

An Ordinary Man

An Extraordinary God

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Dedication

These pages are dedicated to my wonderful wife Dolores, without whom most of this story would not have occurred as it is written. She has been my constant and best companion, supporter and friend for these past 54 years. God's greatest gift to me after salvation has been my dear precious wife Dolores.

These memoirs are dedicated to my beloved wife, Dolores, and my immediate family members. To my children I am simply known as "Dad," and to my grandchildren, "Pop-Pop." To my close friends I am known as "Al" or "Pastor Al," and to congregational members and most other people as "Pastor McLeod."

Acknowledgement

My sincere gratitude to our beloved and only daughter Jan Alicia who first asked me to write a little history of my life while she was in high school for a project.

I am also extremely thankful for all my wife Dolores' wisdom and counsel given to me in writing these memoirs. Her encouragement enabled me to finish what I started many years ago.

Last but not least, I am deeply appreciative for all the insight, creativity and tireless working of Bob and Karen Oudyk for enabling these pages to come to fruition.

To God be the Glory!

Preface

The purpose for writing these memoirs is a reminder to all and especially to my children and future generations of what an extraordinary God can do in the life of any ordinary person. As I Corinthians 1:28b to 29 says, "*...hath God chosen , yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are that no flesh should glory in his presence.*"

The Life Story of Alfred H. McLeod

Birth and Family

I, Alfred Harry McLeod, was born on the beautiful warm summer Sunday June 23, 1940. My mother, the former Miss Mildred Frieze of Linwood, Pennsylvania, and my father Mr. Frederick Alfred McLeod of Media, Pennsylvania, were extremely happy new parents. My grandparents on both sides of the family were also just as happy, and since I was their first grandchild, I was destined to be terribly spoiled.

My father was born on Thursday November 22, 1917, in West Chester, Pennsylvania. My mother was born on Sunday May 20, 1917, in Scranton, Pennsylvania. My grandparents on my father's side were Donald Harry McLeod born in England and Sarah McLeod born in Pennsylvania. My grandparents on my mother's side were Henry Frieze born in Wales and Lydia Weston born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The majority of past relatives were born in Wales and England having come down from Scotland many years before.

My father's occupation was a chef. Later he would build and own his own restaurant in Malvern, Pennsylvania. My mother was very content being a mom, wife, and homemaker.

After I was born at the Chester Hospital in Chester, Pennsylvania, I was taken to my first home in Chelsea, Pennsylvania. Chelsea is a small town just outside Chester, Pennsylvania. I would live for the first six years of my life there.

Scarlet Fever

I suffered with a dreaded disease called "scarlet fever" at the young age of five, which caused me to remain in bed for an extended period of time. The curtains were drawn so as not to permit sunlight to enter into the room. The light, along with the extremely high fever, caused agonizing headaches and pain. I can still remember those long days and sleepless nights of discomfort.

Home and Moving

While in our first home, I was experimenting with kitchen utensils. I pushed a metal table knife into an electrical outlet and almost electrocuted myself. I was shocked unconscious for a period of time, but did recover from the electrifying experience.

While still living at that same residence, I was playing with matches one day and burned down my father's garage. Fortunately, garages were not attached to the house in those days and the living quarters were spared severe fire damages. Unfortunately, I was not spared the disciplinary action from my father, when he arrived home that day.

School (K-6)

It was here in Chelsea Pennsylvania, where I started school by attending a one room school house. All grades from kindergarten to sixth grade were taught by the same teacher in the same room.

Painful Lessons

Just before leaving our home in Chelsea, which holds many memories for me and some of them not very pleasant, I attended a Sunday School picnic at the nearby Lenape Amusement Park. This would not be a pleasant experience for me and I will never forget not having enough money to pay for those rides.

So, I decided to ride the carousel without paying for a ticket. In those days we called it a merry-go-round and tickets were collected on the merry-go-round as it was moving, not at an entrance to the ride as it is done today.

A ride attendant would walk around the merry-go-round and collected the tickets from individual riders, while it was in motion. If you didn't have a ticket, you could keep moving around the merry-go-round ahead of the attendant, so that he or she would not catch up to you to collect that ticket.

Well, I panicked and decided to jump off the ride, while it was moving at top speed. This was a painful mistake, because I broke my arm in two places from jumping off that speeding ride.

I was ashamed of having done this, especially since this happened on a Church Sunday School picnic. I ran away from the ride and didn't tell anyone about my broken arm. Even worse, my mother didn't have a car and I found myself waiting another eight hours into the early evening with much pain before I would get a ride home from a bus.

Only after I arrived home did I tell my mother what had happened and that my arm hurt very much. She managed to take me to a local doctor, who set the arm back in place and put a cast around it.

I will never forget the pain I suffered that day. Until this day I remember the Scripture verse, "Be sure your sin, will find you out." (Numbers 32:23)

Painful Memories

One of the most painful experiences was yet to come. Not the pain of a broken arm, but the pain of a broken home. I will never forget that day. My father came home from work announcing that he was divorcing my mother and moving out never to return again.

I can still remember my father standing by the front door looking at us saying, "*If you want to live with me, then come and stand by me. If you want to live with your mother, then go and stand by her.*" I was six years old and my sister Betty only four.

How could any child make such a decision? I wanted to live with both my mother and my father and have a normal childhood, but that was never going to happen now. My sister and I, having spent most of our early childhood with our mother, chose to stay with Mom.

My father was not a believer and lived an ungodly life. My mother was a Godly woman and raised us in this way. Our futures turned toward God in doing what was right Biblically.

That was an *incredible* experience; one that will live in my memory as long as I will live.

Duties and Jobs

Soon after my parents divorced, my grandmother on my mother's side, Mrs. Lydia Frieze, came to live with our small family while my mother went to work to support us.

Because of expenses, we had to sell our home in Chelsea and moved to a less expensive home in a rather difficult section of a small town called Linwood, Pennsylvania, where we found the house infested with rats in the basement.

My duty was to take glass bottles and break them and shove the broken pieces down in the holes where the rats tunneled into the dirt basement floor from outside. This slowed them down somewhat, but didn't completely stopped them.

