

## FOUNDATIONS

Last week I had to go down below to Orange (City), to visit a doctor in the huge St. Joseph's Hospital medical complex there. Our little St. Mary Hospital is part of that whole organization, and so our doctors who are in that medical group can refer us to doctors in Orange and make use of their expertise in focused specialties, with vast resources for testing, X-rays, etc.

Every time I go to Orange, I get slightly teary, overcome with warm memories of my Grandpa and Grandma Gommel, who lived in Orange from the 1920's to the 1980's. Grandpa Gommel was a gruff character with STRONG convictions, beliefs, and especially integrity. He was a General Contractor whose specialty was the more difficult remodeling work, all around that area. He was the kind of guy who refused to move his car until the newly installed parking meter had finished its time, even though a parade was coming. The police were not amused.

Grandpa's house, at 1103 W. Chapman Ave., was a few blocks from the famous traffic circle in the middle of Orange. He and my dad did some kind of repair work on the fountain 'way back when my dad was a young man (1930's I suppose). About halfway between the circle and Grandpa's house was a Foster's Freeze, that served wonderful soft serve ice cream dipped in chocolate.



As a child, our family moved all over the place, from Southern California, to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, to Indianapolis, Indiana, and back to Southern California.

But all during those years, that place on Chapman Avenue was like home base, even though we spent little time there. It was warm, welcoming, and smelled good as only Orange County in those years could smell, its air infused with the fragrances of orange blossoms, avocado trees, and many other growing things that loved the rich soil there. So when I go to Orange now, and all of that is gone, torn down and covered over with new, modern edifices, it breaks my heart. Yes, life goes on, but the spirits of the great souls who built that city still inhabit many of its nooks and crannies. And now the center of Orange



has been made "historic", so the old buildings surrounding it are frozen into a charming time warp, as people who are clueless to its living past wander its streets, almost like a Knotts Berry Farm. Right here in Lucerne Valley, we have similar sites that are now abandoned wrecks but have stories to tell of human hopes and dreams lived out with varying degrees of success or happiness. There are several within just a few minutes' walk from our house.

When walking our two dogs a couple of years ago, I discovered a large stand of tamarisk trees, mixed in with black locust trees,

and a huge stand of bamboo, encircling what must have been a reservoir, since there is also a well there. Miraculously, these trees and bamboo are healthy

still. Someone built stone culverts under the drive, and wire fencing is tumbled down flat around its boundaries. Just to the east is an empty concrete pad where a house once stood. Wow.

I loved going there, to imagine who did all that work, and wonder why no one is there now. Were there no kids who cared? Did the desert defeat them? I no longer go there because a neighbor chose to use it as a dump, and I can't stand to see it violated like that. Someday I'm going to clean up the trash, and if that guy (yes, I know who he is) does it again, I'm gonna, well, I dunno what I'm gonna do. Maybe just go yell at him to clean it up!

To the west of that place a few minutes, there is another old place, with a wood

shack on its last legs, ready to completely collapse in a

strong wind. There also is a well and a beautiful stone reservoir that took much effort to build. Who did all that work? What did they hope for their lives?

And then the dogs. I LOVE all dogs, and especially our two. But even they create heartbreak as they pass on before we do, with lifespans a fraction of ours. Why, God, did You create these creatures that we love so much, only to break our hearts when they leave us?? Did you mean for us to learn to love and care for something other than ourselves, and then to learn the pain of separation? Is that how You feel towards us, even though we can feel only a tiny fraction of what You feel?

So what's this all about, anyway? What brings it all together is the realization that the pain we feel when these things decay or fail us should point us to our



Creator, who will NOT let us down, who will NOT leave us, who will NOT disintegrate, tumble down, and will NOT leave fading memories in the blowing wind. He placed that sadness in us because deep down inside we KNOW that we were created to live without that pain, to live in the joy and security of a life with Him, with His creatures, in harmony with His creation.

Even Jesus' disciples had to learn these lessons:

*Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

(Matt. 24:1)

Yes, He was probably speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that occurred in 70 A.D., but He was

also speaking God's truth about the futility of trusting in man-made creations, or hoping in values created by a fallen world.

The only true stability available to us is if we realize we must build our houses on a foundation of rock and not on sand, the solid Rock of God's Holy Spirit and not the sand of our fleeting lives here on this earth.

What a comforting thought, to know that this ain't all there is, and there's much better in store for us, if we will choose it.

*Linda Gommel*

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## ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

### CHICKEN TEST

It seems the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a unique device for testing the strength of windshields on airplanes. The device is a gun that launches a dead chicken at a plane's windshield at approximately the speed the plane flies.

The theory is that if the windshield doesn't crack from the carcass impact, it'll survive a real collision with a bird during flight. It seems the British were very interested in this and wanted to test a windshield on a brand new, speedy locomotive they're developing.

They borrowed the FAA's chicken launcher, loaded the chicken and fired. The ballistic chicken shattered the windshield, went through the engineer's chair, broke an instrument panel and embedded itself in the back wall of the engine cab. The British were stunned and asked the FAA to recheck the test to see if everything was done correctly.

The FAA reviewed the test thoroughly and had one recommendation: "Use a thawed chicken."

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