

## Dear friends of Vital Signs Ministries,

I used up more ink than usual this month in writing up each day's to-do list and then crossing them off when completed. That's because May's tasks not only included all of the regular ministry items but, with spring finally coming on, there were the duties necessary in keeping our lawn and gardens healthy and attractive. And, of course, with Claire's recovery continuing from her very difficult surgery on April 24th, I have had to tackle tasks of laundry, dishes, shopping, and other household business.

But please don't think I'm complaining because, even with these extra responsibilities, it has been a very good and productive and enjoyable month. Yes, there have been trials and moments of sadness and stress but, thank our gracious Lord, there have been many joys, encouragements, achievements, and inspirations. So let me give you a brief recap...with maybe a couple of stories along the way.

\* Claire's recovery has been slow but steady. Yes, I've kept her home from the mornings of prayer and pro-life witness outside Planned Parenthood, but she missed only one of our Aksarben Village church services and she was able to be on hand to work the PowerPoint for every one of the month's "When Swing Was King" shows. Thank you all so much for your prayers -- she is healing and gaining strength and agility with every day. Indeed, just a couple of days ago she met the surgeon who was very pleased with her progress. He was also pleased with the sweet card and chocolate chip cookies she brought along for him and his staff! (The photo here is at M'Lady's coffee shop in Fremont. It was Claire's first outing, taken a week after getting out of the hospital.)



\* Mentioning "When Swing Was King" reminds me to tell you we are having more fun than ever in this uniquely winsome outreach. And our decision from a few years ago to start including 2-3 songs from the early rock era is proving very popular as we try to best match our music selections with the songs the residents in the senior facilities were listening to when they were in their teens and early twenties. Thus, the May "When Swing Was King" included songs from Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, the Ink Spots, Harry James, and Jo Stafford -- but also from Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, the McGuire Sisters, and Louis Armstrong. And the 1960s seasoning? Well, that was provided by Bobby Vinton, Andy Williams, and the Supremes! And, make no doubt about it, I will never, ever forget the sight of elderly ladies in wheelchairs dramatically extending their arms and holding up open palms in imitation of the Supremes singing, "Stop! In the Name of Love!" Absolutely priceless!

Other notable items from this month's "When Swing Was King" ministry include comforting a loyal fan whose wife had, just since our last show, fallen, broken a hip, and was moved to a rehab facility across town. When telling us the story, he broke down for he feared that they would never be able to live together again. Such situations allow us to share biblical counsel and prayers with residents and we also take opportunities to share a bit of our Christian testimonies to people we befriend. Also, we were richly blessed in our shows this past month to learn how many of our "When Swing Was King" friends were praying for Claire and how deeply they care for her. Thank You, Lord.

\* Among the most intense moments of the month were my conducting the memorial service for Joan Meradith, a dear saint we have known for 55 years. Yet even in the midst of bereavement, when the loved one who has died is a born-again child of Jesus Christ, there is immense comfort and purpose and anticipation of the grand (and forever!) reunions in our future. My conversations with Joan's husband Tom -- a respected colleague in ministry who I've known since the afternoon in the spring of 1971 when he received Christ as his Savior -- were marked by these divine blessings as were the brief times we had at the funeral with other friends of Joan's who attended. Notable among that group of friends was Gene Lee, the pastor of the Ekklesia way back in the day (who then became the first pastor of Country Bible Church outside Blair). Gene did not retire from "professional" ministry until he was 87 years old (that was 6 years ago) and the inspirational and eminently practical effects of his counsel remain profound...and greatly appreciated.

Furthermore, Gene was brought to the funeral from Saint Joseph by his second son Ricky, who we were also thrilled to see again. Ricky has told me many times of how much it meant to him that back in the days of pick-up football games after church (the very early 70s), I would always pick him first to be on my team even though he was only 15 or 16 years old and to also make sure he got the ball plenty of times during the game. I really appreciate Ricky's memory and I take it as an important complement. For, after all, we all want to belong, don't we? To be considered as important by others who we regard highly, to be part of the action. And especially in the uncertainty of youth, how swell is it to have an older person (someone who you trust and admire) to purposefully help you move through those "rites of passage." Indeed, that's always been a big deal to me. For I myself was tremendously blessed in this way by being accepted by my Dad (and others) when I first started working with adults at Banner Tire and Garage in southwest Denver. Plus, before my football partnership with Ricky, I had already discovered the powerful blessing of performing that service for my younger brothers, Jim and Ric, and other kids in the neighborhood and at Green Mountain Swim Club. Therefore, my reply to Ricky Lee is that it was a blessing and honor for me to team up with him in those games. And, in all honesty, I must confess that he (like my brothers too) was an exceptional ballplayer for his age and I got a big kick out of he and I regularly getting the best of the big guys!

\* Okay, on to the next topic. Our Aksarben Village church services represent another terrific ministry and Claire and I (and our team members) really love being a part of it. However, there are hard moments in this outreach too: one of our congregation died this past month; another is fast falling into extreme fragility and dementia; and a newcomer to our fellowship explained in my first conversation with her that she's been informed that she has an inoperable cancer. Tough duty at times, of course. But important beyond imagination.

