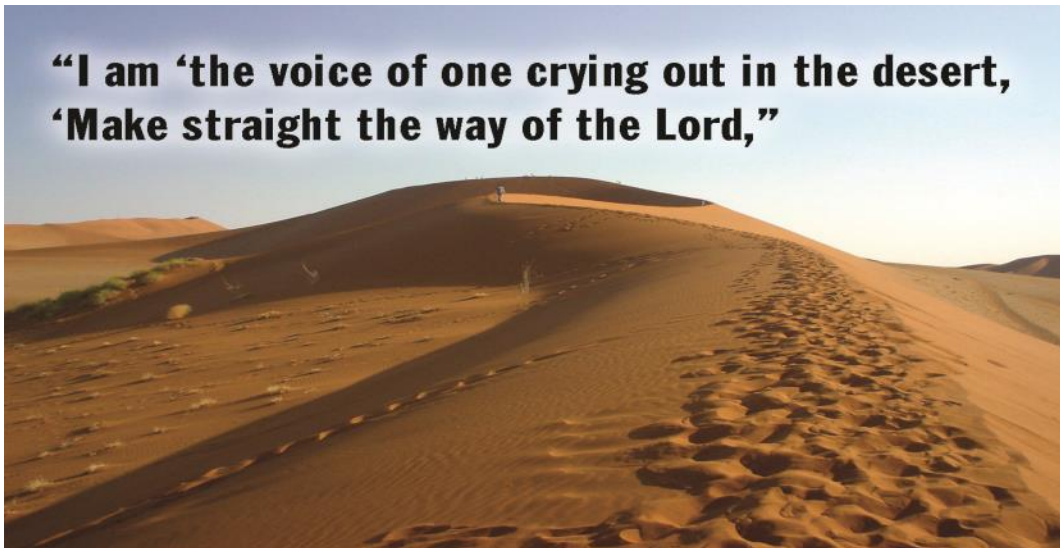


VOLUME XCIII
March 2019

THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF



**“I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert,
‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’”**



“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is He who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’”
Matthew 3:2-3 ESV

Submit your comments to our Editor, Jacque Hinton, about “The Shepherd’s Staff;” and, any other *thoughts* you might have about the publication that you feel will be constructive or interesting to our readers. You may do so by emailing us at:
newsletter@pahrupcc.com



VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 2
----------------------------	---	----------------------	--------

Contending for the Faith

*Ancient Words ever true
Changing me and changing you
We have come with open hearts
Oh let the ancient words impart.*

*Words of Life, words of Hope
Give us strength, help us cope
In this world, where e'er we roam
Ancient words will guide us Home
(Ancient Words by Lynn DeShazo, © 2001 Integrity's Hosanna! Music.)*

We started CDI (Contender's Discipleship Initiative) last month. At this point, our average attendance is around 27, and I am encouraged by those who are attending. Not all are a part of Pahrump Community Church—we have a few from other churches in the valley who learned about the course and have signed up. Some think the work is quite difficult—maybe too much. Others are eager for the challenge and digging in to the studies.

We desire to see believers grow in their walks with the Lord and their knowledge of His Word. It is also my prayer that we may raise up stronger ministry leaders, deacons, trustees, and maybe even a pastor.

Sadly, we have already lost some who took issue with the fact that we welcome the use of many translations of the Bible (ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, etc.). We are not unaware of our enemy's schemes; we know he will use any tactic at his disposal to create discord whenever God's people try to unite around the common purpose of promoting the work of God's Kingdom.

But we also know that the enemy is no match for our all-powerful Savior.

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 3
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2			

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4).

As we endeavor to be firmly established in the absolute Truth of God's Holy Word, we can take heart knowing that the Scriptures are

...living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

So we will continue to

...Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

Whatever studying or reading you are doing, let me encourage you to keep it up. He can use His Word to change your life. *Ancient Words ever true changing me and changing you.* Have you considered what thoughts and intentions are in your heart that the Lord would have you change? Something to consider....

There is always room for improvement.

The old hymn (written over 230 years ago) has a stirring message:

*How firm a Foundation ye saints of the Lord
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.
What more can He say than to you He has said
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

Hold on to Jesus! Hold on to truth! Never stop contending for the faith!