I also had my *chores* to do. One chore was making sure the coal furnace was raked down of all its ashes and add fresh coal each morning, and then take those burned ashes outside each day before leaving for school.

In those days, the family didn't own a car. Each week I had to pull my little red wagon to and from the nearest market to bring home that week's groceries, which was about a mile away. This was a little embarrassing for me, especially as a teenager, since all my friend's parents did have cars. But, I learned humility with this chore and learned that I could earn extra money by pulling other people's groceries home. Our family didn't own a car until I bought my first car in high school.

I held various jobs growing up. My first paying job was that of a paperboy delivering the morning news before going to school. It paid \$1.25 a week. I saved for a whole year for a new bunk-bed set, so that I could invite friends to my home overnight on weekends.

I remember the winter months, it would be so cold in our home that we had to cover the inside of the windows with plastic to keep out the cold winter air. In those days this plastic was not clear, so we could not see outside the windows for the entire winter.

As I continued to grow, so did my duties. I was *the man around the house* as my mother would call me. I helped paint and wallpaper the house several times and put on part of a front porch roof.

I worked many jobs to help support our family in Junior and Senior High School for my personal spending needs, since there wasn't much money for extras in those days. Some of the jobs were a paperboy, a grocery store clerk, an Army and Navy Store clerk, a shoe store stock boy, a *Mrs. Smith Pie* truck helper and a summer day camp maintenance worker.

Hobbies

I was an avid model builder. I loved to build model airplanes and suspend them from the ceiling in my bedroom. I also had a model train collection, which was my pride and joy. It was put on display every Christmas season.

My First Car

At the age of 16, I was able to purchase my first car. It was a 1948 Ford for which I paid \$75 dollars. The car was infested with bees.

At the time, I didn't know how to drive a standard shift transmission. I learned how to drive in an automatic transmission vehicle and so, when I drove my first car home, I didn't know what to do in order to get the car going again after stopping for a stop sign.

Finally, a man walking down the street, came over and told me that I needed to change gears using the clutch. It was an embarrassing experience, but I was glad that I was able to drive the new "bee hive" home that day. I never did get it completely exterminated while owning it.

Frightening Experiences

High School

I was an average, very quiet and reserved student at Chichester High School, Boothwyn Pennsylvania. I graduated in June of 1958 as the quietest boy in my class of 130 students.

I worked for a dairy farmer as a milkman delivering milk door to door for about six months following graduation.

One day while driving home in the morning after working an extended workday, I fell asleep at the wheel of my car and was nearly killed in an awful accident and almost totaled the car.

Winter fun

I had many frightening experiences, while in high school and any one of them almost took my life. For instance during a snow storm, my friends and I would take our sleds and go out into the streets, wait for cars near a stop sign, run after a car and lay on our sleds, while holding onto the back bumper letting the car pull us down the street on the snow.

This was very dangerous because, if there were bare spots in the street, the sled would stop suddenly and you would be thrown off. And if the car pulling you would stop, or turn too quickly, you could be run over, or run over by another passing vehicle.

Summer Camp

I will never forget one year at the Y.M.C.A. summer camp in the mountains of Central Pennsylvania, I needed to go to the out-house and, when I entered only then did I realize that there was a rattlesnake curled up in the corner next to me. I didn't I use that restroom for the rest of the week!

Cousin Robert

My cousin Robert was a very good friend of mine and we had many good times together. Every other weekend Robert's parents would take me with them to Elverson Pennsylvania to my grandparent's farm on my father's side.

Those weekends until this day hold many wonderful memories as Robert and I would roam the hills and countryside, swim, hunt, and explore God's wonderful world of nature. They were joyful experiences that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Robert lived about three miles away from our home. We would take a short cut through the forest and meet each other half way on many occasions. I will never forget meeting Robert one day by an abandoned brick building and suddenly, as Robert and I came down by the stream, bricks came flying through the air from the old building. As I looked back, I could see older teenagers laughing and throwing these bricks as fast as they could toward us. One brick just missed my head. We ran across the stream as fast as we could, where one boy was hit badly in the head with a brick.

It's those kinds of experiences that I will never forget and continue to this day to thank God for His protection.

Engagement and Marriage

After six months of driving a milk truck, I decided to join the Air Force since I always loved planes. I enlisted Monday December 8, 1958 and was shipped to San Antonio, Texas for basic training and stayed there for three months.

In March of 1959, I came home on a ten day furlough and dated a girl that I had met in church by the name of Dolores Bell. On our second date in Ocean City, New Jersey overlooking the ocean and underneath a full moon, I asked Dolores to marry me. She accepted my proposal and after receiving permission from her Dad, we were married on Saturday December 5, 1959 at Marcus Hook Baptist Church in Linwood Pennsylvania.

My interest in Dolores started the first time I saw her in a church service as she entered and sat with a young man who was dating her and cared for her very much. Until this day I cannot understand the reason Dolores broke off her relationship with this godly young man who was multi-talented to date a totally selfish and impolite teenager as myself.

Looking back I can see God's hand in our courtship, because the Lord knew that it would be through Dolores that I would come to know Christ as my personal Savior and grow in Him, and then Dolores would become a perfect pastor's wife.

Actually, I didn't date Dolores until after I entered the Air Force. This was mostly, because I was shy and didn't feel that I had any of the qualities that her present boy friend had. I really thought that she would not be interested in me.

This all changed in March of 1959, when I came home for the first time on furlough from the Air Force. I saw that some of the young people from church had come to welcome me home at the airport and Dolores was the only girl among them. To me this meant that Dolores cared for me to some degree, and so I told Dolores that I would call her at a certain time and day. But I didn't call her until four hours after and arrived three hours late for our first date.

Surprisingly, Dolores still went out for a drive only to have me stop the car about five miles from her home and told her to "get out and walk home!" I was so self-centered and got my feelings hurt over some little statement Dolores had made. Until this day, I am glad that Dolores didn't get out. She started to cry and this tender moment touched my heart. We continued our date and saw one another a few more times during my furlough.