But let me drop in here another conversation with one of our church family from a couple of weeks ago. A lady who had attended a “When Swing Was King” show once or twice came to the church service one afternoon, in part because she had learned how involved we were in opposing abortion. She wanted to tell me how many, many years ago a doctor and some of her friends insisted that she “end the pregnancy” she had been undergoing. It was her 5th child. She recalled, “When I realized what they were urging me to do, I was shocked and angry. I said but that’s abortion! That is an evil thing to even think about! And I will never do anything that might harm my baby!” And then she gave me a big smile and said, “And guess what, Denny? That baby who was supposed to be too sick to live? He’s now a high-powered lawyer with kids and grandkids of his own!” Hooray!

\* Our presence in front of the mega-abortion corporation which is Planned Parenthood is always tough duty, but our last time out we had to endure also the vile antics of a volunteer escort. This woman parked her car within a few feet of John, Mark, and I as we held our beautiful baby signs and offers of help. She then rolled down all her windows and began blaring the filthiest song I have ever heard. Sheer hatred and foolhardy arrogance were throbbing through that despicable music. Hatred of the pro-lifers. Hatred of decency and innocence. Hatred of truth and beauty. Hatred ultimately of God Himself. So please remember to pray for us as we encounter such vicious dupes of the evil one. And yes, pray for miracle breakthroughs that would bring conversion to the perpetrators of abortion.

\* Of course, patriotic Americans commemorate Memorial Day and, for a variety of reasons, Claire and I prefer the Memorial Day events presented by small towns. For instance, they tend to feature more veterans and less politicians. Also, a much higher percentage of the community gets involved...and in sincere and endearing ways. This year we drove down to Elmwood, Nebraska where American Legion Post 247 presented a particularly moving and enjoyable Memorial Day service. There, in a remarkably well-tended cemetery with a great deal of historical information posted around the graves of Civil War veterans, we were inspired by the posting of the colors, brief prayers from a local preacher, readings from young high school men, and an excellent address from Vietnam War veteran and past Legion Department Commander, Boyd Yochum. And then we drove to the Elmwood Community Center where the Legion Post was serving lunch! It was an excellent Memorial Day experience.

\* May also saw plenty of such regular VSM tasks as compiling and sending The Top 5 every Saturday and the Sunday Songs on Monday, personal correspondence, and a lot of social media activity. We had some expensive fixes performed on our Hyundai, made some major changes in our lawn and garden layout, continued to move further away from Google, explored using AI to help us in some areas, and cleaned up old computer files. Also, I had some kind of post-cataract laser treatment on my right eye a few weeks ago, but I’m still dealing with vision problems. In fact, I’m not even wearing glasses nowadays because the prism they put in to deal with my double vision has been... well, let’s just say, problematic. Sigh. I will meet with a doctor in June who concentrates on the lens options so, who knows, maybe I’ll find some improvement.

\* Finally, a quick summation on the saints who have so bountifully blessed us this past month. Besides those to whom I've already made reference, we have enjoyed many "mission of mercy" visits for friends wanting to check in on Claire, sometimes bearing cards or flowers or food: Tim & Gaylene Aylward, John & Barb Malek, Jim & Jean Lawson, Tom & Donna Kotchka, Keith & Carol Moran, Elaine Olson, and Karla Struble.

But that's not all. I enjoyed a lunch out with six "alumni" of the Christian Brotherhood; Claire and I had a wonderful time at the high school graduation party of Luke Troutman; we (and Patrick Osborne) were hosted to a fantastic meal and superbly engaging evening by Dan & Cheryl Hauge; and we were richly blessed by attending the wedding ceremony and reception for our young friends Ryan & Kyra Garvey. Also in May there were several other wonderful connection with friends and colleagues where we had lunches or coffees or VSM business (or just a chance encounter) with Tom Meradith, Jim & Jean Lawson, Ron & Linda Scheffler, Dick Wilson, Patrick Osborne, Deb Harrold, John Malek, Isaac Serafino, Laverne & Marlene Smith, Dan Serlet, Shan (our Chinese neighbor), Daniel Prentice, and Harold & Mary Dee Berry.

Oh, yes, one other thing. We enjoyed an absolutely delightful afternoon at a movie theater where we watched "The Sheep Detectives" with friends. Claire described it on her Facebook page with this paragraph: "A 'Blue Moon' review -- so titled because it is only 'once in a blue moon' that we go to a movie theater to watch a recently released film. But we did this afternoon. Denny had read a very positive, even enthusiastic review on one of the conservative news and opinion sites he frequents and so we decided to take a chance on 'The Sheep Detectives.' And our take? We loved the film! The storylines (there were several) were captivating, entertaining, and heartwarming. The craftsmanship was also superb. Watching 'The Sheep Detectives' made for an extremely enjoyable and inspirational afternoon -- all the more because we shared it with John & Barb, Deb, and Keith & Carol."

Okay, I'm running out of room so --- goodbye for this month. You can always find out what's happening by checking in with our Facebook pages, Vital Signs Ministries website, or Vital Signs Blog. And you can, of course, come be a part of a "When Swing Was King" show (the schedule is on the website), or the pro-life witness at the abortion mill, or our Sunday afternoon church service, or the next letter-writing parties which will be morning and/or evening on Monday, June 22. We would be thrilled to see you! Thanks for your ongoing prayers, encouragements, and support.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denny". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the text "Blessings,".