Serving the Savior,

Pastor Keith

<p>VOLUME XCIII March 2019</p>		<p>THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF</p>	<p>PAGE 4</p>
------------------------------------	---	-----------------------------	---------------

Like the Wind

I'm not sure whether or not people from Oak Ridge, Tennessee really know how devastating sin can be. To be fair, I've never been to Oak Ridge. I don't know anyone from Oak Ridge. I haven't heard any stories about Oak Ridge (to my knowledge). I don't even know where Oak Ridge, Tennessee is! (Ah... there it is). The only thing I really know about Oak Ridge (save that there might be a Comfort Inn there) is that it ranked as #1 on an internet list of least windy cities in the United States.* On average, the wind blows about four miles per hour there each year. For comparison purposes, the wind blows roughly four thousand miles per hour on average here in Pahrump.

I jest, of course (mostly), but the wind drives me nuts! It is not uncommon around these parts for there to be days when I wouldn't mind living in Oak Ridge. What does any of this have to do with sin? I'm glad you asked!

It was a Monday afternoon like so many in my life. I had finished up work, gone to get groceries, and was heading home. The wind had been howling all day and yet another severe weather alert had appeared on my cell phone that morning. I had put the groceries in the far back instead of in the back seat, so I decided that I'd like to back into my driveway. This accomplished, I squinted my way through the gale to get to my door. There's a screen door that must be passed through before getting to the main entrance to our house. Those of you with doors that open out into the elements may already see where my story is going. I do my best to exercise caution and delicacy when opening this screen door so that it doesn't get away from me, but that day my fingers must've slipped. I can only imagine how fast that puppy was going when it was attacked by the gust. Since the spring catches it, it's not exactly a crash or a slam. It's still thoroughly nerve-wracking when it feels like your flimsy little door is going to ride the (ahem) breeze to somewhere north of Crystal. Were that spring not doing its job (and doing it like a champion, I must say), the wind would have carried it away.

We listen to the whistling of the creases of our homes. We watch the tumbleweeds blow around. We see the cloud of dust full of papers, trash, and small bicycles. We hear stories about Renee Bell's office door bending its hinges... The wind is a destructive force.

When my skinny screen door snapped that spring taut, I thanked the Lord for a flexible piece of metal that can withstand more pressure than I'd ever choose to test. I was grateful for the safety that I have in the Lord. My thought after that was a verse. Though I couldn't pinpoint the reference right away, the words stood out clearly: "our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away." A quick hop onto Google reminded me that it's a verse I know very well. Isaiah 64.6 says, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." Most of the time I focus on the first and middle parts of this. I tend to use Isaiah 64.6 when I'm teaching people that our "goodness" doesn't get us far with God. I don't think I'd ever fully chewed on the "wind" portion of this verse.

"Our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

Consider the *violence* of the wind. Nearly ten years ago, a gust got so strong whipping through my parent's back yard that our nice willow was blown over. When my brother served in the Navy on an aircraft carrier, sometimes he and his shipmates would stand on the deck and lean into a wind strong enough to keep them from falling over. The wind is a violent force that strikes with insistence and intensity.

Have you noticed that sin is like that, too? Sometimes it feels like the violence of sin is sufficient to blow us away. We may be fighting and fighting but all of our attempts to stand strong amidst its torrent feel more or less pointless. At times, it seems that temptation will inevitably blow us over and send us to our shame.

Praise the Lord that no wind has overtaken us that is not common to man. First Corinthians 10.13 tells us that there is no temptation that blows too strongly for us to stand up under it. That spring on that screen door will hold; Jesus will provide us with a way of escape so that we can stand up under the allure of depravity.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 5
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4			

Consider also the *greediness* of the wind. I don't consider myself a naturally patient person, but I thank the Lord for His work in my life to help me out in this area. I know impatience is a sin and one of the things that I have to pray through is my response when something gets pulled from my hands on a windy day. Say I'm walking over to the Multi-Purpose Building from my office and the dust pelting my eyes combines with the stinging of my cheekbones. The piece of paper onto which I was holding is now racing away from me. I chase it – it flees. I nearly have it – it eludes me once again. I manage to wrestle it to the ground – it rests for a moment before attempting another escape attempt. When the wind catches something, it's difficult to recover it.