Later in May of 1959, we became more serious, while on another furlough. At that time I didn't hesitate to ask Dolores to be my steady girl friend. The following August, while on the boardwalk in Ocean City New Jersey, I proposed to Dolores and later asked her father's permission to marry her.

Originally, we planned to be married in the summer of 1960, but being so far away from my bride-to-be, I asked if we could move the date to December of 1959. This presented a great hardship for Dolores' parents, because her older sister had already planned a wedding in January of 1960. Despite of all these challenges, Dolores' father said that it would be fine and now her family had two weddings for which to prepare in a span of one month time.

Even though we have been married now for well over 50 years, I don't recommend matrimony for those still in their teen years. I would recommend that all couples planning on taking this big step to have a number of months of Christian pre-marital counseling. As with any worthwhile endeavor in life, marriage involves much effort, time, and patience. Problems must be talked through completely and prayed about together. Each person needs to "esteem the other, better than himself" (Phil. 2:3) and be forgiving at all times. No one is always right all the time, except God of course. I also don't believe in a lengthy engagement period because of the many moral temptations.

Marriage vows need to be taken much more seriously. Unfortunately, divorce laws are too lenient, thereby permitting couples to end their covenant with each other under God too easily.

Still, I praise God every day for Dolores' wisdom and Biblical insight as well as her cooperative spirit. Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the Lord." And to that I say, "Amen!"

Travel & Birth of a Son

On Monday December 7, 1959 Dolores and I left Pennsylvania for Grand Forks North Dakota, where I was stationed in the Air Force.

We were so much in love that I forgot to watch the fuel gauge while traveling and ran out of gas on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. But finally we arrived in Grand Forks, North Dakota and we had only a quarter tank of gas left in the car and two dollars in our pockets, when we finished that two thousand mile trip.

It was there in Grand Forks that I was saved on Sunday, March 12, 1960. My wife Dolores led me to the Lord, which forever changed my life!

After just six months, I was transferred to Glasgow, Montana and Dolores had to return to Pennsylvania to stay with her parents, because there wasn't enough housing available.

Dolores gave birth to our first son named Jay Alfred during her time home. Jay was born Wednesday December 14, 1960 with a very serious stomach disorder that needed surgery.

He was only three weeks old at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, where he underwent surgery by a surgeon who was one of the doctors that cared for the former President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

After recovering from the operation, Dolores and Jay traveled back by train to join me in Glasgow, Montana. There we lived and enjoyed our simple life together.

I can still remember walking about one and a half miles each morning to a local service station, where I would hitch-hike a ride to the Air Base another twenty miles outside of town to go to work. My car just wouldn't start in forty degree below zero Montana winter weather. For this reason, I still don't like the cold today.

During my time in the Air Force I enjoyed all my duties, which entailed cooking for eight pilots and four ground crew members in a little kitchen inside an alert hanger on the runway.

I would work one day and had two days off. It was choice duty on a large Air Base, where only three cooks worked and I was blessed to be one of them.

During my two days off, I would work at a local farm and ride their tractor all day long for a \$1 dollar an hour plus all the dust you could eat. It wasn't much pay, but every bit of it helped to put food on the table for my new young family.

I will never forget having received orders to be transferred to another little Air Base Site on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada,. I was told that this was even a better assignment then the duties I currently had and in a beautiful part of the world.

After clearing through all the sections of the base reporting back just before leaving, I was told that my orders had been canceled by the Commanding Officer. He wanted me to stay here, because of my work ethic.

This was a real concern, because I had already given up our apartment in town. Dolores and little Jay were already in the car outside ready to leave for the new assignment.

Now, we had no place to sleep and nowhere to live. I will never forget driving around that little town and going to every apartment house that I could find to see if they had an apartment available.

It was getting very late at night. Only then, at the very last stop we found an Christian man who had compassion on our situation. He had just rented his last apartment to two school teachers. They still had their apartment and were only planning on upgrading.

He recognized that Dolores, little Jay and I needed the apartment much more than the two teachers, so he told us to move in that night. That was a wonderful answer to prayer!

For the next two years this Christian landlord and his wife and another couple, who would later buy the apartments, became close friends to Dolores and I. We would often spend time together.

I worked for the apartment owners repairing the three large apartment houses that always needed repair with what little time I had left to offer from my other two jobs. I repaired many things, such as electrical malfunctions, water problems, painting and flooring needs.

Most importantly, this is where I became very active in a newly started Southern Baptist Church. And it is here in Glasgow, Montana that I started to grow in Christ and was touched time and time again by the pastor's messages. I started to teach an adult Sunday School class, where my desire to serve the Lord grew very much.

Dolores and I would walk two miles to church in the extremely cold winter months and every so often go into an apartment hallway along the way to get warm. Many times Dolores' legs would be turning blue from the extreme cold, when we arrived at the church. We became very close friends with the pastor and his wife and send Christmas cards to each other until this day.

Honorable Discharge

After four years in the Air Force, I received an honorable discharge and moved back to the south eastern Pennsylvania, where my wife and I were raised, and went back to work for the same dairy farmer, where I had worked after high school.

I was able to secure better employment at a local plant within a year. I believe the only reason I was hired there was, because every week I would go and sit in the company's employment office without an appointment. I was hoping that they would see my determination and desire to work there.

Finally they did. I went to work for the Scott Paper Company in Chester, Pennsylvania, which was a great company to work for. I stayed there for three years and worked my way up through various departments. My salary increased as my family grew.

Birth of a Son

It was during this time that our second son Jeff Allen was born on Saturday October 5, 1963. We were glad for a beautiful boy that day, who truly was a picture perfect child. He would become a preacher, who until this day, pastors a thriving ministry in Rio Grande, New Jersey.

While working for Scott Paper Company, Dolores and I lived in a small apartment in a very difficult section of a town called Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. Marcus Hook is a town on the Delaware River, and Dolores and I lived just one block from the river.

One night I was awakened by a strange clatter, so I arose to see what was the matter. Now, this isn't a Christmas poem, though it did happen right after Christmas. As I made my way into the bedroom where our two small sons were sleeping, I could see two eyes glaring at me from the top of the stair case.

