

CELEBRATING EIGHTY WONDERFUL YEARS

This will be the most personal article that I have ever published.

I claim the old-timers privilege of sharing my story. I was born in Childress, Texas, April 16, 1928 and have a birth certificate to prove my claim. I overcame the obstacle of being born with the handicaps of not being able to walk, talk, read or write. Loving parents and other adults guided me to learn those good things.

Mrs. Warren, my English teacher in college, set a spark glowing when she said she recognized in me the ability to combine humor and seriousness into a worthwhile marriage. I thought her comment to be humorous, but it has always haunted me. I completed a humorless struggle through seminary in 1961, and accepted the call to be pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dexter, NM. In the early 1970s I was invited to tell a ten minute Bible Story each Monday over KSWs TV in Roswell, NM. This lasted for five-and-one-half years. I published a record album called Bible Story Time, and it failed to sell. KSWs opened a fifty thousand watt clear-channel FM station. They invited me to bring the station on the air with a five-minute devotional every morning. I did this for three years.

My first writing experience came with the invitation to write curriculum for the Southern Baptist Royal Ambassador Crusader and Crusader Counselor Magazines. They had a subscription list of over one hundred thousand. I have published in The Upper Room, Home Life, Youth Leadership, Mature Living, and other publications. I self-published Galliant's Journey, New Beginnings, Prayer in Sychar, Sterley Stories, and co-edited Comfortable Chickens and Spiritual Meditations. I am preparing the manuscript for a devotional book on Psalms 23.

Like a bud opening into a beautiful flower, this psalm opened as a metaphor of the journey that I have taken with the Great Shepherd. At age eleven I made a conscious choice that Jesus was my Savior and my Shepherd and I committed myself to follow him. I have walked with Jesus through many desert like places and have always found him faithful in supplying living water to rehydrate my spirit. Green pastures remind me of the rest and security he has provided during times of stress and fear. Countless times he has restored my soul when I felt defeated and hopeless. His rod of power and protection has often beaten off attacks of Satan who constantly attacks my loyalty. His staff points and directs my path and nudges me gently away from danger. The valley of the shadow of death has not been the fear of physical death, as much as the shadowy threats to my faith and commitment.

The table the Lord prepares for me is overly lavish and my cup of joy and thanksgiving runs onto the table. I do not consider anyone to be an enemy. If I have offended others I beg their forgiveness and invite them to my table as a welcomed friend.

At my birthday party, when I turn eighty, I plan to read the final lines of my humorous poem about being eighty. I call it 8T. (eighty) The ending lines go like this:
Now I am 8T. Big ole 8T. I am now a real-live oc-to-gen-ari-an. I hope you're impressed.
But, I don't know for sure how I should be dressed.
Only good prospects lie ahead. The 2 good people who caused me 2 B are waiting in heaven to welcome me. Jesus and I have walked many-a-trail.
He promised to guide me and has never failed. So, with loved ones beside me, and Jesus ahead, I'll walk into heaven...as soon as I'm dead.