When sin rips righteousness from our grip, it is difficult to recover it. We know well that sin is never satisfied. How many times have we given into what we consider a "small sin" only to find that we're miles from where we started surrounded by piles of further iniquities? We continue to pretend that we can somehow be the master of our sin. Sin is never a slave; it is always a master. Just as the wind greedily collects all the strays in its path, so too does sin demand every part of our lives.

Praise the Lord that our Heavenly Father is a God of grace. Even when we wretchedly choose to snap the spring keeping us safe, God comes to find us where we finally fall. Wherever the wind may try to abandon us, He is always diligent to restore His children to Himself. He is faithful to us even when we are not faithful to Him. Our iniquities may at times take us away, but He is the firm foundation that will never move.

If you're one of these folks who like the wind, more power to you. For the rest of us, when the wind threatens to knock you over between your car and your front door, remember that sin is a nasty enemy and that Christ is a sure Savior.

By God's grace,
Pastor Caleb

<p>VOLUME XCIII March 2019</p>		<p>THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF</p>	<p>PAGE 6</p>
--	---	------------------------------------	----------------------



School of Biblical studies...

Over the past five months I have been studying the Bible nonstop. I've made my way through the entire New Testament and have almost finished the Pentateuch for the Old.

S.B.S.(School of Biblical Studies) has been very challenging in a very good way. Going through the inductive method, where I essentially read through each book five times before I'm finished, has formed me more than I ever thought I would.

An example of this is with the book of Leviticus. If you're like me, you never enjoyed reading this book, but after seeing God's heart in Leviticus it has quickly become one of my favorite books.

Let me explain a little, and hopefully you'll see Leviticus in a new light.


The first section is about sacrifices that we can't really relate to, after all what strange sacraments are these: sheep, goat, bull and grain offerings?

But think of an outsider looking in on us partaking in communion. He steps in the sanctuary and sees a woman take a piece of bread and a cup then go into a corner by herself. She closes her eyes and prays then breaks down in tears. The outsider is weirded out and cannot understand what on earth is going on.

It's the same for us when we read Leviticus, we're outsiders looking in on an early Israelite worship service in the Ancient Near East.

So we understand that it's very different from our culture - how does that help us understand it?

Looking at God's heart the Israelites had been in Egypt worshiping an array of gods that didn't communicate with them.

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 7
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12			

Here God is telling them exactly what He requires of them, He is a personal God.

As we see in the grain offering they come with fine flour that takes time and money and is offered with frankincense which is also expensive.

This shows that God wants a relationship with His people that they are invested in.

Surrounding this whole idea of worshiping God is His holiness. They go through these protocols so that as they approach God to have a relationship with Him they are not consumed.

All of this was for God to have relationship with His people, this made me reflect on how many times I had gone to a Sunday morning or Wednesday night worship service and wasn't present or invested in worshiping God.

For one of these Israelites, that would be unheard of, "God wants to have a relationship with you and you don't care!"

God's heart in Leviticus hasn't changed, He still wants to have a personal relationship with His people that they are invested in. Our sacraments have changed and we no longer worship God with offerings of bulls or goats because Jesus stepped in and became an atonement for our sins.

That means we have unimpaired access to God, something unheard of to an Israelite who could be considered unclean by simply sitting in the same place as someone who was unclean.

Paul writes about us being the body of Christ, another way to see it is we are the tabernacle of Christ. Holy Spirit dwells in us, Acts 2, just like the Spirit of God dwelt in the Tabernacle.

We are not serving a different God, but rather, we have so much freedom in Jesus to come to him at any time and anywhere.

This is just one of the many things that has caught my heart as I've been reading through and studying the Bible which leads me to my what God is calling me into next.

After this School finishes in June I will be continuing on in an outward expression of what I have learned.

	CONTINUED ON PAGE 14
--	-----------------------------

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 8
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13			

The name for this is the Titus project. This is a movement based out of Titus 2:1 "but as for you teach what accords with sound doctrine."