I grabbed my son's toy pop-gun, since I didn't have any real weapon. Shouting at the intruder to leave or I would shoot and hoping that the intruder wouldn't know that all I could do is shoot corks on a string. But he just stood there glaring back at me and didn't go away.

A telephone wasn't nearby; the only phone in the house was downstairs. I had no choice but to bluff the intruder into leaving. I continued to threaten with my trusty pop-gun for another half an hour.

Finally, seeing that this was going to be a stand-off, I decided that I would rush the intruder with a baseball bat like a stick. So mustering up enough courage, I turned the light on and rushed towards him as fast as I could. Much to my embarrassment, I found it to be my son's hobby-horse with glass eyes reflecting in the night.

That stand-off with that hobby-horse will always be engraved into my brave and courageous memory.

Meaning and Purpose

After living in Marcus Hook for about four years, we were able to save enough money to purchase a new brick home in a nice community called Afton in Claymont, Delaware. Afton is still a lovely little community with neatly lined homes in a beautiful area of northern Delaware. In fact, the couple who bought the home from us, still lives in that same house today.

It was there that I seriously thought about the meaning and purpose of life. I worked so much overtime and saved hard to buy this new custom built home, and purchased a new car; I had a wonderful wife and two small boys. Life was good, but something was still missing.

Even though I was very active at my home church in various ways, I kept wanting to do more for the Lord. In frustration, I went to my pastor one day and asked him, "What else can I do in the church for the Lord?" My pastor wisely said, "Al, you are a Trustee, you serve on the Official Board, you are a Sunday School Teacher, you serve with the Brigade, the Bus Ministry, and you work in our Children's Church Program. There is nothing more you can do except to quit your job and go to Bible School or Seminary, and go into the Lord's work full-time."

After praying about it with Dolores, we sold our home in Afton, when the buyer assumed our mortgage, and moved into a little four room apartment in yet another bad section of Chester, Pennsylvania.

I enrolled in what is called today "The Philadelphia Theological Seminary" following the advice of our pastor and graduated from there in May of 1969.

Making Ends Meet

During my years in Seminary, we struggled to meet our financial needs every day. Dolores cleaned houses at various times and I still worked part-time at the Scott Paper Company. Later, I was employed by Sears Roebuck & Co. going door-to-door as an interior decorator around the Chester area.

I also worked as a maintenance man at a large apartment complex in Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania called Drexelbrook, which I enjoyed very much. I would leave for seminary at seven in the morning and then attend classes from eight thirty to one. From there I would drive to my place of employment and work until eight in the evening every day including Saturdays. I would arrive home at about nine and have supper with Dolores, say goodnight to our children, and study until about one in the morning. I would get up at six the next morning and do it all over again.

Sometimes, I would go to bed later or get up earlier depending on how difficult my studies were, especially having examinations the next day.

During these years Dolores and I struggled financially. Many times we would search for loose coins under cushions at home, in our pockets, and in the car. On one occasion we didn't have anything left. We didn't ask anyone else for financial help, we simply trusted our Heavenly Father to provide for our food, gas and rent.

On this one occasion, things couldn't look any worse. We prayed earnestly for at least a quarter so that I could buy a half gallon of gas to drive to work for my paycheck. Finally, and as you may have guessed, after Dolores looked everywhere, she found twenty five cents. It was just enough to get the gas needed for a trip to work. God always likes to expand our faith and He sure did it that day!

Praying for Guidance

All during my seminary days I prayed and asked the Lord for direction. I was not looking to enter the ministry as a pastor, after all, I was too quiet and reserved, and just didn't speak well in front of people.

In fact in seminary, we were required to preach in the chapel and conduct our own service at least three or four times a year. We were assigned a verse on which to speak, and then were graded by our professor who attended the worship service. Other students could also comment on the sermon and on the service.

Well, my first sermon was so bad that the dean of the seminary publicly reprimanded me for at least thirty minutes. He was so harsh that there was complete silence in the room. My fellow students felt bad for me, because the dean had corrected everything that I said and I was given a failing grade.

Now, usually if the student tried to do their best but did poorly, he would still receive a low grade. The only way you would get a failing grade is when you skipped class and didn't speak at all.

My message was so poor that the dean failed me, regardless of my effort and I will never forget asking the dean about receiving that failing grade. The dean simply looked at me and answered, "I failed you because you deserved it." Turned around and walked away.

Well, I did deserve it and I learned from the experience. It gave me the determination to be a better spokesman for God. I did improve in public speaking and in fact, the very last sermon that I gave in seminary was in front of that very same dean, which gave an "A" for my effort this time.

I went to dean and thanked him for the high mark and I will never forget his remark, "Mr. McLeod, I gave you the grade because you deserved it." He turned around and walked away as before.

I had learned to deal with failure. I had also realized that if you continue to try to do your very best, the Lord will reward your efforts in His time.

Originally, there were forty two seminary students in my class starting as freshmen. Until this day, I thank the Lord for permitting me to be among the final twelve students graduating and surviving the Hebrew and Greek 1969 classes. This is a tribute especially to what God can do through someone like myself, who had not studied any type of foreign language prior to seminary.

Years after graduating from seminary, I would continue to achieve advanced degrees, while pastoring and doing the work God had called me to do.

The Calling and Trusting in God

After graduating from seminary, I accepted a call from the First Baptist Church of Damascus, Pennsylvania and would become their pastor. Damascus is a small dairy community in northeast Pennsylvania. It was while in this mountainous area, that our third son Jon Andrew was born on Saturday December 27, 1969.

Jon was born in the midst of a violent snow storm that almost caused us not to reach the hospital in time. Dolores was awakened at four in the morning and said, "It's time to go to the hospital." With the help of some friends, we shoveled the snow out of our driveway and started on a twenty mile trip to the nearest hospital in town. The roads were completely covered with winddriven snow. Somehow, Dolores and I were able to travel half way until we arrived in a section, where the roads were totally impassible.

The wind had driven the snow so high across the road that it reached the tops of our tires. Dolores and I were praying continuously as to what to do, and then suddenly, we saw flashing lights ahead of us. We strained our eyes in the whiteout conditions, and we could barely see this enormous snow plow coming our way clearing part of the road.

