

Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

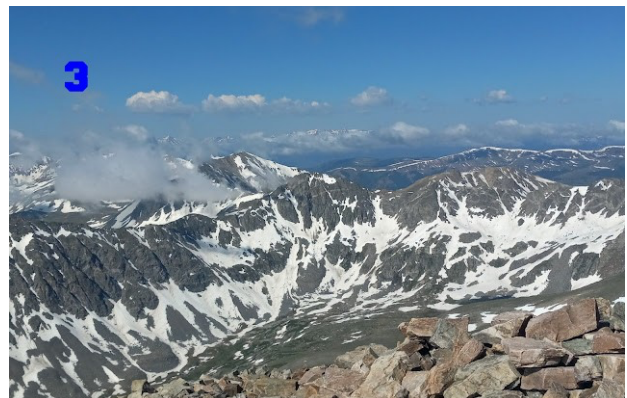
August 2023

It has been quite a July with an awful lot of activity in a lot of different places. Omaha, Lincoln, and Nebraska City, Nebraska; Wichita, Kansas; Golden, Keystone, Frisco, and Breckenridge, Colorado; and even Mt. Quandary in Colorado's Tenmile Range (14,265 feet in elevation) where 3 remarkable friends joined me in celebrating my 72nd birthday with my 6th successful summit of a Colorado 14er.



That hike wasn't the only memorable experience from July and I'll briefly describe a few of the others in a moment. But first, let me give some quick explanations of what you're seeing here on the first page. Photo #1 is a shot taken by our godson Scott Lawson of myself, Ryan Garvey, and Aldo De La Cruz at one of the "gentler" parts of the ascent with the valley between Mt. Quandary and North Star Mountain falling steeply beside us. It was

cold, cloudy, and rugged going, especially for the septuagenarian in the company! Photo #2 shows me and Aldo coming to the end of the snowfield which levelled out just before a last little pitch to the summit. Photo #3 is just one of the gorgeous, breathtaking, inspiring views from the top of the mountain. This is looking directly westward across Monte Cristo Creek to the ranges beyond. And Photo #4 is the "crew" at the summit: Ryan (20) Aldo (36), me (72), and Scott (50).



* For more details (and photos) of our mountain adventure, you can check out the posts on Vital Signs Blog: "The Latest 14er Adventure" from July 7 and "The Latest 14er Adventure: 'Let's Go to the Video'" from July 21. That second post will take you to an 8-minute video Aldo created which utilizes music, interviews, and even aerial shots from his drone (!) to make for a most interesting and exhilarating look at this 14er birthday adventure.

Okay, here's a brief overview
of some other happenings in the weeks since our last letter.

* One of the most significant of our July experiences was Claire and I again spending some precious time with my little sister, Sherry. She suffers from a very early and severe dementia and lives in a care facility in Wichita where her daughter and son reside. Though Sherry's cognitive "retreat" continues by the day, we were blessed to simply be with her, talk, play music and sing, pray for her (and with her), share treats, love on her, talk with other residents, and pass along to my siblings a report. As the Lord brings us to mind, we would also deeply appreciate a prayer for Sherry's peace and protection. Thank you.

* I think I've mentioned to you recently that our "When Swing Was King" outreach is now in its 13th year. And though the shows are better than ever, we still offer it completely free of charge to the facilities. The power of this program to lift people's spirits, to encourage and entertain them, to stimulate their memories as well as spark conversations with their fellow residents (and us!), to remind them of the profound importance of their lives, and to allow them a heartwarming respite from loneliness and boredom ---well, it hasn't ceased to amaze us yet. The Lord has been so good to us with this ministry. The July "When Swing Was King" schedule saw us at **12** different senior care facilities, including a show at a facility in Nebraska City and two in Lincoln. There *are*, however, changes underway. For a variety of reasons (distance, lack of staff support, audience size, etc.), we recently dropped three of the facilities from our monthly schedule but are already in the process of adding others. Also, please note that the "When Swing Was King" schedule is always posted on the Vital Signs Ministries website and we would love to have you join us for a show sometime.

* Claire and I gave a couple of "team talks" this past month to pro-life groups at two different churches -- St. Peter's Catholic Church downtown and St. Stephen the Martyr's Catholic Church in southwest Omaha. The presentations (and subsequent interactions) were lively, wide-ranging, eminently practical, and quite encouraging. Guys, thank you so much for the invitations.

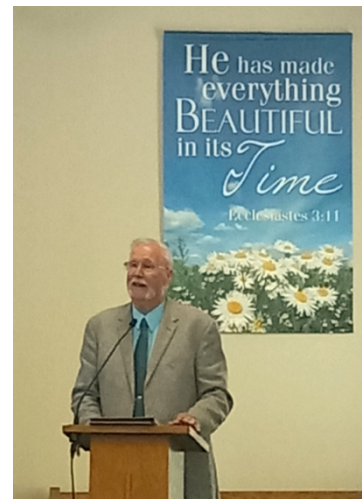
* July also saw us really impressed and grateful with Claire's brother Kevin's remarkable artistry in putting a new vinyl planking floor in our kitchen, living room, and dining room, a sturdy sub-floor underneath, and new carpeting on the stairs. It looks really fantastic. Our carpet was pretty well shot (Kevin had put that in 16 years ago) and with him giving us a terrific break in costs and he and Claire finding a nice bargain on the material, we opted for this brand new look. We have even taken the big step of replacing our very large, very heavy furniture of 28 years (and the monster of a dining room table of 36 years) with light barrel chairs that can be easily moved as needed for our many in-home parties, book discussions, letter-writing events, etc. Want to take a look at our new digs? Drop on by!