So coming up in September of this year, I will be going on an overseas missions trip both to be trained as a Bible teacher and to minister to the congregations of our brothers and sisters that are there.

Most of my life I have taken for granted that we have so much opportunity in the west to learn about the Bible, but in places like Nepal, there are very few opportunities, and in many villages the pastor of the village is simply the first person who converted to Christianity.

This email is just a general announcement of this trip, which is in about seven months, so I don't have any details about it, but I will probably have a better idea by June, when I'm back in Nevada, of where this trip is taking me and more specific prayer requests.

As for now, my prayer request is that I would be formed by the word of God as I continue to study it day to day.

With love in Christ,

Ben



**VM DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE
DESSERT SOCIAL**

Please join us this Friday (March 8) at 6:30pm for a time of worship with our Village Missions District Representatives Richard and Ellen Hayes. We'll learn about what God is doing through Village Missions and how we're contributing to His Kingdom each week. Our goal is to encourage the Hayes and help them feel fully appreciated. Please bring any dessert you'd like to share!



WOMEN'S RETREAT

Wishing you could sneak away for a relaxing time with friends? We have the perfect plan. Our "Cozy Mountain Lodge" will be open on March 16 from 8:30am to 4:30pm. This women's retreat will include musical worship, Bible study, and time to interact with other women and to make new friends. The \$20 cost per person will cover a delicious lunch, snacks, and fun and refreshing activities. Come and preregister at the Women's Retreat table!



Winter Update February 2019

Mike & Karen Kotecki
jm.kotecki or karenk52
@ gmail.com



Chaplains from across Europe came to a 'Spiritual Leaders of Character' conference recently. Photo at left shows Karen with a small group discussing Acts 16.



To review the past year and to seek God's will and direction for 2019, we helped organize a retreat for women and one for men. Second photo shows the women who spent time alone with God and with each other that weekend.



The men had an all day retreat on Saturday with breakfast and then several hours alone with the Lord in Psalm 37; afterwards, a time to debrief and pray together.

The lower photo shows three who stayed after the retreat to work with their hands together on a surprise serving project!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 11
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8			

Psalm 37: 8, 22 "Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. The LORD redeems the soul of his servants; no one who takes refuge in him will be condemned (or held guilty)."

Love to have coffee together with you here in Germany to celebrate Valentine's Day!



Looking Ahead: This month, we will be *moving...gradually...* 'down the street' to a smaller place!

February 28 - we fly to **Côte D'Ivoire** to minister with and to our 'family' in Africa.

Thank you for praying for both of these faith adventures!

Your partnership empowers us to proclaim Christ, to help others in knowing Him and in making Him known. **Thank You.**

**The Navigators, P.O. Box 6079,
Albert Lea, MN 56007-6679
Mission Account #40956 Ph: 866-568-7827
To mail us a letter: Akazienstr 10a, 66849 Landstuhl
Germany
[https://donations.navigators.org/SpecialPages/
DonorMaster/staffDonation?id=S40956|40956](https://donations.navigators.org/SpecialPages/DonorMaster/staffDonation?id=S40956|40956)**

Mike and Karen Kotecki are Navigator Missionaries to our military forces and their families in Landstuhl Germany that our PCC family supports



ROAD TRIPS

Sharon Ankrum

I love to travel!! It so exciting to go somewhere new and see new things and places. Flying is becoming a tiring way to go even though it's way faster. Luggage, security checks and small confined seats, (sometimes REALLY cramped), crying babies , all seems to take the excitement out of going.



Now I love road trips! Driving across new territory, seeing beautiful scenery, meeting the most interesting people, AND eating in new and different places, (some really good and some really bad.) Besides, all this you can leave suitcases in the car and use them as a dresser drawer, and not drag them everywhere. Another thing, driving allows more shopping space.

I love hitting backroads and exploring small out of the way communities where the pace of life doesn't seem so rushed, and of course I love to explore the history of cemeteries and headstones, I realize most people find that weird, but what interesting things you learn!

