a year in our home.

We chose to travel home to the U.S. by ship and found a Chinese passenger-freight ship with a doctor on board. We embarked for the journey across the Pacific, through the Panama Canal, up to New York, and then down to Charleston where Dad would pick us up. We stopped in San Pedro where our good East-West Center friend, Helen Lee, came to see us with her own little baby for a brief reunion. This was La Mei's first, my second, trip through the fascinating Panama Canal. Then on to wintry New York City, where Bill and Grace Schneck were the very first relatives on my side to see Chris. We stayed at their home in Queens Village. Bill Struve, my godfather, and wife Ethel, both long-time friends of Mom and Dad, also got to see Chris before his grandparents did. We also drove out on Long Island to visit Grand-aunt Elizabeth Glaudel, my paternal grand-mother's sister, and she was thrilled to see her Great-grand-nephew. We sailed on to Charleston, where Dad was waiting with the car he had driven up from Florida and also with a truck he had hired locally to carry our household belongings. Dad, La Mei, and Chris rode in the comfort of the car; I became the first truck-driver in the Baron clan. Grandma was waiting anxiously back in Ormond Beach to hold her grandson, and was of course thrilled to see him. By the time we disembarked from the ship, I think Chris had spent more of his life at sea than on land!

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1969-1972 - MARGATE, FLORIDA

While still in Taiwan, I had received a Letter of Call to Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Margate, Florida, which would at least locate us in the same state as Mom and Dad, though still several hours' drive away from one another. That problem was solved when they moved to Deerfield Beach, next to Margate. They loved baby-sitting Chris, and they were his main source for learning English (along with "Sesame Street"), because Ia Mei and I had agreed that it would be of great value to Chris to grow up bi-lingual. Our rule was that, when alone, we would speak nothing but Chinese with Chris and would require him to reply to us in Chinese. When he reached preschool age and, influenced by his little classmates, began to prefer English, we fined him a dime from his newly-introduced one-dollar weekly allowance every time he spoke English to us. We're glad we did that; so is Chris - now.

Prince of Peace Church had a high proportion of retirees, reflecting the community of Margate. I had to learn the hard way that senior citizens are, on the whole, not looking for change but for continuity and tradition. I'll never forget the Sunday I used a more contemporary form of the liturgy, and old Mr. Johnson stormed past me at the door, muttering, "Next Sunday I'm going to a *Lutheran* church!" That didn't fit my passions very well, and at the end of three rather frustrating years, I felt that we should move on. I was even having doubts about being in the pastoral ministry. I decided to take a stab, with no preparation, at the Foreign Service exam, and missed being among the allotment of people they wanted by two points. Then, with President Nixon's opening up of China, I tried offering my Chinese skills to some companies that I thought would be investing there, but nothing came of that either. The Lord had other plans and saw to it that all other doors stayed shut.



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## A TRIP TO REMEMBER

I must inject here an experience that we can laugh at now, but which was no laughing matter at the time. We were as poor as church mice at Prince of Peace Church. Eating at Burger King was the usual day-off treat. Vacations had to be low cost. That need, and my desire to "initiate" la Mei into camping, which she loathed but had never really braved, led to our borrowing an old tent-trailer (the kind that is opened up and becomes a tent with two beds) from an elderly couple at church. Our destination: Houston, Texas, where la Mei's sister and family were living while her husband did graduate studies at Rice University. It took a full day to drive up to Florida's pan-handle where we found a camp not far from Pensacola. Wouldn't you know, it was raining when we arrived and started to put up the tent, which we had never before handled. One-year-old Chris refused to stay in the car while we figured out the intricacies of tenting, and made such a screaming fuss that we finally had to set him up in his high chair - in the rain - which didn't make for a happy baby either. What a mess. The next day, somewhere between Florida and New Orleans, we heard a *crack!* Investigation showed that the trailer axel had broken - big expense Number One. Moving on to the outskirts of New Orleans, we found a trailer camp to spend the night. It was our anniversary. We inquired at the office about a possible baby sitter, and they referred us to a family staying there long-term right next to our trailer. They were willing to keep an eye on the trailer and come out and check occasionally, and that seemed safe enough in those days. After Chris fell asleep, we drove into cuisine-famous New Orleans for dinner to celebrate. I've totally forgotten where and what we ate because of what followed. When we returned to the camp, we found the door of the tent left wide open and inside was Chris, still asleep, but with a swarm of mosquitoes having a meal on his little body. We felt so guilty! And tomorrow we were going to show off our mosquito-bitten baby to sister Ching-mei and family who had never seen him before!

After a few days with them, we headed toward the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina for more camping. Somewhere on this trip, not being experienced at backing up with a trailer, I jack-knifed and bent the "tongue" of the trailer out of shape. Second major expense. We had barely made it up into the Smokies than I got sick. We found a doctor and he pronounced me ill with the shingles and recommended that we return home immediately. My temperature was so high I had to ask la Mei to drive. (She had only received her driver's license just before leaving on that trip.) That meant driving our car and trailer down hairpin turns! But she did a good job. We had just driven onto the very first straightaway in the entire descent when we heard a huge *pow!* It was a blow-out. We shuddered to think what might have happened if we were still up there on those curves! We lifted up our eyes and, behold, across the street was the only gas station that we had seen all the way down. We praised our faithful God. The tire was soon repaired and we continued on our way southward toward home. Next problem: As we traveled southward through Georgia, it became quite clear that we would run out of money before making it back to Margate. What to do? We had no credit cards and no one would accept an out-of-state check from strangers. I noticed road signs pointing westward toward Stone Mountain and somehow remembered that we had a sister Luth-eran congregation there. So, on the chance that we might find the pastor and that he

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

might endorse our check, we turned westward, hoping our gasoline would last. It did, and the pastor was in, and, yes, he'd take us to his bank and endorse our check. And so ended a journey we'll never forget. Do you wonder why la Mei still hates camping?

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1972 - SEATTLE LUTHERAN BIBLE INSTITUTE

One day I said to la Mei, "There's one place I know I'd have a fulfilling ministry. That's teaching at one of the Lutheran Bible Institutes." But that could only be a pipe dream; I knew no one at these schools. Some weeks later, however, there in the mailbox lay a letter from the Seattle Lutheran Bible Institute. It was from President Conrad Lund and he asked if I was open to the possibility of a Call to the faculty, with assignment to opening an extension program in, of all places, Hawaii! We were astounded, but immediately indicated our interest. It seems that Pastor Hammer and parish worker Millie Christopherson had been corresponding with Seattle about the need for a Bible school in Hawaii, and probably had dropped my name. I was flown to Seattle for inter-views with the faculty and, back in Florida, soon had a Letter of Call in the mailbox. We took about eight days to drive the long distance across the continent, from the south-eastern to the northwestern extremes, with a little guy less than three years old on the crib mattress that was fitted over the back seat of the car. The welcome in Seattle couldn't have been warmer and we settled in for a month or so, proceeding to Hawaii at the end of the annual Deeper Life Festival that brought hundreds of LBI supporters together and gave us rich opportunity to get acquainted. We were sent out with prayer and the laying on of hands.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1972 - TO HAWAII - AGAIN

For the first few months, we lived in a room in Pastor and Mrs. Hammer's apartment on the 11<sup>th</sup> floor of Laniolu at Waikiki Beach. We were staggered by the cost of living, especially rentals and real estate, but finally accepted the reality that what would buy a large and beautiful home in Florida would buy only a small, 900 square foot condo-minium apartment in Hawaii. There were no amenities, not a blade of grass around the ground floor, no place for children to play, just a dangerous driveway. The building was full of noisy "swinger" types who never went to bed and played their music LOUD, and there was an apartment-full of female impersonators directly above us who were noisily getting dressed to go to "work" when we were trying to get to sleep. As Chris grew active, it was obvious that we couldn't stay there. We began another search and the price for a decent home of any kind was horrendous. With the help of Roberta and Fred Chang (Roberta and Ia Mei were acquainted from First Presbyterian Church, where Roberta had soloed and Ia Mei had sung in the choir), both qualified real estate agents, we found Haleloa II, a garden condominium complex consisting of six 3-storey buildings, each with six apartments. It was ideal, with a large living room, three bedrooms, newly built - but the price was beyond us. They counseled us to wait. Sure enough, several months later, in 1976, the prices came down substantially and we just barely squeaked by in qualifying for a mortgage loan. The apartment is located up quiet Kuliouou Valley in East Oahu, a half mile from the ocean. That home has been our refuge now for over thirty years, and we're satisfied to spend the rest of our lives there.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1972-1989 - THE BIBLE INSTITUTE OF HAWAII

I absolutely loved my work with what came to be known as Bible Institute of Hawaii. At the beginning, I was the only full-time teacher, and each quarter I had to develop all new Bible courses, mostly Bible book studies. Three other favorite courses I taught were 1) "Bible Overview," based on the Bethel Bible Series approach, but with even greater emphasis on the Abrahamic Covenant as the scaffolding of the entire Bible. 2) "Christ or Absurdity," which made use of Francis Schaeffer's video series, "How Should We Then Live?" supplemented with introductory lectures on the philosophers and philosophies referred to by Schaeffer, with critiques thereof. This course, I think, effectively helped people see how we've gotten where we are today in the Western world which, in turn, affects the entire global village. 3) "Keys to Bible Study" which introduced the student to the inductive (or "discovery") method of Bible study.