And so being cool, calm, and collective, I jumped out of the car and started running frantically through the snow that was now coming up to my knees. I waved my arms and shouted, "My wife's going to have a baby, my wife's going to have a baby! We've got to get through to the hospital."

The snow plow operator shouted back, "Well, I'll try to get you through this section, but from this point on you are on your own, because there are no other snow plows between here and town." Well, by the grace of God, who is always faithful, we made it in time for the birth of Jon Andrew in Honesdale General Hospital.

God also met financial needs regarding our doctor and hospital bills without Dolores and I realizing it. We did not have health care coverage at this time, and so the Lord was the One who moved us to Damascus, when she was eight months pregnant back in November of 1969.

He knew that the church here would give their pastor a Christmas gift of \$230. The doctor donated most of his services and that truly was a blessing. Still, the hospital needed to be paid before we left the hospital. The bill was \$228 leaving us with two dollars, just enough to get a prescription for our new son, which cost \$1.75. So, God once again provided for us with twenty five cents to spare. Isn't God good?

Be Careful What You Say

Living in the mountains of Pennsylvania that winter provided many memories for our growing McLeod family. For instance, none of the telephones were private lines, they were three or four party lines. Dolores will never forget talking to some of the church members one day as they proceeded to tell her everything that she had been talking to a friend about by phone the day before. So, Dolores asked them, "How do you know all these things?" And they replied, "Oh, we heard you talking on the phone yesterday. We hear all that's going on."

Now, one might think that *that* is bad enough, but once a week they had a little country newspaper with all the information that was gathered from what everyone had heard the previous week. Needless to say, Dolores and I learned to stay off the phone as much as possible.

The Mission & the Ministry

The first year in Damascus, I was to officiate my first wedding with very little notice. The couple getting married had been church members from their youth and were well known in the community. So, this was to be the affair of the year and a very important wedding in this little country town.

Their former pastor was invited back to perform the ceremony since he had known the couple for so many years. The rehearsal was on Good Friday evening and I went along just to observe, since I wasn't part of this service. The wedding was scheduled to be held on Easter Sunday in the evening at seven.

Well, it snowed on Easter Sunday. It snowed so much that at about four o'clock the parsonage telephone rang and it was the former pastor. He said the roads were so badly covered with snow that he could not come to officiate the wedding ceremony since he would be traveling from the state of New York. I would have to, in his words, "wing it!"

I was beside myself for I had not conducted any wedding ceremonies before and didn't know what to do. I had just finished with the Easter Sunrise Service in the snow, taught the Adult Sunday School Class, and preached my first Easter message. Now I was asked to officiate my first wedding ceremony without a rehearsal with the couple?

I arrived at the church about an hour before the wedding, which was no small task in these blizzard-like conditions. I didn't have time to go over the service plans with the bride and groom, so I was forced to "wing it."

Overall, the wedding turned out to be just fine and some 35 years later this couple wrote to express their appreciation and thanked me for all my efforts that day. I still remember a large picture of the groom mounting snow chains on a car outside the church, so they could go on their honeymoon.

Discouraged

I served our church in Damascus for a year and against the advice of the deacons and members of the church who wanted me to stay especially the young people, who wrote me a long letter asking me to reconsider, I resigned.

I was discouraged because I just could not develop a proper study ethic. I would stay up Saturday nights until daylight Sunday morning trying to formulate messages. It was total frustration for me and the only way out of the situation was to resign, and so I did.

Dolores and I moved our family back to Claymont, Delaware, and lived in a small apartment there. I told the Lord that I was not interested in pastoring another church again. The only way I would reconsider is if the Lord had a church contact me.

Even though I was no longer interested in pastoring, I was still very much interested in serving as a layman at my home church in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. It was during this time that I was asked to teach a large adult Sunday School class. I consented and taught that class but, unknown to me, there was a couple from Connecticut visiting with friends in the same class that morning. They attended a church that was without a pastor and they asked our church if I was a minister. They told them that I was and not pastoring a church at that time.

So, when they returned to Connecticut, they told their pulpit committee about me. Then the Calvary Baptist Church of Norwich, Connecticut, extended a call for me to come and be a candidate for their pulpit. I did not want to go at all, but Dolores reminded me that I had prayed that if the Lord wanted me back in this ministry, that the Lord would have to send a church to find me, which they had done.

The weekend I was to go, I became very sick with flu like symptoms. I wanted to cancel the speaking engagement, but through the urging of Dolores, I reluctantly went to Connecticut. I became even more ill on the way to Connecticut and had to stop alongside the highway several times. After arriving there, I went straight to bed that Saturday evening and was not very polite to this wonderful couple, who had opened their home for Dolores and me. This was the same couple that had recommended me for their church, which later would become extremely close to our family.

I preached that Sunday morning and returned to bed in the afternoon. Dolores and I were asked if we would like to see the parsonage I said "no." But Dolores wanted to see it. Later, she told me that she had prayed, "Lord, this would be a wonderful home and community and church in which to raise our family." I hoped not to see Connecticut ever again.

After a meeting with the pulpit committee for about two hours, I preached the Sunday evening message and again went straight to bed.

But as you may have guessed, God did not listen to me. He heard the heart cry of Dolores as the Calvary Baptist Church reached out to me in becoming their pastor.

By this time, two other churches had contacted me to become their pastor and our large home church asked me to become their associate pastor.

Believing that it was God's will for me to go to Connecticut, I accepted their invitation, which became the turning point of my life in serving the Lord. I served as the pastor at the Calvary Baptist Church in Norwich Connecticut for fifteen years from 1971 to 1986.

Preston, Connecticut

I had many memorable experiences in a small, but wonderful community of Preston Connecticut where the parsonage was located. The greatest of which was the arrival of our fourth child a daughter Jan Alicia, who was born on Thursday May 18, 1972, in Backus Hospital, Norwich Connecticut. Dolores and I had hoped and prayed for a daughter for many years. I told the congregation that if the Lord gave me a daughter, that I would wear a pink shirt in the pulpit. Well, God did His part in giving us this beautiful baby girl, and so I kept my word and wore a pink shirt for several Sundays in church.