Now our Christian walk is just like going on a road trip. If we are in a hurry to get somewhere, we miss opportunities to meet and enjoy those folks along the way . To stay on freeways and flow with the traffic, stopping for gas, fast food and other necessities, gets you there quickly, but you miss out on the good stuff. You might see some pretty scenery, but not stopping to smell the roses, you miss the real beauty of the trip. This is like reading your Bible every day but not having a relationship with the one who wrote it. Hurrying through to say we read a verse or chapter but missing the message, is like hitting the freeway and missing the real beauty and character of the country. Sometimes traveling in the southeast or the northwest, the trees obscure the countryside, all you see is foliage. When we see the real country it's like being enlightened in God's word, His character shines forth.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 13
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10			

I love how the Old Testament and the New Testament mesh like putting your hand in a velvet glove, the one pointing to the Savior, the other fulfilling the promises and directing our path. Just like reaching our destination and enjoying the trip.

God gave us wonderful senses to see, hear, smell and taste. On back dusty roads, you must slow down, but oh, the wonderful opportunities to witness, see absolutely beautiful country and eat lots of homey meals. Sometimes the décor is delightful and a little funny, most times a mishmash of collections and so MUCH that you miss what it's all about.

When we take our eyes off the route, it doesn't mean we're lost forever, just taking a little longer to get to the destination. It can be a little spooky and the road gets narrower and narrower, so we just turn around and find our way back. That is repentance!

Hebrews 12:2-4

Keeping our on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, to finish the race set before us. We may stray from the paved roads, but keeping our eyes on the One who is always faithful, the destination is an anticipation of hope.

Once my friend, Gail, and I were in California and we went looking for a baby whale that had gotten stranded in a river. We took a really back road, and meandered through some really scary areas, hippies in makeshift tents, broken down vehicles, and junk everywhere. It kept getting narrower and narrower and the feeling that eyes were watching us from every hilltop was really creeping me out. Gail was driving and soon she said this looks like Deliverance, and I said "okay, that's it, let's get out of here" and thank goodness we didn't have fifteen side roads to decide which way to go, but we had to go back the same spooky way. I was really relieved to see civilization again, my sense of exploration was satisfied.

When we get off the straight path, and take our eyes off the road, that feeling of anxiety fills us with fear. Keeping our eyes focused on what is to come brings peace and expectations. As Christians, traveling the road here gets a bit rough and bumpy, but we always know Who is making straight our path.

Psalm 107:7 "He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in." We are only passing through, but traveling toward that place call HOME!

So, next time you take a trip try the backroads and see the beauty, taste the Lord for He is good.



DESSERT AUCTION



Saturday, March 23, 2019
Bob Ruud Center
1 pm

**Need Something Sweet To Eat?
Come to the Auction
Bid on a Dessert
*Support our Center!**

Do you have a favorite dessert to donate to the auction? Give us a call to add your dessert to our list. Let's see if your dessert will take home a *1st, 2nd, or 3rd place trophy for "Best Presentation"*.

LOOKING FOR CHILDREN AGES 7-12 to bake their favorite dessert (little help from parents) and donate to the auction. They will be judge for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place trophies too!

Looking for judges (not entered in the auction) to judge.

Contact Nancy Erwin: 775 513-6207 or the Center: 775 751-2229

*All donations will go towards the Center of operations.



Don't
Forget!

SPRING FORWARD!

Change Your
Clocks March 10





DAY TRIP OF THE MONTH

Giant Rock, Landers, California

Giant Rock is a large freestanding boulder in the Mojave Desert near Landers, California; it covers 5,800 square feet of ground and is seven stories high. Giant Rock is believed to be the largest free standing boulder in the world.

This granite rock and the surrounding area had been held as holy ground by Native Americans. For thousands of years Native Americans tribes used this rock in their ceremonies and prophecy.

In the 1930's and early 1940's a prospector named Frank Critzer constructed a single large room beneath the rock which he made his residence. He knew enough that if he could fashion a supported house under the giant rock that he would enjoy cooler temperatures in the summer and burn less fuel in the winter. He engineered a rainwater collection system and a tunnel for ventilation. The underground home was about 400 square feet in size and was reportedly never hotter than 80 degrees and never cooler than 55 degrees. Sadly Critzer perished in a dynamite explosion in this room on July 24th, 1942, while being investigated by local police under suspicion for being a German spy probably because of his short wave radio hobby and the array of antennas he had mounted on top of giant rock for better reception and the fact that he was German. Some stories claim that a tear gas canister was lobbed in which ignited Critzer's cache of dynamite. No one really knows the truth but the burned out room was closed and locked for years after that incident and subsequently has been filled in.