There were no full-time students. All were busy working people or homemakers and a few retirees - all of them busy in some form of volunteer ministry in their churches. We numbered about fifty students each quarter to begin with, but in later years, under successor directors, that grew to as many as 200. I was out every Sunday doing Bible study series at churches all over Oahu, my family following me wherever I went. Various kinds of weekend seminars were organized as well. We eventually developed two study "tracks" by which a student could earn a certificate in lay ministry or in Bible knowledge. We added an administrative secretary, Canadian Jean West, who lifted a great burden off my shoulders. The Seattle school paid my salary; other expenses were met by local giving, and a small amount came in from the very low course registration fees. Classes were held in many different church facilities, seeking to bring courses to where people lived, all over the island, and occasionally to Maui as well. It was deeply fulfilling to me to be "equipping the saints for ministry" and totally immersed in teaching Bible. There were two special outreaches to the Pacific islands. One of these took me to the island of Kwajalein to do a Bible course mainly for Americans, but I also was able to make contacts with churches in the other Marshall Islands. The other took me twice to American Samoa to offer Bible courses. During my last few years with BIH, I received training as a Church Growth Associate under Dr. Win Arn, father of American "church growth," and I brought consultation services to a number of Hawaii churches. (I wouldn't want to defend everything that is called "church growth." Suffice it to say that church growth principles, as originally understood, were simply common-sense aware-ness and removal of non-essential church habits and practices that are obstacles to pre-Christians hearing the saving Gospel message. Our churches are full of such obstacles, though we ordinarily are not conscious of them.)

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1974 - CHINESE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HONOLULU

We had only been in Hawaii a couple of years when I was very surprised to read in the newspaper that there were as many as ten thousand Mandarin-speaking people on Oahu. I knew that there was no Mandarin-speaking church on the island, and I couldn't get the matter out of my mind. I shared the concern with Pastor Hammer, who encouraged me to look into possibilities. I thought of Ruth Yuan in Hong Kong, and wondered if we could bring her over to help initiate a Mandarin outreach. She was available. Laniolu, the Lutheran Retirement Home, would give her room and board. We initiated immigration for her and, being sponsored for ministry by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, she did not have to await a place in the immigration quota. We could meet in the spacious Laniolu lounge on Sunday afternoons. Ruth arrived, and began to make contacts with Chinese people, inviting them for the first worship service. Against the background of her contact work and of further word of mouth, Ruth and I debated that first Sunday about how many chairs to set up. I said twenty; she insisted on forty. The turnout was *seventy*, and the church, first known simply as "Kuo-yu Li-pai T'ang" ("Gwo-yu Li-bai Tang" - "The Mandarin Church") was off to a good start. After about a year of pastoring this growing congregation, I was coming under pressure from Seattle LBI about dividing my time like that. This, and a misunderstanding between Ruth and me, finally led to my decision to step down. I was succeeded by Pastor David Chao and he, in turn, by Pastor Simon Lee from the Li-Hsien Hui (founded by the Rhenish Mission) in Hong Kong, and a graduate of Luther Seminary. Under Pastor Lee's leadership, the church, now known as the Chinese Lutheran Church of Honolulu, has gone on to number in the hundreds, with worship in Mandarin, Cantonese, and English, with two pastors, and with an awesome new three-story sanctuary on Liliha Street, right in the middle of a community full of Chinese (and just two blocks from Good Shepherd Lutheran Church - more on that church later), and with an ongoing mission outreach to China and to Chinese in Switzerland. Some 600 adults from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the China mainland, along with their children of course, have been baptized into Christ under Pastor Lee's ministry, though the majority have moved on to other places.

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## **TO ISRAEL AND CHINA**

As part of our LBI work, Ia Mei and I had the privilege of organizing and leading two tour groups, one to Israel and one to China. To see Israel with our own eyes in 1978, and to walk where Jesus walked, was unforgettable and gave us a fresh love for the Bible and for the Word-made-flesh who dwelt among us and performed His saving acts in the land of Israel, all out of love for us. That journey also included stops at Ephesus, Pat-mos, Athens, and Corinth. The journey to China in 1983 was also unforgettable, as we witnessed a China that was just beginning to emerge from its dark ages under Mao, and as we got to worship in two newly re-opened churches in Xian and Beijing, overflowing with crowds coming to hear the Word.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1977 & 1978 - DAD AND MOM'S DEPARTURES

After we arrived in Hawaii and got settled down, we soon talked - it didn't take much talking! - Mom and Dad into moving to Hawaii to be near us. They lived in an apartment in Laniolu where life was pleasant, and they got to baby-sit their grandson often. Mom was in a wheelchair with diabetes and hypertension, but got around quite a bit with Dad's help and a station wagon. We invariably had Sunday dinner together after church, often at the old Ranch House in Aina Haina, compliments of Mom and Dad. It was wonderful having them with us, though I was terribly busy and often felt guilty about not spending much more time with them. They had been with us about four years when one morning Ruth Yuan called me at home and said breathlessly in Mandarin something that just wouldn't register: "Nide Fuchin gwo-chyule." I'll never forget those exact, awful words. I couldn't believe my ears. "Your father has passed away." I dropped everything and numbly raced into town where I was directed to the Laniolu lounge and found my father's body lying on the floor. I remember kneeling down and hugging him and crying, "Dad!"

That very morning - something very unusual - Mom had stood up and danced a few steps with Dad to the sound of a familiar old song playing on the radio. As was his habit, Dad kissed Mom and went down to the lounge for daily pre-breakfast devotions with about a dozen people, after which he would return to get Mom for breakfast. They closed with prayer and, when finished, everyone raised their heads - except for Dad. A lady next to him nudged him and said, "Mr. Baron?" But he was gone. Many have said, "What a beautiful way to go." God had seen to it that, the night before, Mom and Dad came to our home for dinner, and la Mei had prepared some of his favorite food. Chris, eight years old, had gone to bed at his usual early hour, but as Mom and Dad were leaving, he woke up - something he absolutely *never* did - and ran out to hug "Gramma-Grampa" once more and say goodbye. Dad's death was a terrible shock to Mom, who had always expected to go first. The Laniolu people made an awful mistake by immediately putting Mom on a tranquilizer that her doctor had given them permission to use "as needed." The result was that Mom really never got to mourn and to fully experience what was going on, and later sank into deep depression that she never really recovered from. Partly due to that, I'm sure, she went downhill physically and, 11 months after Dad, she passed away in her sleep. After Dad's death, she had wanted to move in with us in our apartment, but there was no way that la Mei could have cared for heavy Mom, with the danger of falls and with steps to climb - along with the full-time job of bringing up a young boy. Mom and Dad's ashes are in the columbarium of Oahu Cemetery, where one day la Mei's and my ashes will also be placed, to await the resurrection of the body and to meet our returning Savior.



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1982 - CRISIS

The BIH crisis came in its tenth year when a new president came to Seattle LBI and he did not favor supporting the extension program. Somehow during the previous year la Mei and I had sensed this coming and had asked President Connie Lund for permission to raise my support "by faith," with Seattle lessening its support and giving it as direct subsidy to the school. That way, come what may, we thought we would be better prepared for any decisions coming out of far-away Seattle. Connie, a real man of faith, approved, and my full support came in very quickly from friends of BIH. About two years later, the blow came under the new president, Jack Eichhorst. BIH was to close and I was to return to Seattle to teach. But the local BIH board rejected that and determined to go it alone.

It was a very traumatic thing for me that BIH, after over ten years of hard work, was cut off. Jack Eichhorst came to Seattle LBI with a very different spirit from the LBI movement. He was openly critical of LBI's "pietism," and his extreme insecurity caused him to drive away some good people, both faculty and staff. Others survived by keeping silent. The character and spirit of the school changed significantly. Trygve Skarsten, a good man, succeeded him, but the harm had been done. It was not long before Seattle LBI lost its character as a Bible institute and as an heir to the great Scandinavian Lutheran heritage of sound orthodoxy and warm piety. My own son, Chris, who spent a year there, was witness to this tragedy. Spiritual life on the campus deteriorated and liberalism crept into the classes.

The Seattle subsidy was no more, but that very month local giving increased to the point that it wasn't missed. At the same time, we took a bold step of faith and began a search for a second faculty member. Soon Lutheran Pastor Bill Moberly from Minnesota had joined us. Not long after, a person much loved in Hawaii who had been Bible Study Secretary, working out of London, for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) decided to move back home and was looking for a work that she could be a part of. Ada Lum is a champion of inductive Bible study and does it magnificently. I was extremely excited that she was willing to join us, bringing her support with her. Later, when Bill Moberly left due to lack of support, we sought out and called Dr. Bob Neff, former Lutheran missionary in Singapore with a doctorate from Concordia Seminary, and he and his wife, Eivor, moved to Hawaii to join us. As it turned out, being cut off from the Seattle mother school was a great blessing, under God, for advance at BIH. On the other hand, it was a great disappointment to me, because BIH began to lose its Lutheran moorings.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

Brace yourself for the Lutheran “alphabet soup.” As we moved on in the 1980's, it became increasingly clear to me that The American Lutheran Church (a merger in the late 50's of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the old ALC, and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church), to which we belonged at that time, was moving further and further to the left theologically, and I was feeling less and less at home with what was being tolerated and taught within that church body, including at my alma mater, Luther Seminary. Then came the news that there was to be a merger of the ALC and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA dominated by the former United Lutheran Church in America - LCA), the latter being the liberal wing of Lutheranism that I had left as a senior high student. I was not prepared to be a part of that merger, the union documents of which were worded so as to admit the most radical theological leanings within the LCA. I applied for a move to Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS), which was facilitated by making use of the ALC/LCMS "altar and pulpit" agreement - which allowed for inter-Communion and exchange of pastors - the protocol for which had not yet been cancelled even though the actual agreement had been terminated at the previous LCMS convention. I was "grandfathered in," via that protocol, as Dr. Sauer, LCMS vice president, called it. I was hated by a few in Hawaii, but a warm welcome was extended by the LCMS' California-Nevada-Hawaii District President, Dr. Orv Oswald. I was given a "status Call" by Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, since Bible Institute of Hawaii was not a recognized ministry of LCMS and therefore didn't provide a basis for me to be placed on their clergy roster. I have never regretted the move, and have identified with the strong movement within LCMS for evangelism and missions.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1989-2001 - GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH

After seventeen years at BIH, I felt that I had contributed what I was able to. I found myself drawn back to parish ministry, where I might use sound church growth principles and other skills accumulated over the years to build up a congregation. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, a mile from downtown Honolulu, had been a languishing congregation as long as we had known it, and I often wondered why. It had adequate facilities, had a thriving preschool, was near bus line and freeway, and was located in the midst of a highly un-churched neighborhood. When Pastor Herb Schaan resigned, I was asked to take services for a month, which I did with the condition that we also meet for Bible study before Worship. I led the ten or twelve members into an investigation of the first six chapters of Acts, asking them to observe: What was the goal of that first congregation in Jerusalem? What was that church's life like? They discovered that the Jerusalem church had a burning mission to reach the lost, and its life-style was determined by that goal. Jean Kam exclaimed one Sunday: "I feel *guilty!* Why, we wanted to keep these doors open so that we'd have a place to be buried from." My month was soon up and I left. But I couldn't forget Good Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd people couldn't forget what they had seen in the Book of Acts. One day I was driving along the H-1 Freeway, not far from Good Shepherd Church, when a voice within me said clearly, "Go to Good Shepherd." I laughed. I contrasted all the people I was reaching through BIH with the small handful of people at Good Shepherd.

However, I couldn't shake that inner voice, and I dropped a line to the District office just to raise the subject of a Call. They had been seriously thinking about cutting out the District subsidy to the church, which would have effectively resulted in the closing of its doors. The District was willing to have Good Shepherd call me with the understanding that if there was no significant change within three years, that would be the end. We thought and prayed about such a Call for some time. It would involve a substantial cut in income for us - and Chris was at expensive Duke University! Ia Mei was at peace about it before I was, but ultimately she and I were of one mind to accept the Call. I notified the BIH Board of my resignation and some time later was duly installed as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. A beautiful rainbow glowed high in the sky as we came out of the church that Sunday afternoon, a symbol of God's commitment not to destroy. He would keep His promise and build His Church.

By this time, I had accumulated a good deal of pastoral experience, had done a lot of reading and observing, and had built up in my heart and mind a fairly clear picture of what I would consider a local congregation pleasing to the heart of God. As a pastor, I would take my cue from Ephesians 4:11-12: "It was He who gave some to be...pastors and teachers, *to equip the saints for ministry*, so that the Body of Christ may be built up..." My ministry would be to equip ministers. The inward life of the congregation would include emphasis on Bible study, small groups, and prayer - the means for equipping "the saints." Preaching would not be topical but expository, mainly working through entire Bible books, as Luther recommended. All of the above would be for the carrying out of the congregation's mission, which would involve serious emphasis on both evangelism locally and missions globally. In my 58 year-

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

old heart, I saw this as the climax of my entire ministry, collecting together all that went before. Bible study, evangelism, and missions - thanks, Carl Johansson.

# Memoirs

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Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## IMMEDIATE CHANGES

I immediately changed the worship style from formal liturgy to laid-back, informal worship that fits Hawaii so much better, mainly using contemporary praise songs, but also singing familiar hymns with the organ. This style would not only be helpful to our members, but would especially help our many unchurched visitors to more readily give a hearing to the Christian message. On the first Sunday I led worship, I placed a long paper banner across the chancel steps that read, "We've never done it this way before." I pointed out to the congregation that those words are the infamous "Seven Last Words of the Church." They got the point. I then crumpled the banner up and had one of our youth take it outside, place it in the garbage can, and noisily slam on the metal cover for all to hear! God blessed us with the gracious "loan" of a guitarist, Barry Matsumoto, from his home church for six months, giving us time to develop a worship team. By that time, Peter Lee, a good guitarist, had appeared on the scene, and a worship team began to develop with gradual additions of guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums. Peter, Marv Dryden (bass), and Chuck Gooch (drums) have been the "old dependables" to this day. I wrote a philosophy of worship for the team to study, incorporating biblical, Lutheran insights and values as guides as we pioneered contemporary Lutheran worship. Our worship incorporated several major liturgical parts, though not necessarily using the traditional words. We had "Celebration of Forgiveness" (Confession and Absolution); "Celebration of Faith" (a creedal statement that included the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed or Bible passages that were affirmations of faith, e.g. Colossians 1:15-20); "The Commissioning" (a benediction); all of this built on the overall structure of the traditional liturgy. Above all, what made our worship "Lutheran" was the faithful preached Word and biblical administration of the Sacraments. I sought to lead our worship in such a way that, while "contemporary" and laid back in spirit, it was also dignified and orderly and worthy of our God.

Although we got out 40 or more people to Sunday morning Bible study, which was mostly Bible book studies plus some theological topics, I was convinced that the only way to ground 100% of my people in meaty, theology-rich Bible exposition was to take Luther's advice and preach through Bible books during worship - and that these sermons cannot consist merely of a talk by the pastor using his pre-digested gleanings from the text for the day, no matter how pithy, that the sermon has to be preached with everyone's Bible open, involving them mentally in discovery of the message and theology of a given text, so that they go away feeling more competent to study the Bible on their own. All this, without making it into a dry lecture, but making maximum use of the homiletical arts that stimulate, illustrate, apply to life, and make a message memorable. Tough assignment; sometimes I succeeded, sometimes not. My "laboratory" was the Gospel according to Matthew and I preached chronologically thru that book for a full two years. I'm glad I did that, as well as preach through Philipians, Ephesians, and other books.

Very early on, the unhappy organist resigned. That was OK. The preschool director walked out too. We had made it clear that our goal would be that all the teachers in our Christian preschool would ultimately be committed Christians. (What a novel idea!) I had interviewed all eight teachers and discovered that at least four of them didn't have the foggiest notion about

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

the Christian faith. The Director, in interviewing prospective teachers, had merely asked them if they believed in God. If they said yes, she assumed they were Christians! Without any direct pressure from us, at the end of the first year, they all voluntarily resigned. When it was announced that we needed a preschool director, Lisa Scherping "just happened" to be visiting our church that Sunday. A well-trained and experienced First Grade teacher at Our Redeemer Lutheran School, she had dreamt since her 'teen years, when she had helped out at Good Shepherd Preschool, of being preschool director at Good Shepherd. We called her immediately. As our Pre-school Director, Lisa had a passion for her children to know Jesus. God was good. Within a year, we had a preschool director and staff made up completely of committed Christians, and it wasn't long before all the teachers were members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, which I considered important if we were to draw preschool families to Christ and to the Good Shepherd ohana. When, after some years, Lisa stepped down, she had introduced many improvements, and had also mentored an excellent successor, Karen Louie who, among other strengths, is Chinese and speaks the Cantonese dialect spoken by half of our preschool families, a great asset for communication with those parents, many of whom speak little English.

By God's grace, in less than a year's time we were thrilled to be able to notify the District that we didn't need their subsidy any more; we beat the three-year deadline by two years!

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## THE CELL CHURCH

Whether by word of mouth or whatever, people began coming in until, by the end of the first year, we had around 100 at worship where once there had been only a dozen. That number continued to grow until we had to go to two services each Sunday. There were a few who came because they knew of me through BIH, but that number was quite small. People were bringing people. I've always had a passion for small groups, and we began a Wednesday evening group called T.U.F. ("Tuned-Up Faith" - thanks to Pastor Kirk Militzer who coined the name as youth worker at Trinity Lutheran Church of Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis, Carl Johansson's former parish). Pretty soon TUF had grown too big, and we launched about ten Home Fellowships. This was not well-sustained, however, largely because I wasn't yet akamai (Hawaiian for "smart") on cell groups and the cell church. But by this time, I had stumbled across Ralph Neighbour, Jr., and his book, Where Do We Go From Here? It was a ground-breaking book on the cell church movement. It was new to me, but fit in perfectly with what I already had learned about small groups, beginning with Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life Together. However, this new concept was not a church *with* cells, but a church *of* cells, where - beyond Word and Sacrament worship as the church's matrix - every other dimension of church life was to happen in the cells. These churches were to be "two-winged" churches: Cell and Celebration - the latter being when all the cells are gathered to worship and to be equipped through Word and Sacraments. The real excitement came from attending a cell church conference led by Dr. Bill Beckham and from reading his book, The Second Reformation. While Neighbour was pessimistic about a traditional "program church" ever being able to transition to cell church, Beck-ham was optimistic and developed transition methodology,. This was followed up by a visit by our new Director of Outreach, Scott Euken, and me to a church in Modesto, California, that had effectively transitioned from "program church" to cell church and found that it had closed "the back door" through which they had been losing almost as many people as were coming in "the front door." Scott and I came home convinced, and I began the first "pilot cell," using Bill Beckham's suggested process for creating a kind of "DNA" in that first cell that, through cell multiplication, could be passed on to all successive cells.

While most small groups very naturally tend to "turn in on themselves" (and that, by the way, is one of Luther's definitions of sin: curvatus in se), the cell, from the word go, intentionally focuses outward in a highly disciplined way, and never loses its mission to win the lost as they create sub-groups of many kinds that connect lost people with Christians through service, common interest, Alpha Course, etc. At its height, the cell group movement at Good Shepherd probably involved 75% or more of the membership. We sought to build into each cell group the following ingredients, summarized by the acrostic JEALÉ:

J = Jesus in our midst. Seriously living our cell and private lives with Him at the center, and practicing His Presence in praise, conversational prayer, etc.