The first weekend that Jan Alicia came home from the hospital, Dolores was going on a ladies retreat. So, being the proud father of my little baby girl I said that I would care of little daughter Jan.

Well, when Dolores came home from the Ladies' Retreat after only twenty four hours, I had changed Jan so many times that I used up all the diapers.

The Holy Land of Israel & Travels

One of the highlights of my fifteen years of service as pastor at Calvary Baptist Church was, when the church awarded Dolores and I a trip to the Holy Land of Israel in February of 1980. We were traveling with a group of Christians leaving from J.F.K. Airport in New York. I made it very clear to the tour hosts that, I didn't want to speak or preach in Israel. This was merely to be an educational pleasure trip for us. The tour hosts assured me that they would not ask me to speak and that they understood.

However, *and isn't there always a however*, in Jerusalem at about eleven one evening the telephone rang in my hotel room and you guessed it; our tour host was calling to ask me to speak at the Garden Tomb the next day. The scheduled speaker had developed laryngitis and was unable to officiate the communion service that was planned. I consented feeling this must be the Lord's will.

As Dolores slept, I stayed up the entire night preparing for the morning's message and communion service. This turned out to be the highlight of the entire trip, because at the end of the message I extended an invitation for those present to accept Christ as their personal Savior. Well, seven individuals responded to the invitation that morning and I will never forget that wonderful opportunity and experience of being able to be used of God in that way. The tour guide later remarked that they didn't extend salvation invitations on any previous Holy Land trips and expressed how glad they were that the people were given an opportunity to be saved.

Another memorable experience I had while pastoring in Connecticut is when a deacon and I traveled to Indiana for a Pastor's Conference. We ran into a major blizzard on the way across upstate Pennsylvania that stranded many motorists. My companion and I were able to get off the highway and stay in a motel overnight.

The next morning we saw trucks and cars as well as tour buses that slid off the highway and were stranded as we continued on our trip going westward. God once again protected me and gave us traveling safety during that incredible snow storm in March of 1973.

God had spared me for many reasons. One of which was certainly for moving from an old church building in the city of Norwich, into a new church that God permitted us to build by His Grace. The new Calvary Baptist Church was built in the wonderful little town of Preston, Connecticut. The new church was located just three miles from its former location and during the fifteen years at Calvary Baptist Church, the church grew with many coming to know Christ and were active in its ministry.

Several of the young members were called into full-time Christian ministry and some became pastors. A large bus ministry and tape ministry had begun. Until this day, I have

a love in my heart for that ministry and those people. I was so privileged to work with them in that wonderful part of God's vineyard.

All during the summer of 1985, the people of Mullica Hill Baptist Church in New Jersey had continued to ask if I would consider becoming their pastor. I persisted in saying no, not at this time. After candidating that September, as I had finally consented I told them I would join them if the church voted in my favor.

How my heart was torn as I truly had fallen in love with the people and ministry here in Connecticut and felt perhaps that God was now opening a door in New Jersey. I can still remember returning home, the entire parsonage yard and driveway were full of cars and members from our church welcoming us back again.

How was I ever going to tell them that I might be leaving them for New Jersey? This is where I raised our family and learned proper study habits in preparing sermons. We made so many wonderful lifetime friends and had to tell them the news.

Thus this wonderful part of our ministry was over as we followed God's leading and direction for my life.

Mullica Hill New Jersey

In the winter in 1986, our family moved to southern New Jersey, where I became the new pastor of what was then called the Maranatha Bible Church, which was renamed the Mullica Hill Baptist Church. We have been here for almost thirty years and have seen all four of our children grow, marry and are now raising their own families.

Dolores and I are blessed to have thirteen grandchildren. We are so thankful to the Lord that all of our children are active and serving in good Bible-believing ministries. We are blessed to have a son who has served as a pastor since 1995. God has truly been good to us in many ways throughout my life. I continue to praise God everyday for all His mercy and kindness.

One of the many highlights at the Mullica Hill Baptist Church was in 1999, when a member of the church gave Dolores and I a three week trip to Scotland and England. It was a wonderful experience for us to see the country, where my grandparents and great-grandparents were born and raised.

Summing it Up

The summation of my life thus far is probably best seen in the fictitious story that was printed in my high school yearbook in 1958, when I graduated from Chichester High School and was voted the quietest boy in a class of 130 students.

In this fictitious story every one of the seniors was portrayed with the exact opposite characteristics of what they actually were in real life. So in the story all of the seniors are gathered together to hear a famous orator, which happened to be none other than the quietest boy in the class, Alfred Harry McLeod. That was intended to be humorous, and indeed it was. In fact it was hilarious!

Well, I am NOT a famous orator, nor will I ever be. I am trying to be a faithful orator of God's Word. I realize that only the Lord can take a shy reserved quiet boy and make him into a preacher. So, I have chosen as my life's verse 2nd Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Everyday, I say as the Apostle Paul did in 1st Timothy 1:12, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." Amen!

I was asked by the former president of my high school graduating class to officiate his wife's funeral in 2012. I accepted this opportunity and thanked God for the privilege and honor of being asked. Only later upon reflection did I realize that perhaps that humorous, fictitious story of the quietest boy speaking before his fellow high school seniors was fulfilled in a small way. Although it had been some 54 years after the writing in the yearbook, that day there was a large number of former classmates attending the funeral.

But most importantly, I was able to share the Gospel and open God's Word with my former peers. It's almost as if my life has come full circle and only God could have made this happen!

"To God be the glory, great things He hath done."

Three Pastorates

I learned many valuable lessons in God's ministry in three different locations over the years. Sometimes it is difficult to understand that pastors learn from their congregations as much as they teach their congregations. The lessons learned in my first ministry were many. Overall I was taught by God's people the lesson of humility not to think that this newly graduated seminary student knew all the answers to everything.

I can still remember visiting a dairy farmer in his barn in the middle of winter. It was bitter cold outside, when I entered the barn I noticed it was warm and comfortable. So this new pastor wanting to impress this member of the congregation said, "My, it must cost you a fortune to heat this barn." To which the wise farmer said "Pastor, I don't heat this barn; the cows do." I learned to listen and not speak so quickly on subjects that I was not familiar with.