* Our hospitality ministries went apace in July with hosting the quarterly Vital Signs Board dinner meeting...hosting the Tate family for a festive brunch...helping to host the annual block party for our neighborhood...hosting the "Hartford Cafe" every Tuesday morning....and Claire's cookies frequently being passed around to the places we go.



* We purchased two small (but effective) video cameras this month for use in our public pro-life witness at the abortion chamber. Here Claire is holding one of our newer baby signs in front of the Planned Parenthood abortion business and, if you look close, you'll be able to see the camera attached to the top of the sign. With the increasingly aggressive actions of pro-abortion zealots, these unobtrusive but effective video cameras will provide us another layer of defense against the provocations, slanders, and intimidation tactics of our enemies. The *first* line of defense, however, is the prayers of the saints, so please do not neglect praying for our safety, our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and the winsome, persuasive effect of our public witness there. Thank you!

church audiences. This photo was taken at Herman Community Church on July 9 where I was preaching from Mark 5 about the patient faith of Jairus, the chief synagogue official. I had already presented a talk on "Practical Praying" for their adult Sunday School that morning, part of an ongoing series on spiritual disciplines I'm presenting there every other month. I covered the same prayer material for another adult Sunday School class at Wellspring Lutheran Church on July 30 and then afterward presented a sermon I had entitled, "Hey Julius; How Was Your Trip?" covering key moments of Paul's journey to Rome described in Acts 27 and 28. And what of the sermons on Sunday afternoon at Aksarben Village? In July those sermons (only 8-12 minutes -- and probably all the better because of that brevity) covered various narratives from Mark's gospel: "The Traditions of Men or the Commands of God?" (7:6-8 and context); "Who Do You Say I Am?" (8:27-33); "The Revelation on the Mountain" (9:1-8); and "Kids and the Kingdom" (10:13-16).



* What else? Well, July also saw us writing a lot of letters and cards. We did a lot of "communication work" through the blogs, website, and social media (including the Top 5 we send out every Saturday). Claire and I did a thorough evaluation of our progress on the 2nd quarter of our New Year's Resolutions. We attended a birthday/retirement party for Claire's youngest brother, Casey. And then there's the prayers together, Bible study

and sermon preparations, important times of fellowship with dear friends, our weekly Zoom conversation with family, quite a bit of lawn work (with an increasingly inefficient lawnmower), reading (Claire has been into Tolkien, me doing a re-read of William Shirer's massive *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*), and getting our house back together following Kevin's generous and skilled renovations.

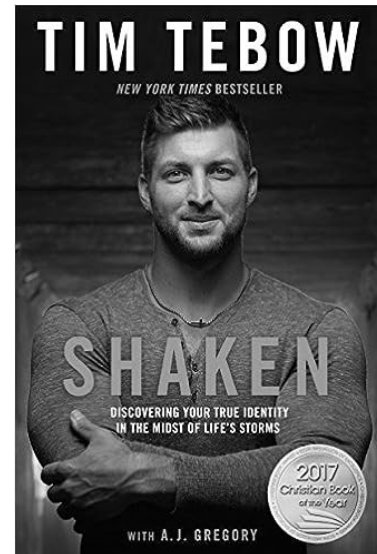
And so, as the Lord allows and blesses, on we go. We thank God for His merciful provision of health, motivation, discipline, and all the opportunities -- as well as the intercession, support, and encouragement of those faithful colleagues who mean so much to us, including every single one of you, the recipients of these monthly letters. Thank you so very much.

Okay let me close with a couple of invitations we hope you will put on your calendar.

The first regards the next Vital Signs letter-writing parties on **Tuesday, September 12**. I use the plural in that sentence because, like we have done the last couple of times, we are offering two different letter-writing opportunities. One is at 10 in the morning (with a few brunch items as a reward after toiling away at your letters!) and another at 7 in the evening of that same day where the traditional fare will be Claire's chocolate chip cookies. Both parties will be at our home. (Hey; you'll be able to check out Kev's work!) And, as always, suggested target sheets, addresses, writing materials, even stamps will be plentifully available.

The second event is the Vital Signs Book Brunch (also at our place) on **Saturday, September 23** at 10:30. We have been finding these discussions of great value and so we hope you'll join us to take part in the blessings. The fellowship is grand; the food is first-rate; and the analysis of the book and its applications to our lives is of remarkable relevance. Oh yes; the book we will be talking about on September 23?

Tim Tebow's
***Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity
in the Midst of Life's Storms***
(2016, 203 pages).



Until next time,