E = Equip. Every Christian needs to be equipped to walk with the Lord and to be a servant to others. This involves the use of discipleship materials such as Neighbours' "Beginning the

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

Journey," and "Arrival Kit," dealing with practical sanctification issues and skills for ministry to others.

A = Accountability. There is vertical accountability from cell member to cell servant to cluster leader to pastor. There is also horizontal accountability where each person partners with another person to meet weekly, discuss the equipping material, pray for one another, etc.

L = Leadership. In-service training is the key. Each cell, in addition to the cell servant or cell servant couple, has an intern cell servant or couple and two apprentice individuals or couples, readying them for leadership of new cells as the present ones multiply.

E = Evangelism. No meeting is without time to plan for and pray for individual friends and associates that cell members long to draw to Christ.

To me personally, the development of the cell church model was the most exciting and fulfilling thing I have done as a pastor, and I only wish I had learned it thirty years earlier. It is the answer to the felt frustrations of pastors and people who want their churches to be all that the Lord of the Church wants them to be. It leaves behind the "program church" model that requires the pastor and many others to run about trying to keep the programmatic plates spinning. It creates a fellowship of ministers, ready and eager to be equipped by their pastor-teacher, because they've become hungry in the doing of real ministry rather than the "housekeeping" that too many lay people are relegated to. It's people-centered, not program-centered. It's community-centered, not building-centered. It's admittedly demanding, which is the way it *must* be with a Lord who calls us to die to ourselves and live radically for Him. I only regret that Good Shepherd, after I retired, was led in other directions and lost its momentum.



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1997 - THE T' IEN SHAN MISSION SOCIETY

Along with the cell church model as crucial to Good Shepherd's existence was the focus on world mission. Every year we sent out at least one short-term mission team, sometimes more, to several countries in Europe and in Asia: Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Czech Republic, etc. Gradually, the Holy Spirit focused us on a totally unreached people group known as the Dungan Chinese Muslims of Kyrgyzstan. The Dungan, who belong to the Hui people of China, number 110,000. Their name suggests that they may have roots in eastern Gansu Province.

GSLC member Anne Marie Schulz "stumbled" upon them when she went out one summer with a fact-collecting group called "Caleb Project" to Central Asia and stayed in a Dungan home. Our mission team, called TeamUP ("U.P." stands for "Unreached Peoples"; thanks, Chris Baron, for this great name!), had been doing an extended study for the choosing of an unreached people group to "adopt," that is, to pray for, study about, investigate, and send to, and they saw Anne Marie Schulz's cue as divine guidance. A team of ten people were sent out to get acquainted with the Dungan people and collect information on them and their needs, after being trained by Caleb Project staff who specialize in that kind of work. The team members came home with a 150-page report. Soon a team was going out every summer to teach English at the local Dungan school. The Tien Shan Mission Society was organized to carry on this work. Two sister churches in California joined us, and TSMS became a partner mission of Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod's World Mission. From Our Savior Lutheran Church in Palm Springs, a TSMS member church, came a couple, Kip and Ivy Hoech, who went out with a short-term team and sensed a call from the Lord to go back full time. Kip finished seminary training, and was called jointly by TSMS and by LCMS World Mission, the first LCMS missionary to raise his own support. Now Dr. Mike Wade and wife Ann have become our second missionary couple. They have already served on two LCMS mission fields and so are veterans. Mike has a doctorate in agronomy and will work with the highly agricultural Dungan people to develop their own source of seeds for their crops which, I understand, provides 90% of the food for the entire nation while they are only 2% of the population!

The Good Shepherd experience in direct involvement in world mission is a great working model for other smaller congregations, proof that it can, indeed, be done and is not at all limited to large congregations with huge budgets. It is time for every local church to do hands-on, cross-cultural missions, so as to finish the Task!

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## CHRISTOPHER ALBERT BARON - AGAIN

Time to catch up with our son, Chris. Chris attended Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's preschool long before we had anything else to do with that congregation. His verbal giftedness was already visible at that time, the evidence (which we still have) being a fascinating bit of "creative writing" that he dictated to me at a time when he couldn't yet read or write. He then proceeded to Our Redeemer Elementary School where he grew with great speed in his reading skills and was an A student throughout. However, as he got into the intermediate level, it became evident that he was not being challenged, and it began to be reflected in his grades. By the time he reached 10<sup>th</sup> Grade, it was obvious to us that we needed to find a more demanding school. Our Redeemer, an otherwise good school, was too small to be able to provide for exceptional students. With some hesitation, we began dialog with the Punahou School. The reticence was due to the fact that Punahou, although once a mission-sponsored school, was no longer Christian and very secular-humanistic in focus. Also it was a school for the rich, many of them delivered to school (or driving themselves, in upper grades) in their Mercedes Benz, Jaguar, etc. We wondered if that would adversely affect Chris who, though not a "deprived" child, would certainly not be able to keep up with those kids socially. We needn't have worried. Chris by this time was a very committed child of God and that gave him both spiritual and social equilibrium and discernment. We also thought that, in this high demand school, Chris might receive lower grades during at least his first year as he adjusted. That also was not the case. In fact, at the end of his first year there - 11<sup>th</sup> Grade - he received the school's American Studies Award. His grades actually soared, right across the board. Furthermore, Chris became a leader in Christian things, becoming the founder of the Punahou Young Life Club, with the support of Kurt Kekuna, the Young Life Director for Hawaii. Young Life Club grew large and impacted many students while Chris was there, and still carries on to this day.

Then came college applications. Chris was accepted at several schools and chose Duke University in North Carolina, a school that academically is the equal of the Ivy League schools in every way - except for endowment. (While others were calling it "the Harvard of the south," Duke people, with tongue in cheek, were calling Harvard "the Duke of the north!") Majoring in "Comparative Area Studies" that embraced China and Europe, he graduated summa cum laude and was inducted into Phi Beta Kapa. He was active in Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and was First Cellist in the Duke Symphony. His parents were busting their buttons with pride, and his graduation in the Duke Stadium was an unforgettable time for us of proud tears and chills up the spine. We were so grateful to have family with us that day, including especially Ia Mei's parents all the way from Japan, along with the Illicks, David Woo (Ia Mei's first cousin) and family, and my second cousin, Audrey Merz (grandchild of my Grand aunt Mamie Maisel) and her husband, Albert (you wouldn't believe how many Alberts our extended family has). From Duke, Chris proceeded to Europe for a year of mission with Operation Mobilization, working mainly in Austria and in what was at that time Czechoslovakia. On our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Ia Mei and I traveled to Europe to pick him up at the end of his year and travel together into Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany). This was shortly after the downfall of Communism, and it was a fascinating

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

experience. Due to various serendipities, we got to stay in a typical, worn-out "people's apartment building" in Budapest overlooking the Danube River, and later to overnight in a private home in Bratislava (now the capital of the Slovak Republic) with a Slovak lady who was thrilled to discover that we were fellow Lutherans. For me, the most exciting part of the journey was our visit to "Luther-land": Wittenberg (his preaching/teaching headquarters), Eisleben (his place of birth and death), the Wartburg Castle (where he translated the Bible while in hiding from Emperor Charles the Fifth's death warrant), and Erfurt, (where he had been a law student and a monk in the Augustinian monastery). We also went to Leipzig and visited St. Thomas Church, made famous by its organist, Johann Sebastian Bach, who is buried in the chancel. I want to go back again and walk the streets of Wittenberg.

On returning home, Chris spent a year of ministry in Taiwan, teaching English at China Lutheran Seminary where his godfather, Thomas Yu, was now president; spent a year at Seattle Lutheran Bible Institute; a year at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis ("not my cup of tea," said he); in Hawaii on staff for two years at Good Shepherd and later earning a Master's degree in International Relations at the University of Hawaii. He later passed the Foreign Service exam, served with the National Security Council under Condoleezza Rice and later joined the State Department in Washington, D.C., ran into President Bush several times to talk to, as well as other significant people, did two years of mission in New Zealand under joint sponsorship of Campus Crusade, Lutheran Church of New Zealand, and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Honolulu. In January, 2007, he returned to Hawaii to serve as chief of staff to Hawaii House of Representatives member Dr. Gene Ward. When the session was over, he became Special Assistant to Ted Liu, right hand man to Governor Linda Lingle and head of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism. The future? Stay tuned.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 2001 - TO RETIRE OR REFIRE?

At age seventy, it seemed time to retire, and so I did. Stamina was running down. The good folks of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church organized an unforgettable retirement feast under a big tent by the ocean. A deeply painful dimension of that otherwise great evening was that my wonderful friend, Dr. Wing You Tong, who worked too hard with his cameras that night, died at home that same night from a heart attack. His wife, Dorothy, called me immediately and I joined my broken heart with the family's at the hospital. I had the deep honor of delivering the Word of God at the service of thanks-giving for Wing's life. I miss this good friend still.

Later, we made a brief trip to see Baba and Mama in Japan. They had long since immigrated to Japan, where Baba oversaw two different hospitals, and they had become Japanese citizens. Now Mama was a stroke victim, lying helpless in a room of the very hospital that Baba had lately supervised, and he himself was declining seriously and living in a nearby room where he could watch over Mama. While there, I received the sad news that my dear brother, Fred Illick, had died of cancer. It was not unexpected. Earlier I had made a trip to Maryland to spend some time with him, and it was good fellowship and precious because we both knew it would probably be the last time we'd see one another on this earth. Just before leaving for Japan, I spoke with him on the phone and his last words to me were, "See you in the Morning." His death was a real blow to me, as if the world changed with him gone. Marilyn asked me to send a letter that could be read at his memorial service, and I did that. He was one guy throughout all my adult years that I felt I could totally trust. His home-going left a permanent hole in my life, made me sense more deeply than ever that "this world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through," made death more of a reality than ever before, and made me feel acutely the impermanence of this life. But over and above that reality, I cling to Jesus' affirmation that He is the Resurrection and the Life, and because He lives I can still face tomorrow, and life is worth the living just because He lives! In the words of a chapel speaker at Gordon College long ago, "I am immortal until my work is done."