In the 1950's this rock was a gathering point for UFO believers. It is located on land which was at that time leased by George Van Tassel, a friend of Critzer's, a flying saucer contactee and organizer of UFO conventions. Van Tassel also built the nearby structure which he calls "Integratron". This is a building designed by Van Tassel which he claims is capable of rejuvenations, anti-gravity and time travel but that is another story that I don't want to get into.

In the early hours of March 24th, 2000, a large rumbling sound was heard across the small town of Landers, California. A few days later it was discovered that Giant Rock had mysteriously fractured in two revealing an interior of white granite.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14



The top photo shows Giant Rock with broken piece; and, the lower photo shows a person standing in front of rock for size comparison (Photos are from the internet)

VOLUME XCIII March 2019		THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF	PAGE 18
	EDITORIAL PAGE		

Life for Me

I am sorry the monthly newsletter is arriving a little late this month. I had my Editorial finished and in place until my morning devotions. Today is the first of March 2019! I should be motivated to reach my self-imposed deadline to get this out each month by the 1st day of the month. However, God interrupted my morning devotions with a remembrance of my maternal and fraternal grandmothers. I don't know why but I feel I am pass due on giving them the proper recognition and the well-earned appreciation that they deserve.

I have never seen such recognizably dissimilar and diverse personalities between these two women. My paternal grandmother was a "farmer's wife" raising 15 children (10 boys and 5 girls.) Their farm was across from Huntsville Texas Prison. My maternal grandmother was a working woman raising one child. Both women lived in Texas but in different cities. My maternal grandmother lived in Galveston – a tourist town and a fisherman's paradise. She worked as a maid in the various tourist cabins and hotels.

Their presence in my life was an indication of their personalities. My maternal grandmother we called "Dalsy." I don't really know why because her name was "Althea." My other grandmother was called "Grandma." Dalsy rarely visited us but she sent boxes of gifts for every occasion and even some for no reason at all. Grandma lived with us during the summer but returned to Houston the rest of the year where she babysat her granddaughter for her dead son's widow.

Both women loved and spoiled their grandchildren. One showered them with gifts and food. The other one showed them with stories and laughter. One was always in a hurry and the other loved to sit in my dad's rocker and regale us with funny stories about her 15 children on the farm when they were growing up.

But, there was something that they both had in common – they were both widows. Dalsy's husband was killed when my mother was three and she never married again. Grandma's husband died when the two older sons were 16 and 18 – the two who continued to maintain the farm until the remaining 13 children were all grown. None of the children - with the exception of the two oldest boys - ever returned to the farm. The boys sold the farm and retired to a solitary life – neither ever married. I remember them both – Uncle Conrad and Uncle "Bud." I never knew why he was called "Bud" because his name was "Paul." Nevertheless, they were two very prim and proper single bachelors.

Well, back to my grandmothers. Grandma died when I was eight years old. I remember that because I was in the third grade and my teacher's name was Mrs. Kellogg. (I remember her because we always referred to her as Kellogg Cornflakes – behind her back, of course.) Grandma died of a massive stroke. That was the first and only time I ever saw my father cry. She was 68 years old.

Dalsy died when I was in Junior High. She had ovarian cancer. She was 52 years old. She never visited us after I was about 10. But she still worked; and, she bought a Boarding House for men who worked on the Railroad. I am very proud of both of them. As I write this I feel I may have written about them before. But if I have – they both deserve as many accolades as I can give.

Their lives were "no crystal stair" but they paved the way for mine to be!

God bless ALL the precious grandmothers in the world. And, God bless all the grandchildren in the world who love and respect them. And, a very SPECIAL blessing for one of the GREATEST grandmothers of them all, and one who just happens to be a very close friend.

	CONTINUED ON PAGE 19
--	-----------------------------



Mother to Son
By Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you."
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor –
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now –
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.