

The Never-Ending News

There's always something! Things keep happening!

Inspiration without works is dead. Once in my lesson on "Fe y el esfuerzo" (Faith and hard work), I surprised myself by suddenly mentioning Merlin Peterson, a friend I haven't seen and hadn't thought of for about 38 years. Merlin was blind and yet wanted to do missionary work among speakers of Spanish. With faith that he could do it and lots of hard work, a tutor, records (no tapes way back then), and the scriptures in Spanish Braille, he did it! After class, Hna. Lorena Vargas, from Viña del Mar, stepped up and told me about her mother, blind for 2 months. She thought that what I said was inspired. Her mother is learning Braille very fast and is desperate for something spiritual to read. Soon after, when calling the Missionary Department, I asked if the Scriptures were available in Spanish in Braille. "Sorry, only in English"-- which she doesn't know. In her first letter to us from the Chile Concepción Mission, Hna. Vargas reported how all the U. S. missionaries think she's a gringa and start yacking to her in English. Similarly, just because she's blonde I assumed that her family would be relatively well-off. Not so. Most poor people here--meaning most of the people--are of Indian or mixed-Indian ancestry. Now I'm plumb disappointed in myself because I failed to follow through. An individual who is inspired never fails to search for alternate possibilities and solutions. So, finally, I'm trying to find recordings of the Book of Mormon, etc. in Spanish. Can any of you out there help? We're going to send her mother a beautiful recording made in Buenos Aires by our dear friend Pablo Lucena, with guitar accompaniment by himself and son-in-law. Also we want to send recordings of the Tabernacle Choir, though in English. Hna. Vargas says her mom is very valiant and full of good humor. For example, she likes to tell the elders: "¡Benditos los ojos que lo ven!" or "¡Benditos los ojos que no lo ven!" (Blessed are the eyes that see you -- or don't see you!)

"Let it be, let it be..." I'm about to take back my jocular refrain (well-known to our kids) about how ya gotta eliminate the human element. Gosh, if we did that, what would we have to laugh at, where would we find our fun, and as Merrill so insightfully just added, what would we have to complain about? Yesterday, although I had clearly stated that we do not depart from the official schedule, I discovered that the elders were getting up at 5:00 instead of 6:00 a.m., leaving no hot water for the sisters by the time I ring the wake-up bell exactly at that hour. Before supper, extra hungry, the elders also went downstairs to the "casino" and talked the cook into serving them at 6:30, half an hour before the rule-abiding sisters. So in my 8:00 p.m. class, I spoke in glowing terms of a group which I had nicknamed "Los unidos" (the united ones). From the moment of their arrival it was heart-warming and touching to see how closely they stuck together, never leaving anyone out, always watching out for one another--all for one and one for all. The elders got the message and so this morning not one of them would take a step to go to breakfast without the sisters. Sooo... After 15 minutes, when the "concesionaria" called to ask what was going on, Merrill told the élderes to go ahead without the hermanas. I guess they were still powdering their noses. Oh! Ho, ho, ho! That incredible old human element! You just can't beat it.

Wanderjahr (vahnderyahr). Without thinking, this time I murmured to myself "Dein Leib, mein Herr," and then, "Dein Blut..." (Thy body, Lord... Thy blood...) For years, on partaking the sacrament, I've had the custom of expressing something in a foreign language. Sound dumb? It turns my thoughts to brothers and sisters around the globe who also are receiving the sacrament that day and I feel bonded to them in reverent, world-wide communion. Today, the German words I silently spoke took me back to Innsbrück and the breathtaking Austrian Alps where our regiment ended up at the end of the war; also to 1952-53, when I was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Vienna. At the university I became better acquainted with one of the most beautiful traditions mankind has ever known: Das Wanderjahr. Over centuries, after their first year of

study, German students spent a second year wandering--mingling with the people, getting acquainted with local customs, enjoying magnificent scenery and exciting sights, learning things that formal education cannot teach. And as I looked at our beloved missionaries, I thought, "They're doing much the same, but in addition they're teaching, serving, and furthering the cause of peace, justice, and brotherhood on earth while showing the way to eternal life." A record 45,000 missionaries are expected to serve this year. How wonderful it would be if young people everywhere could have this experience, more marvelous, even, than das Wanderjahr.