I also remember another couple from the church that bought a new piano and gave it to the church. They took the old piano and brought to their home. Most folks would have bought a new piano for themselves, not giving it to the church, but not this godly couple who truly loved the Lord.

Near the end of this pastorate, I did not want to continue on in ministry. I was looking to leave the ministry and enter into secular employment, because I was discouraged. So, when I heard of a position as a "hunting dog trainer" that opened and provide lodging for my family, I applied for it immediately.

Upon being interviewed for the position, I was asked if I had any dog training experience and I said, "No, but I can learn!" Well, I figured if I could learn Hebrew and Greek in seminary, certainly I could learn how to train dogs! I didn't get that position. Looking back now I can see it was God closing that door, so that I could return to my home church.

Later that year I taught an adult Sunday School class and met a couple from Connecticut whose church was looking for a pastor. When I went and spoke at this church in Connecticut, I was called to pastor that church. In less than nine months after resigning from the church in Pennsylvania, saying that I would never go into the ministry again, I became the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church. So, never say never to God!

I also learned not to run from God's calling for my life. I should have known this principle from the story of Jonah in the Bible. Like Jonah, our family experienced many difficulties during the nine months I spent out of the ministry.

Perhaps the most severe one was the time my son Jeff spilled a hot cup of tea on his stomach. He suffered severe burns running through our little apartment as his T-shirt and skin melted together on his stomach. In fact, Jeff was so badly burned that he was isolated in the local hospital for more than a week until he recovered.

I learned that running from God not only causes much heartache for me, but for my family members as well. This situation caught my attention and I seriously started to think about returning to the ministry again.

After arriving and beginning a new ministry on Mother's day, 1971, I had for the first time in my life started to love the ministry in Connecticut. Over those fifteen years there, I made many life-long friends and learned proper study habits, which enabled me to finally "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," (Acts 20:28)

Not only was I serving as a Pastor in this ministry now, but for the first time there was stability for our family, for which I praise God. And it wasn't a moment too soon, because Jay was now 10, Jeff was 7; Jon was only 1, and Jan was to be born in May of 1972.

For the first time I was able to spend some time with the family. The boys were involved in playing on various baseball teams, and we played golf on many of the Connecticut and Rhode Island golf courses. I attended the children's baseball games and I enjoyed taking Jon and Jan to Christian school each day and completing various school projects with all my children.

The Calvary Baptist Church was a very active church. It grew spiritually and numerically. There were many church activities and everyone in the church seemed to rotate their lives around them, and so all the programs and services were well attended.

This was a great ministry where God showed me stability for the ministry and for our family.

Yet, all good things must come to an end. And so, feeling it was God's will to accept a calling from a church in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, I submitted my resignation in Connecticut. One of the major reasons for accepting the call to New Jersey was the persistent urging of the Mullica Hill Baptist Church congregation. They said they knew I was to be their pastor and they would not take "No" for an answer. So, I left Connecticut for a new challenge in New Jersey.

However, because of making so many lifetime friends in Connecticut, I had the opportunity to return 20 years later in keeping a promise to a dear lady and officiate her funeral service. When Dolores and I arrived at the funeral home, we were so pleasantly surprised to see so many former church friends there to fellowship with us and hear me speak once again. It was a privilege that I will always cherish.

Now, looking back over my nearly thirty years at the Mullica Hill Baptist Church, I have been blessed to see so many individuals give their hearts to the Lord for salvation, and then follow through with Believer's Baptism thereby visibly showing others their new found faith.

I will never forget one Sunday night after the evening service, just as I was closing up the buildings, that a young lady knocked on the church door and asked if she could burn a few candles for her sister in the hospital who was very sick. I explained that I knew she was really asking for prayer for her sister, so we prayed together.

Afterwards I shared the plan of salvation with her and she was saved that evening. But this marvelous story doesn't end here. Her mother, father, sister, brother, and other relatives were all converted and baptized and united with our church. She still writes me periodically and says that even though she has moved and nearly 28 years have passed, she still considers me her pastor. I have thanked the Lord over and over again through these last 30 years for allowing me to see this kind of response.

Over the last three decades many guest preachers, evangelists, missionaries, sacred concert singers and ensembles, chalk artists and films have been used at the Mullica Hill Baptist Church to see many saved and baptized and go on to grow in Christ.

Before the church was air-conditioned and because of the extremely hot conditions inside the church, especially Sunday evenings, I conducted outdoor drive-in services, weather permitting. It was a blessing to many and was featured in the local newspaper several times. It brought individuals to a church service that might not have entered any church building.

Our church also bought a bus for a bus ministry transporting families to church who had no other means of transportation; especially for children whose parents would not bring them. My son Jeff who has been in ministry for about 20 years was extremely instrumental in working with this bus ministry. The bus was used for Children's Church Programs and Vacation Bible School.

A tape ministry was also started so that individuals could have a copy of the message for further study or to pass on to friends.

Through the years there were times the church sanctuary was so full that there wasn't any room left for visitors. So, a separate Children's Church Program was created for the entire morning service. While the children were taught in another building, this made room for visitors in the main sanctuary.

As I look back over the last thirty years at the Mullica Hill Baptist Church, I thank the Lord for the privilege of simply being a coworker in this part of the Lord's great vineyard. I am blessed to have made so many wonderful friends in New Jersey.

Many of these friends have been called home to heaven, while others have retired and moved out of state. Others have sought fellowship elsewhere for various reasons, but I remember them all fondly.

I praise God for having been able to know and fellowship with some of the most wonderful people this side of heaven. I can say as with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:3, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

Valuable Lessons

I have learned many valuable lessons through my various experiences in life. Some have already been shared in the previous pages, but there are a few additional lessons I also learned that have not been shared.

Value of Possessions

One is the lesson of placing too much value on temporary and passing possessions. I had a good Christian friend in my childhood and teenage years by the name of Sandy. Even as a young boy and young man he was very mature in his faith and commitment to our Savior. For instance, in my high school yearbook Sandy's prized possession was his Bible, but mine was just my old 1948 rusty Ford car. Looking back I realize how wrong I was in putting too much emphasis on commodities.