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 2001-2007 - NEW ZEALAND

The past five years have been spent mainly in New Zealand where, unbeknown to la Mei and me when we traveled "down under" for a brief getaway, there was waiting for me another ministry. I had retired only to "refire," to use an apt word from Pastor Erman Lunder, my Seattle LBI colleague. A little group of Lutherans in the small city of Tauranga on the North Island of New Zealand were languishing under a mere once-a-month service brought by a distant pastor. I ended up taking his place when he retired, and we moved up to weekly worship services in the beautiful community center of a Christian-run retirement village called Carmel Country Estate. Worship grew to an average of over forty each Sunday, consisting of members plus a number of non-members from the village who came quite regularly. The challenge was to help this little congregation move toward becoming a viable, ongoing, outreaching church in this rapidly-growing town of 100,000.

Although we seemed to lack people with the degree of spiritual maturity and commitment to begin a "pilot cell" that could be the matrix of ongoing life, leadership, and outreach for the congregation, we took the risk of beginning one anyway. We took well over a half year meeting weekly and training them in doing church as a team and in the principles of the cell church. When, in 2006, we left for Hawaii for a 2-month "fur-lough" and turned it over to their own leadership, there seemed to be great hope that cell life was "taking" with the participants in terms of the JEALE ingredients (see above under Good Shepherd Lutheran Church), but when we returned, we found, to our great disappointment, that they had chosen to back down to the usual low-demand "home group" that cannot provide the needed spiritual resources for a church to carry on and grow. Without a healthy cell at the center, I held little hope for the future of Tauranga Lutheran Fellowship. The very survival of the congregation after we dropped out at the end of 2006 was/is a toss-up. There is neither the spiritual leadership to inspire and instill a sense of mission, nor is there even a part-time pastor on the horizon to help. About twenty-two adults are committed to keep TLF alive for at least three more months, with the hope that God might still have a way for them into the future.

While we were in New Zealand, Baba passed away, and we flew up to Japan for the service in a church in Shizuoka. Now Mama was all alone in Japan - although she undoubtedly was unaware. She was well cared for by the compassionate nursing staff. Not quite two years later, Mama died as well, and we rejoiced that she was finally released to go to her Savior. Their ashes are buried in the Los Angeles area, in a beautiful cemetery not far from the home of their youngest child, Ming-chung.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 2004 CHINA JOURNEY

If I had a "favorite" in the Youth Fellowship at Truth Lutheran Church, it would be Yu Yueh-chiang (Yu Yue-jiang) - though we loved them all. He grew up a block away from the church. His family did not have much income, having come to Taiwan as refugees with Chiang Kai-shek when he retreated to Taiwan in 1949. He was attracted to Truth Lutheran Church's Sunday school because they were giving away colorful, used Christmas cards sent from America, something that the children loved to receive. Ia Mei and I got to know him well when he was already in vocational college. He had a lot of personality, full of zest and fun, and was a leader. After we returned to the United States (1969), we lost contact with him and the other youth, though we never forgot them and, as it turns out, many never forgot us. After graduation, Yu Yueh-chiang and another Youth Fellowship member we called "Teng-erh" began a small handcraft business. From that small beginning, Yueh-chiang went on to importing shoes from the China mainland, and step by step became an investor on the China mainland, until today he owns two huge shoe factories employing thousands, and has also developed a national chain of super-marts throughout China called "Hao You Duo" ("Good and Plentiful") employing tens of thousands. In short, he's a multi-billionaire tycoon. What is wonderful is that his heart is still for the Lord. He hadn't forgotten us and, over recent years, had been after us to come to China as his guest. Finally, in 2004, we went for a month, a journey to be long remembered. He treated us like kings. We stayed in five-star hotels and we had a guide and a chauffeur in each city. We saw the new China in the burgeoning cities, where the economy was exploding. He had me address his white-collar workers, the administrators throughout the country, both in person and via electronic communication, with an eye to building their morale and values. Of course, I had to begin with God as the One who sets worthy values and morals, and they were respectfully receptive to this "pre-evangelism." Yueh-chiang's dream is for the day to come when he can use his accumulated riches to help build churches all over China. We thank God that we have seen such concrete fruit from past ministry.

One of the thrilling moments on our China journey was our stop in Jang Jia Jye, a small city with a beautiful, mountainous national park. We would be there on a Sunday, but had been told that there was no church there. However, we asked our local driver if there was a church, and he thought there was and said he'd look into it. On Sunday morning, he picked us up, drove a distance, and then we walked through narrow lanes until we came out on the shore of a river. There by the river was a church the size of a cathedral! Inside were a thousand people waiting for worship to commence. Then we began to take notice of certain unique things about this building and about the service. The large altar had a half-circle altar railing, reminiscent of northern European churches. As the service began, the worship leader knelt before the altar and prayed - and ended the service in the same way. It was Pentecost Sunday, and the preacher, the parish worker, preached a solid sermon and included some quotes from Martin Luther. It all smelled very *Lutheran*. After worship, we met the parish worker and I asked her, "Is it possible that this church has Lutheran background?" She was thrilled that I had noticed, and affirmed that this church had been founded by Finnish missionaries exactly one hundred years before and was still strongly Lutheran, despite the

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

government-forced incorporation of all Protestant churches into one organization. Her father had once been the pastor, and had suffered under the “cultural revolution.” They had two thousand members. The Sunday school children sang during worship (despite the fact that they're not supposed to "indoctrinate" children under eighteen). We met the elders, and we all knelt around the altar and prayed for one another before leaving.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 2007 - BACK TO HAWAII - YET AGAIN

As for la Mei and me, we will continue living here in New Zealand for a few months more and then "escape" in mid-May before the cold weather moves in. We have already made our first trip to Australia, focusing on the state of Victoria - the beautiful city of Melbourne and the Great Ocean Road. Then, God willing, on our way rejoicing, back to our little love nest up Kuliouou Valley in eastern Oahu, to see what God assigns to us there. I can't imagine myself merely kicking back and doing no ministry. Nor are we at all sure how we'd fit into life at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in its present state, though they do want us back there. I've been approached about becoming a Board member of the T'ien Shan Mission Society, a work I'm still intensely interested in. Bible Institute of Hawaii has invited me to teach an occasional course, and teaching Bible is still my "first love." And they have invited me to be the speaker at their 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration on June 30<sup>th</sup>. However, those decisions must wait at least a few months beyond arrival home, to give us time to settle in and sense the lay of the land after six years' absence from Hawaii and the American environment. Meantime, I have my precious life partner, la Mei, by my side and we'll walk on together until one of us places the other into the arms of the Savior. What more could one ask?

AMEN!

*Like Johann Sebastian Bach, who wrote at the bottom of all his music the words solī deo gloria - to God alone the glory - I'd like to add those words at the end of these memoirs. But do I dare? Is my life a hymn that can be dedicated to God like Bach's masterpieces were? I hear dissonance and sour notes in that score of mine. And I'm sure there are tunes I was meant to play but never did. In the end, whether I have really made music that brings Him glory or not, only He can judge. But whether or not, I know His grace has me covered. He has not counted my trespasses against me. He has imputed to me the very righteousness of His own beloved Son. So, yes, I will say boldly...*

*SOLI DEO GLORIA!*



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## Appendix

*While my memoirs reflect the chronology of events in my life, they do not fully reveal - , beyond my passion for Bible study, evangelism, missions ,and for cell church - some other things that are very close to my heart, things that "push my buttons." For that purpose, I am attaching here several articles that I hope will reveal things that are most precious to me, covering the following topics: Justification by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ; the Real Presence of our Lord in His Supper as integral part of the Gospel; the inerrancy of Scripture; the interplay of orthodoxy and piety for wholesome Lutheran faith; and my passion for the pastoral ministry as an equipping ministry.*

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 1. AUGSBURG CONFESSION

*Article IV - the article by which a church either stands or falls*

Men cannot be justified before God by their own merits, but are *freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith alone*, when they believe that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins.

(Compare the Roman Catholic Council of Trent: *If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than trust in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is faith alone by which we are justified, let him be damned.*)

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 2. ALIEN RIGHTEOUSNESS

*Some thoughts for Reformation Day*

I had an awful look at my old nature one day. We had house guests. That meant that I had to give up the conveniences and privacy of my study, which seconds as guest room. The guests had three little children, ages three through twelve, who were up at 6 a.m. making a racket. I gasped as the five year-old grabbed an expensive Chinese tea set to play house with, and as the three year-old spilled juice on the white carpet. One of the guests left the car door unlocked in our carport, and our snorkling equipment was stolen during the night. Never a dull moment.

Now that might not sound like much to some people. But, you see, I'm not the most organized man in the world. I establish and sustain system in my personal life only with great effort. All of a sudden, I found my order disintegrating, falling apart, and I was demoralized. I had been feeling so good about the new start I was making in disciplined living. Maybe even a little proud. Perhaps even somewhat righteous.