She wanted to die. Chileans have a way of fanning with their hands. The classroom may be cold but they still fan their faces, apparently in need of fresh air. "Exactly," said Merrill, "and somebody--some bodies--need a deodorant." "Oh, I hadn't noticed," I averred. "I know I'm sort of deaf of the ear, but of the nose as well?" Jorge Quinteros, CEM secretary, thought this so funny he couldn't stop laughing--probably because everyone else was well aware of what had gone unnoticed by 3 + me. So the delicate problem of how to approach the unbroachable arose. Jorge had some deodorant left behind by someone and he simply told the unaware elder that it was available and he could have it. Merrill purchased additional deodorant and Hna. Acosta was enlisted to employ all her sensitivity and tact in presenting a small, unimportant present to each of the two sisters. One of them took it with outward aplomb; the other wanted to die. Merrill had explained that maybe they didn't know about deodorants--or couldn't afford them--and that each had only one change of clothes. Two poor, humble, dear Bolivians. I had to hurry to a bedside and kneel, pat and hug a precious head, tears blending with tears on my cheek, express understanding and love, and with Merrill's authorization offer some help to buy some clothes (for both of them). The crisis passed. But what about No. 4? Well, he's always careful never to work up a sweat.

The game of the name. "Sitting Bull," we suppose, is an accurate rendition of a name in Sioux. When I was a professor at Northland College and we attended church at the Bad River Indian Reservation, northern Wisconsin, one of our good friends was Iron Cloud--a correct anglicization of his name, if I understood him right, because he spoke hardly any English and all I knew was "Ma nu ne na ninga majah ma nu ne na ninga ma ja nin oh-eh da na majah ninga ma-ah-jah!" Or was that something else? Oh, yeah, that's from what S. Dilworth Young's wife Eleanor taught us Injuns to sing when we chanted and danced at open air pageants in the Ogden Stadium and at Camp Kiesel. Here in Chile, native names remain untranslated and often their possessors have no notion of their literal meaning. I like to inquire, but right now the only translation I recall is "Head of a Serpent," for Longavi. A few samples of indigenous surnames among our missionaries from Chile and Bolivia: Huenupi, Manquilef, Huary, Canaviri, Coyo, Pilquil, Colil, Huayllas, Chambi, Llancan, Teuquil. Don't know if I would go by Longavi, myself, because Cabeza de Serpiente is much more picturesque and colorful. German surnames are sometimes too colorful. Frederick the Great, I believe it was, is said to have set a date by which all his subjects would select a surname, lacking which, his soldiers would favor them with one. This accounts for such embarrassing names as Dreck (dirt), and others that are worse. Merrill's mother's maiden name is Baker (Originally Bäcker, I understand, which means "baker"). Well, Hall is supposed to come from "hall," "flint," or "salt." Take your pick: Those who served in the halls of the mighty, those who were hard, tight, and stingy like Scotsmen, or (this is how I like to hear it) the salt of the earth. Well, Sherlene has turned my thoughts to genealogy and names. What was my dad Howard Hall's ancestor's Indian name? Or was it Jewish? (The name to go with the nose.)

The ad hominem fallacy (ad hom'in-em, Latin: "to the man"). Appeal to prejudice not to reason. Attack the person not the message. Defame the man and discredit his stand. Very effective, but the truth is, that independent of its source, impudently, irrepressibly, obstinately, truth remains truth. It is said to have issued forth, no less, from the mouth of Balaam's ass, who almost got herself killed (Num. 18:28-30). Strange to say, even women, Blacks, village idiots, professors, politicians, old geeks, kids, lawyers, TV evangelists, atheists, nobodies, celebrities, liars, beggars, or thieves may wittingly, unwittingly, inadvertently, or by mistake utter truths. But watch it! Anyone unsolicitedly expressing unsettling truths can expect a zeroing in on himself rather than a dispassionate focus on what's expressed. Blam, blam, blam! Before he can say shame or sham, someone to whom he's totally unknown may shoot holes in his character, dedication, intentions, and devotion. No reason to be surprised. Everybody's human. The human element is everywhere. Smile. Shalom! Peace to one and all. • Ever-loving Mom and Dad / M-W