The value of Jewelry

This was a lesson God taught me on many occasions, but none more so than when Dolores and I were newly engaged and went shopping for a wedding ring. Well, this starry-eyed, young, teenage couple in love walked into a jewelry store one day hoping to find just the right ring. The salesman asked, "How much did we have to spend?" I unwittingly said \$350.00. This was the amount for which I had just sold my pride and joy; a 1952 customized car. The salesman said, "What a coincidence! I just happen to have a ring here for that exact amount!" Of course, being the clever buyer that I was, I bought the ring only to find out later when it was appraised in North Dakota, that it was only worth \$10.00. I was not willing to be out-smarted, so I wrote back to the jewelry store and told them I wanted them to make this 'mistake' right. So the jewelry store informed me that if I would send them another \$100.00 they would up-grade the ring and send me a better one. Again, being totally unsuspecting, I sent the requested amount and the old ring back and received a new ring only to find out this new ring was worth a meager \$25.00. I learned through this unpleasant experience not to place much importance and emphasis on things that are temporary, but rather, to focus on the eternal things that will always endure.

Bus Accident

Another lesson I learned was that God loves and cares for His own in every situation of life. I can still remember, while stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, that one night when coming back to the base from town on an Air Force bus that the bus driver lost control of the vehicle in a snowstorm. The bus slid off the road into a deep ditch and overturned onto its side. Many of the airmen were injured, some very badly, but I was spared any injury at all because, by God's grace, I was seated on the side of the bus that was least effected by the crash. I was seated on the side that became the topside of the bus and not the side that had slid across the ground.

Immorality

Thirdly, I also learned that God protects us from immorality if we remember the terrible consequences of sin and refuse to do what the unsaved world accepts and practices. This was driven home to me after I started working at the Scott Paper Company in 1963. At this time, I was 23 years old. My first assignment was to work at the end of a conveyer belt and operate a machine that boxed the finished product. This meant working a "swing shift," which was either 8am to 4pm, or 4pm to 12 midnight, or 12 midnight to 8am. On the same shift, of course, would be other men and women. After about a month, when employees were able to order and eat their snacks while still working, I was told that someone else had already paid for my snacks. One day I found out that it was the quality control woman, who was working near my machine, who was paying for my snacks. It turned out that she wanted to get to know me better. Later that week she approached me and asked if I would like to go to her home after we had finished work at midnight and stay the night. I told her I was married and she said, "Oh, that's not a problem because a lot of the men and women in the department did that and were married too. They would tell their spouses that they worked overtime." I proceeded to tell her that I loved my wife and family, and I didn't want to be involved!

Well, you guessed it; no more free food after that. I didn't want to be in this kind of environment and asked for a transfer from that department. The next week I went to work in a warehouse, where there were only men. I praise God for giving me enough wisdom and moral strength to withstand temptation not making the same type of mistakes that my father had made. His choices in life destroyed my family, when I was only 5 years old. I was determined to break the cycle of immorality that I saw around me and started a godly cycle for generations to come.

Fourthly, I praise God for the opportunity of being able to live for the Lord and share biblical principles with fellow workers and students at the Kingsway Regional School District, where I worked as a bus driver for twenty five years. So many times students as well as fellow bus drivers came to me with their questions, concerns, problems, and sorrows. This gave me so many opportunities to open my Bible and share with them what God's word said on that particular subject.

At other times, I was given great opportunities to pray with those in need. I was always seen carrying my sermons and Bible on the bus, studying whenever I could. I truly enjoyed those many years of serving there and was asked to conduct funeral services for relatives of fellow bus drivers. The lessons learned were that God can use us anywhere he desires. This is a great example of just saying, "Here am I Lord, use me."

Finally, I have learned that God was preparing me for serving Him by surrounding me with godly men and women throughout my life. When I was much younger, it was the leaders in the Boys Brigade program at the Marcus Hook Baptist Church who helped shaped my ideals. Later in high school, there were men leading the Bolting Bishops Custom Car Club of which I was a member, while attending Youth for Christ.

After that, there were godly pastors and seminary professors that influenced me. And now as a pastor for over forty four years, it has been the wonderful men and women with whom I have had the privilege of having worked with in the churches that I have pastored. God has surrounded me with some of the godliest individuals who have ever lived and I am spiritually richer for it.

God also has blessed me with a wonderful godly brother and sister. Truly, this once shy and quiet boy stands in awe of what God can do. In pondering over these things, I offer sincere praise to Him every day! And I also thank you for taking the time to read of what an extraordinary God can do with a very ordinary and insignificant person like me.

In closing

Since the Bible tells us in Proverbs 15:13, “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance” and Proverbs 17:22 says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine,” it seems proper and fitting that I close with this humorous story.

An avid golfer was talking to an angel one day and asked, “Are there any golf courses in heaven?” To which the angel answered, “Well, I have good news for you and bad news. The good news is we have the very best golf courses in heaven. In fact, the best one is excellent and so perfectly groomed and absolutely beautiful. The bad news is your tee off time is 9am tomorrow morning!”

Well, that is a humorous story but the strange fact is, when I came out of cancer surgery on Wednesday August 23, 2000, while I was still in the recovery room under sedation, and I can't remember this at all, my son Jay told me later that I looked up at him and said, “Well son, I guess I missed my tee off time.” Isn't that something? That humorous story must have been in my sub-conscious.

Final Word

I am looking forward to walking down the “fairways” of heaven with all my dear brothers and sisters in Christ in whom I have had the privilege of knowing in this life. May we behold together all the beauty and splendor of God's glorious new world side by side! Why does everyone seem to look at death as bad news? For believers, isn't the whole object to get home to heaven in the end? I can't wait to enjoy all that God has for us in glorious music, majestic scenery, and perfect fellowship with dear friends such as all of you. Until then, or God willing between now and then should the Lord enable us to meet down here again, may our wonderful Savior bless you richly!

Sincerely In the Savior,

Pastor Al