But now I felt distant from God and, yes, a bit resentful. My morning "quiet time" with Him was ruined by a mind tied up in knots and unable to be "quiet" at all. I realized afresh that my own righteousness is such a thin veneer! With great effort, I go about setting up the disciplines of piety that are proper responses to His grace. But after years of working at it, it takes but a few less-than-ideal circumstances to restore the primeval chaos! Isaiah put it bluntly: "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isa.64:6). It drove me back to the Good News in that old hymn:

Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head!

Should I live to be a hundred, I shall have added nothing to the righteousness credited to me in the perfect life and atoning death of my Savior! My right standing with God is pure gift; it is an "alien" righteousness, as Luther called it. Or as Paul put it, "...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but...the righteousness that comes from God" (Philippians 3:9). Or, as the hymnist puts it: "Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne." At the great Wedding Feast, I shall wear, not my own polluted garment, but the special garment presented by the Host Himself.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
My soul shall exult in my God;  
For He has clothed me in the garments of salvation,  
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Isaiah 61:10

# **Memoirs**

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## **3. LUTHER ON FAITH**

"Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith. Faith cannot help doing good works constantly. It doesn't stop to ask if good works ought to be done, but before anyone asks, it already has done them and continues to do them without ceasing. Anyone who does not do good works in this manner is an unbeliever."

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 4. LUTHER'S COMMUNION PRAYER

"You can joyfully say to Christ, both at your death and in the last judgment:

“ ‘My dear Lord Jesus, there has arisen a strife about Your words at the Last Supper. Some want them to be understood differently from what they say. However, since they cannot teach me anything certain, but only lead me into confusion and uncertainty, I have remained with Your text as the words stand.

“ ‘If there should be an obscurity in them, You will bear with me if I do not completely understand them, just as you forbore with Your apostles when they did not understand You in many things...As also Your dear mother did not understand when You told her "I must be about my Father's business," and yet she kept these words in her heart and did not alter them.

“ ‘Thus I also have remained with Your words: “This is My body...this is My blood.” ’ “

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 5. KAHU\* LETTER - July, 2001

### *ONE LAST TRY!*

I believe that my primary spiritual gift is that of Teacher. There is nothing that I love more than to try to exposit the Bible or to explain difficult biblical topics. I love it when people say to me, "Now I see!" That's the reason why I'm deeply disappointed in myself that I don't seem to have succeeded in explaining the importance of "close" Communion, at least to some who are still troubled by it. So can you blame me for wanting to make one last try? Please bear with me. Please hear me out. Please understand that it is as painful to me as it is to you that we cannot invite every Christian to the altar to kneel with us.

### *"WHY AREN'T YOU DOING IT OUR WAY?"*

When I moved to Taiwan, I knew that I had to adapt to customs that seemed strange to me. My gracious Chinese hosts tried hard to make me feel at home. But there were many situations where I couldn't understand what was going on. I felt very awkward. However, I knew I must not say to my hosts, "I'm offended that you don't do things like we do back in America. Why aren't you doing things our way?" No, I had to try my best to understand why they do what they do, without judging them too quickly.

### *THE GIVER OR THE GIFT?*

Let me give you an example: If I brought someone a gift in Taiwan, they wouldn't open it immediately. They said thanks & then just set it aside! I was offended at first. I felt they were taking my gift lightly. In the USA, we immediately open a gift to show that we're excited to receive it. It was only after observing and asking questions that I understood. Their view was that it would be impolite to turn their attention away from their guest, just to focus on a mere gift! After all, what's more important: the giver or the gift? Once I understood why they did what they did, I could enjoy the custom.

### *"I'M OFFENDED"*

What I had to do in Taiwan is what we ask of Christians who visit GSLC. It would be quite unfair for one of our guests to say to us, "I'm angry. You don't do things like we do them back in my home church. Back there any one can take the Lord's Supper, no questions asked. You people have offended me."

### *"NO QUESTIONS ASKED"*

But you see, in many churches there's good reason why it's "no questions asked." It's because to them the Lord's Supper is simply a memorial ritual, using bread & wine that merely represent Jesus. Why would they make a fuss about who takes it & who doesn't take it? Little children can take it. Total strangers can take it. It's only bread and wine. No reason in the world why it shouldn't be "open" Communion.

### *AWESOME ACT*

And there is equally good reason why, for us, we cannot say, "No questions asked." To

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

\* *"Kahu" is the Hawaiian word for "shepherd."*

us, the Sacrament of the Altar is an awesome act of being joined in a supernatural way with the very body and blood of Jesus who purchased our eternal salvation! How else could we understand the Supper when it was Jesus Himself who took the bread & wine and said, "This is My body given for you" and "This is My blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins"? We stand dumbfounded before such deep Mystery! It matters greatly to us that all who come to the altar should bow before the Great Mystery of the Real Presence of the crucified and risen Lord in the bread and wine! Also, for us, communing is a corporate act – a fellowship act. It's not just a "me and Jesus" act. It's the highest act of unity that we do together. We are communing with one another as well as with our Lord, and we believe that requires full unity of faith.

Let's use two scenes to illustrate the vast difference between the two understandings of the Lord's Supper:

## SCENE 1

You visit a friend's home & he says, "I want you to see my poster of President Bush." He reverently (obviously, he voted for Mr. Bush!) takes you over to a wall & there it is. The photo on the poster represents President Bush and you look at it with due respect and say something like, "That's nice."

## SCENE 2

You & a few friends visit someone's home and he says, "I want you to meet someone." Out steps George W. Bush "in the flesh"! Now that would be a moment that would leave all of you speechless! You stand before the most powerful man in the world. He reaches out with his warm smile and shakes your hands. He pulls you all into a huddle, puts his arms around you and you have a deep moment of "communion" together. This would be an experience utterly beyond comparison with the mere viewing of his photo.

## HE REALLY MEANT TO SAY...

Let these two scenes suggest the difference between what most other Protestants teach about the Lord's Supper and the way we see it. We are saddened that most other Protestant churches teach their people that when Jesus said, "This is my body...this is my blood," He really meant to say, "This bread and wine represents my body and blood. They're just visual aids to help you think about me."

## PAUL'S PLAIN WORDS

We are also pained that there are people & churches that effectively ignore Paul's plain words in I Corinthians 10:16: "The cup that we bless, is it not a participation in (or 'communion with') the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in (or 'communion with') the body of Christ?"

## ULRICH WHO?

Why do some fine Christians bypass the Bible in that way when it comes to the Lord's Supper? The answer to that question shows how powerful tradition can be, even among Protestants! While Luther was leading the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, there was a Swiss by the

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

name of Ulrich Zwingli. He was a humanist. Humanists believe in man's ability to use his own mind to find truth. Zwingli used human reason to interpret the Supper. Understandably, he was reacting (we would say over-reacting) against the "magical" view of Roman Catholicism that the priest has the power to "change" the bread & wine into the body & blood of Christ. In contrast, Zwingli insisted on making the Lord's Supper fully understandable to human reason. Therefore he taught the "symbolic" idea of the Supper. It's only a "photo" of Christ. He cannot really be there "in the flesh," according to Zwingli. What Zwingli taught is what is believed to this day in almost all of our American denominations. Most accept it without questioning, because it sounds reasonable. (Reasonable it may be, but Scriptural it is not.)

## *THE HIGHEST ACT*

Please understand that when Christian guests come to GSLC, we do not "judge" them. We merely say to them, "We don't know what you believe & you very likely don't know what we believe. Since the Supper is the highest act of Christian unity, it simply isn't time yet for us to kneel together. Let's first make sure we are truly united in what we believe, especially about the Lord's Real Presence through bread & wine."

## *NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY*

Sadly, some people won't understand what we mean, no matter how hard we try. They are like guests from another country, and our ways seem strange to them, and we have to say to say to them, "Even though you may not understand our way of doing things, please respect them, and please do not judge us too quickly. Try to understand why we do what we do."

## *WHO'S OFFENDED?*

Here's an important thing to consider: Our guests who are offended are usually Christians. But if they are already Christians, then they are not the people we are most concerned about! Did you know that the Kingdom of God doesn't grow when Christians move from one church to another? The people we seek to win are pre-Christians – and they are not offended by "close" Communion. One new Christian at GSLC said to me, "You know, Pastor Don, I like the fact that I could not just casually come to Communion, but had to wait until I was fully informed and received into the ohana. It made Communion so precious to me when I was finally welcomed to kneel with my new family!"

## *WARNING: DANGER AHEAD*

Did you know that it can be dangerous to eat the Lord's Supper? The Apostle Paul has a very serious warning for people who want to eat the Lord's Supper. He says that a person must examine himself. Question: Examine himself about what? Paul's next words provide the answer: "Anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). As your pastor, I have the solemn duty to be kahu to all who come under our roof. I do not know whether or not our guest recognizes the very body of the Lord in the Supper. Therefore, love, duty and my pastoral heart demand that I protect him from the possible danger Paul speaks of, that is, of bringing some kind of judgment upon himself. If we decline to admit our own children to the Supper until they are carefully taught, why would we do less for our guests – especially given the casual (and often



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

erroneous) handling of the Supper in so many churches where they require little or no teaching beforehand?

## *LUTHER STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER*

Concerning the duty of your pastor, let me quote Luther:

“It terrifies me to hear that in one and the same church or at one and the same altar both parties are to find and to receive one and the same Sacrament, and one party is to believe that it receives nothing but bread and wine, while the other is to believe that it receives the true body and blood of Christ. And I often wonder whether it is credible that a preacher or shepherd of souls can be so hardened and malicious as to say nothing about this and to let both parties go on in this way. If such a person exists, he must have a heart harder than any stone, steel, or adamant. Whoever, therefore, has such preachers, let him be warned against them as against the devil incarnate himself.”

Strong words from a strong man. Does it help you to understand why I must do what I do?

## *WHAT TO DO?*

So what are you to do when Christian guests join you on Communion Sunday? If they come from a sister LCMS church that shares all our doctrine, (including, of course, the reception of Jesus' very body and blood in the Supper), tell your pastor & then bring them with you to the altar. For others I suggest that, before Worship, you tell them something like this: “We have Communion this morning. Our ways of doing things may be a little different from what you're used to. Please don't be offended that we're not able to invite everyone to Communion. We have our reasons, which you can ask me or the pastor about later, if you wish.”

## *THANKS!*

Well, thanks for reading all the way to the end. I sincerely hope that you understand at least a little better why we practice “close” Communion. If I have failed I have failed. This was my last chance! I would enjoy hearing from the many who I know do appreciate our practice of “close” Communion (tell me why you do). Once again, please understand: We are not saying that we are better Christians than others are. And please understand: Your pastor takes no joy in not being able to welcome all Christians to the altar.

## *SO HERE WE STAND*

We must insist that the Word of God stand exactly as it is, regardless of whom it offends. Your pastor is answerable to God, not to man. So are you. I hope we can join together in Luther's words: “My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.” Amen.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 6. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE BIBLE?

*Published in "O Lelo O Ke Ola," the newsletter of Bible Institute of Hawaii*

The question above really resolves itself into the question, "What do you think of Christ?" You see, it is when Jesus became my Lord that I found His Lordship imposing upon me the authority of Scripture. That authority is imposed by the simple logic that the attitude of Him who is my Lord must be my own attitude – otherwise He is not my Lord.

We accept the Scriptures in their entirety as the very words of God because that is the way Jesus regarded them. That He indeed viewed them so is attested even by scholars of liberal bent:

*Adolph Harnack*, the church historian, asserts that Christ was one with His apostles, with the Jews, and with the entire early Church in complete commitment to the infallible authority of Scripture.

*H. J. Cadbury*, Harvard New Testament critic, once declared that he was far surer that Jesus held to the common Jewish view of an infallible Bible than that Jesus believed in His own messiahship.

Some would divorce teachings from words, affirming only the inspiration of the former. But the great biblical scholar, *B. F. Westcott*, insisted that "the slightest consideration will show that words are as essential to intellectual processes as they are to mutual inter-course...Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body." If the words are not inspired, then neither is the message!

Some would divorce doctrine from history, recognizing only the accuracy of the former. But can these really be divorced? The Christian faith is built on historicity! Can one deal honestly with the Bible's authors and their texts and at the same time sever doctrine and history, say, in the case of the resurrection of Jesus? Is His virgin birth doctrine or history? Well, both - and indivisibly so. In both cases above, if the history is not true, then neither is the doctrine.

*Emil Brunner* was not an orthodox theologian but, in describing how the Old Testament prophets were inspired, he unknowingly expressed succinctly and exactly what Jesus Himself believed about the extant (Old Testament) Scriptures and what we under His Lordship believe about the entire Bible: "...the Word of God is there in the form of revealed human words, not behind them...but in direct identity, in a complete correspondence of man's word and God's Word." (*Die christliche Lehre von Gott*, 26)

*Dr. Samuel Miller*, first leader of the Lutheran Bible Institute movement in America, wrote, "There is no intellectual or spiritual danger in believing that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit both as to thought and words. An affirmative approach to the Scriptures, trusting them as we trust a friend even when we cannot always understand or explain, is the approach that results in spiritual enlightenment and power. 'The Word of our God shall stand forever!'"

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## 7. THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

*from a 2006 email to Dr. Edward Hansen, formerly my teacher at Lutheran Bible Institute, Teaneck, NJ, and years later a bishop of the ELCA.*

Dear Ed: Thanks for your frank words. I'm neither shocked nor offended, though a bit disappointed. However, as undeniable brothers in Christ, I think it's good to feel free to be open about our convictions, even where they differ as widely as we do on this subject. We are saved by the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, not by our doctrine of the Word. Assuming as I do that you still hold to the Faith as affirmed in the ecumenical creeds and our Lutheran Confessions, then for you and me, this is an in-family discussion!

You must know, of course, that the inerrancy stance cannot be as easily dismissed as you suggest in your email, Ed, as if our church fathers naively held the doctrine and never thought it through. Nor is it true, as sometimes claimed, that the reason for the shift is because we know some things about the Bible that they didn't know. It is an article of faith, like the doctrine of the Trinity, both deduced from Scripture but not "provable." I wavered at seminary - after all, as they said, who wants to fight a battle over inaccurate numbers in the O.T.? Then, over my mere 5-year connection with the seminary, I watched "allowable" mistakes in trivia progress from mere numerals to the virgin birth! Sadly, despite the clear stance of the fathers of the ALC/UELC/ELC (from previous-generation fathers all the way back to Luther) on inerrancy, it now became "politically incorrect" - and barely, condescendingly, tolerated - to be of that opinion.

Those developments forced me to re-visit the subject. I found some excellent scholarly works on the subject that ultimately won me back to that article of faith. To me the finest of all is a succinct, very readable little book (180 pages) entitled 'Fundamentalism' and the Word of God (1958, Eerdmans) by an Anglican theologian, J. I. Packer. (Note the quotation marks around 'Fundamentalism.' Reason: The book was occasioned by an earlier book entitled Fundamentalism and the Church of God by another British Anglican, Alan Richardson. Richardson was attacking British evangelicalism, especially among Anglicans, but chose to apply to them the epithet, "fundamentalism." Packer used the parallel book title as his way of indicating that it was a response to Richard-son.) It is the most well reasoned presentation of inerrancy that I've ever read. If you're willing to revisit the subject, that's the book to read.

Conrad Lund, president of Seattle Lutheran Bible Institute most of the years that I was on their faculty, had quietly come at least to tolerate the new view of Scripture at some point in his ministry, but as he battled terminal cancer and grappled with ultimate issues of life and death, he thought again about the subject, possibly also because he was troubled by the fallout from the new view becoming apparent in the church. Shortly before he died, he affirmed his return to the inerrancy of Scripture.

Reflecting my own experience at Luther Seminary of rapid deterioration of confidence in the Scriptures, I remember reading that not one of Karl Barth's renowned students remained where he stood (i.e., orthodox doctrine built on top of a liberal view of the Scriptures). To a

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

man, they deserted traditional doctrine. Neo-orthodoxy appears to be a halfway house that cannot be occupied even for two generations. That's my deep concern.

George Aus, "patron saint of seminarians from the east" and a sound, evangelical man, was my favorite professor at Luther Seminary. If he knew what the "Trojan horse" of an errant Bible had brought into the seminary and into the church (including one lecture by a *universalist* delivered, of all things, as the George Aus Lectureship!), I think he, too, would re-visit the subject.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 8. ORTHODOXY & PIETY IN LUTHERAN FAITH

Dr. Robert Preus, a former president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Indiana, once said something like this to me, with pain in his voice: "Don, we have such a beautiful, pure Gospel like no one else has, but how is it that we're doing such a terrible job of getting it out?" I anguish over that, too. I feel that one major factor is our failure to distinguish between traditions, which we tend to cling to so tightly, and the uncompromisable Gospel. Sometimes it seems harder to change a tradition in the Lutheran church than it is to change a doctrine! That's extremely "un-Luther"!

I did not grow up in a Christian, much less Lutheran, home. I came to faith as a teenager. It was the warmth and freedom of a Lutheran congregation that came out of a Norwegian background, representing a beautiful amalgam of theological orthodoxy and "pietistic" warmth and fervor, that confirmed the truth of the Gospel for me. I know that "pietist" is a dirty word in some Lutheran circles, but it needs to be reinstated as an essential part of the Lutheran heritage, for what it was when at its best: Sound doctrine fired up in the heart and not only the mind, changing the behavior and devotional life of the believer, is the power behind the missions movement that has now encircled the globe. We have passed on wholesome aspects of the pietistic movement to large sections of the Protestant world - and have lost them ourselves. As a youth, I would not have been impressed, attracted, or kept by a congregation that lacked that dynamic. It was characterized by freedom that was not afraid of "borrowing" things not in our tradition that were proven effective elsewhere - for instance gospel music that youth could relate to. We had a liturgy to be sure, but it was a very simple one, and there was no inclination to "refine" it or tinker with it as some do today (like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic while it sinks!) We had a large youth group that was unashamed of the Gospel, that actually knew how to pray together, and that was active in bringing in pre-Christian friends.

Worship style, I believe, is a very important factor in what we're talking about here. I want to urge upon you the little paperback called, The Other Story of Lutheran Worship" (subtitle: "Reclaiming Our Heritage of Diversity") by Dr. David S. Luecke, available from Fellowship Ministries.

I believe that, while holding fast to our Lutheran confessionalism we should eat "humble pie" and go out and learn - selectively, to be sure - from groups that are effectively bringing in youth and others. I think of my commitment to our Confessions as the "umbilical cord" (like that of the space walkers) that holds me secure while I venture out to see what I can learn from others, and which keeps me from going out too far. While I grant you that there are indeed some groups that over-use emotion and programmatic pizzazz to pull youth and others in, that alone is not enough to explain the vast contrast between us as a plateaued church and some other churches that are exploding. I just have to give some credit to the Holy Spirit working through His Word which, though it might not be delivered with total biblical purity in these groups, is sufficiently there for the Holy Spirit to "call, enlighten, and convert" (to use words from the Book of Concord) - and is delivered with the fervor and urgency that attracts the outsider and convinces him that there must be something real going on here.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

## 9. HIS WORD - YOUR MINISTRY

*Sermon preached on the occasion of the ordination of James Rehder, at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Honolulu, September 9, 1976.*

Text: II Timothy 4:1-5

My brother, I know that I speak on behalf of all at Our Redeemer Church and all the rest of us who have gotten to know you, when I say, "Praise God for you!" We think that there will be eternal reverberations from the fact that the right man has come to the right place, and we thank Him for giving you to us. We think too that you will find rich fulfillment in your ministry here, as well as in your association with Pastor Schumm, who is hopelessly in love with this parish and its exciting mission.

All the priests at Our Redeemer Church, by God's will and for the sake of order, are entrusting to you, their brother priest, the public administration of Word and Sacraments on their behalf. We are here to recognize and celebrate that today, via the service of your ordination.

The Word from God that I wish to relate to the occasion and that I wish to emblazon across your ministry is in II Timothy 4:1-5:

Before God, and before Christ Jesus who is to judge men living and dead, I charge you solemnly by His coming appearance and His reign: proclaim the Word, press it home on all occasions, convenient and inconvenient, use argument, reproof, and appeal, with all the patience that that word of teaching requires. For the time will come when they will not stand wholesome teaching, but will follow their own fancy and gather a crowd of teachers to tickle their ears. They will stop their ears to the truth and turn to mythology. But you yourself must keep calm and sane at all times; face hardship, work to spread the Gospel, and do all the duties of Your ministry.

*Note: The Bible text is in the words of the New English Bible, but with "Word" replacing "message" (Greek: logos) and "ministry" replacing "calling" (Greek: diakonia).*

There are two words that stand out for me in this passage, and that seem to embody Paul's entire concern for his young spiritual son, Timothy: "Word" and "ministry."

### I. Word

The old Puritan saying went, "Thou art a preacher of the Word; mind thy business." That sentiment sounds very obvious, and what graduate of a Missouri Synod seminary doesn't know that as a commonplace? But unless it is a burning, magnificent obsession in your heart, I assure you that you will soon be waylaid.

The rush of a busy parish - people, programs, poverty, publications, parents, politics, paraments, and pot-lucks - can close in on you with their very legitimate demands until the preeminence of the Word in your work is reduced to a theory that relates in no way to reality. Your own study of the Word can end up being merely preparing it for others or - worse yet - just reading books about it. If you aren't daily fresh out of His Word-mediated presence -

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
**Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)**

renewed, restored, forgiven, excited and in love with your Lord, you'll throttle the very Word you are called to communicate to others. When the people of this parish select a phrase to describe your ministry among them, may it be, "Pastor Jim Rehder is a man of the Word"!

Matthias Claudius describes such a man as a "weak, unworthy, imperfect man, but with the lightning of God in his hand." So may you be, my brother!

And what is that Word which Paul wants you to proclaim? It is Jesus Christ - the mighty God, Word-made-flesh, who lived among us, shed His blood and gave up His life a sin-offering on mankind's behalf, who crashed the gates of death and hell, walked alive out of the grave, and who lives today to unshackle men and women from sin, guilt, death, and the devil, to make them dynamically new, eternal people.

Paul says, Proclaim Him! Elsewhere he says to Corinthian Christians who were splitting the church wide open with their arrogant intellectualizing of the Christian message: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." What a deceivingly simple Word! But Paul knew it was dynamite - the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

Luther said, "One thing you must preach: the wisdom of the Cross!"

Another put it this way: "Let Christ be the diamond to shine in the bosom of your sermons."

It does not detract in the least from Christ as the Word of God to speak of the Scriptures as the Word of God. It is only through them, and the Sacraments that derive from them, that we have access to Christ the Word. Because they mediate Jesus to me, they participate in His nature as the Word - they are part of God's self-revelation to men. There are many christs being preached - sometimes by sophisticate theologians, sometimes by ignorant sectarians - christs who are fully or partially the figments of men's imagination. It is only by the inscripturated Word that I can bypass the counterfeits and find Him who is the Truth. You will be indeed blest if those who hear you preach and teach are as noble as the Berean Christians, of whom Luke said, "...they received the Word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." - and doubly blest if the Christ you preach checks out perfectly with those Scriptures!

There are those who would escape the embarrassing scandal of the Church's historic article of faith concerning the Bible as being the Word of God, dependable in all it says. It is significant that several modern theologians who did not for a moment accept the full inspiration of the Scriptures - men like Harnack, F. C. Grant, and Emil Brunner - agree that Jesus took it for granted - and I am quoting Grant - "that Scripture is trustworthy, infallible, and inerrant."

Hence we need no man-made theory of inspiration to submit to the fullest authority of Scripture as the Word of God, as a whole and in all its parts. That authority is imposed on us by the simple logic that our Lord's attitude toward Scripture must be our own. Otherwise we call into question His Lordship.

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

So proclaim the Word, my brother - that is, preach the Scriptures, with full and joyful confidence that these human words are words from God. Jesus often said, "It is written...", and His appeals to Scripture were always final. Let yours also be so. Preach with unhesitant authority all of the Bible's content, organized as it is about the dual themes of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, man's dilemma and God's solution, condemnation and justification.

Take its history seriously, for theological truth and historical truth are the warp and woof of the fabric of God's self-revelation. You cannot unravel the one without unraveling the other. The hidden God becomes for us the revealed God in, with, and under the occurrences recorded in the Bible. Preach confidently from the written Word as it presents Jesus Christ the Incarnate Word, whose nature and work are known only because the Scriptures accurately record thirty years of events, within the confines of which we humans were permitted to see, hear, and touch God!

Apart from the proclamation of the Word, Paul in our passage is also concerned with the *manner* of the proclamation. "Be urgent," he says. "Press it home on all occasions, convenient and inconvenient." John Ruskin says that when you stand in the pulpit, you have "twenty minutes to raise the dead in." D. T. Niles says you are a beggar telling other beggars where to find bread. Expect mighty things to happen when you proclaim the Word in pulpit, classroom, or person to person. Expect resurrections. Anticipate a feast!

This is no academic exercise, this proclaiming of the Word. You are a dying man with an urgent message for dying people. Every person you face in your ministry will be either lost or saved, and you have the saving Word. You have the pearl of great price. His name is Jesus. And He approaches people as you teach and preach Him from the written Word.

Proclaim Him urgently, brother! Granted, it is not your drive or enthusiasm that gives the Word its power, but your *lack* of it can certainly sabotage the Holy Spirit's work as He "calls, enlightens, and converts." The most earth-shaking news loses its credibility when delivered by an indifferent messenger. May those who sit under your preaching and teaching react as the two men who met the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

Brother Jim - preach the Word - and be urgent about it.

## II. Ministry

It is *His* Word, to be proclaimed through *your* ministry. What will your ministry be like?

You are in a world that is reeling under its load of problems: individual and corporate, spiritual, psychological, social, economic, political - none of which can be ignored by Christ's people; all desperately in need of having the Gospel's implications brought to bear on them.

During the days of the early Church in Jerusalem - also a place of social and political crisis - the apostle Peter said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables...we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." One is



# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
 Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

tempted to ask how Peter dared say such a thing. In such a world as ours, where else should he be but serving people at the immediate point of need? In the face of pressing crises that will not wait, how can you, Jim, afford the luxury of devoting yourself to the Word and prayer?

Now if you think of yourself as being the Church - or being the Church in any greater sense than the rest of the people of this congregation, you will find it difficult to answer that question. You will have to accept the obligation of taking on the world single-handedly, as some clergy mistakenly do.

But the biblical picture of the pastor is not that of a prima donna who has gathered around himself a group of admiring patrons who pay the bills while he performs. The Reformation freed us from the misconception that there is an elite group of people who by a sacrament of ordination are turned into Christian gurus whose Sunday morning hocus pocus maintains for the congregation a safe relationship with God; and who, at the same time, are transformed into Christian supermen who emerge from the nearest confessional booth flexing their muscles every time a new crisis arises.

The biblical concept is best described in Ephesians, chapter four: "And Christ's gifts were that some should be...pastors and teachers, to equip God's people for *their* work of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

The ministry is everyone's, and your *particular* ministry is to fit out the people of Our Redeemer Church to do *their* ministry in the world. If this congregation has only two ministers, it is a pitiful congregation indeed. As a matter of fact, Our Redeemer Church has two *pastors*, whose job is to enable several hundred ministers to accomplish their mission to make Jesus known through word and act in a hurting world.

We have here a complete reversal of the usual image: not the pastor on the front lines, with the laity sending up supplies, but the *laity* on the front lines with the *pastor* sending up the ammunition! Too often the image of a pastor is that of a Micky Mantle - the star who goes out on the field and brings home the pennant; when the correct image ought to be that of a Casey Stengel - the manager who trains the players to go to bat. This understanding of the pastor as the *equipper of ministers* will greatly affect your self-image and your priorities.

And coupled with the correct concept of your ministry must be a deep respect for what the word "laity" means. That word all too often is misused by common consent to give people the feeling that they are *not* ministers - that they are amateurs and spectators, unqualified for the real action, condemned for life to responsibilities of only peripheral importance.

The word "laity" comes from a Greek word, laos, meaning "people." And it is used in such as places as I Peter 2: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, *God's own people*, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were no people, but now you are *God's people*."

# Memoirs

written in 2007 A.D. by  
Pastor Don Baron (May 6, 1931 ~ Sep 11, 2013)

Your ministry is, through preaching and teaching the Word, to affirm the marvel of who they are - the very laos of God - and through the Word to equip them for their ministry - which is to declare the wonderful saving deeds of God, and thus turn on the lights in a dark world.

Brother Jim: Proclaim the Word; equip God's people; and thus fulfill your ministry! Amen.