

Annie Oakley's Story (As told to Linda Gommel by phone.)

Do you remember Annie Oakley on television? Probably not. Only those of us who are OLD in years (but young at heart) remember it. It was a western (was there anything else back then?) and ran for 3 or 4 years in the fifties, when I was an impressionable little kid. I loved westerns, because right was right and triumphed over the bad guys, always.

I had two blonde braids, just like Annie Oakley, so I identified with her, which nowadays qualifies me to say that I AM Annie Oakley! Hahahahahahahahaha. . .

Did you know that Lucerne Valley has its very own Annie Oakley? Her valley is Ann Matteson, and she lives in the east side of the Valley. I remember my folks (Ernie and Barb Gommel) talking about what a character she was (is still). They loved desert rats, aka desert characters, as in the little sign on Highway 247 that has the tagline, "Lucerne Valley, a Town of Character(s)."

Ann just celebrated her 102nd birthday at Crossroads Chapel on a recent Sunday. Ann can hear, think sharply, and speak clearly,



but she cannot see or walk, so she needs to use a wheelchair. Getting her to the church turned out to be an adventure in itself. A ride had been arranged but fell through at the last minute. Then a second ride was being negotiated, but it cost \$1100, and so was nixed. Ann's church friends were about to give up when Angie Smith asked to be allowed to make one more phone call to see if a ride for Ann could be arranged. She called our local County Fire Department and they came through with their ambulance and brought Ann to the church!

I heard through the grapevine that I should write about Ann in this space, and Angie sent some pictures from her celebration. When Ann called, she expressed regret that since we don't have a local paper, she had no way to thank her church and Lucerne Valley for all that has been done for her. At that point I knew that God wanted us to write a little of her story here and express her thanks.

Ann was born in 1921 (the same year both of my parents were born) on a farm in Iowa, but came to California when she was 6 or 7, and moved to Lucerne Valley in 1968.

Her husband was killed in the Second World War, three days before the armistice. "I raised my kids by myself, and a bunch of foster children, too," she said.

While on a retreat in Big Bear with her church from Glendale, Ann's brother-in-law Frank Matteson came up from Lucerne Valley and brought her daughter back to Lucerne Valley for a visit. Her daughter loved the Valley and ended up buying a piece of property, on which she hoped to build a home for unwed mothers.

However, there was a hitch. The property was a parcel of a larger piece that had been illegally subdivided, a situation common in the desert at that time (1970s). Ann, her daughter, and neighbors tangled with the realtors and the County, trying to protect their property from what they believed would deprive them of their rights regarding the conditions under which they bought it.

One Sunday, Ann decided to stay home from church, and here came the bulldozers, along with a surveyor. The issues involved legalizing the subdivision, constructing a flood control levee that cut through the various parcels, ruining them, and cutting a road that further shrank their original 10 acres.

Ann walked across the desert to a neighbor to borrow a gun. When she returned to her property, she told the workers, "I have never fired a gun, but when I do, that bullet is going someplace." They left immediately



and then brought the sheriff back with them. For a year, Ann had to fight the County to get her property ownership straightened out. She pitched a tent on the intersection of her two roads to keep them out ("them" was those who were hassling her). Meanwhile a bunch of teenagers with whom she was friends collected pieces of lumber and built her a weatherproof room in her tent.

One small incident that tickled Ann happened when she and her daughter were down below and walked into a restaurant. Ann's story had been written up in the San Bernardino paper. Two ladies kept looking at Ann and her daughter and finally walked up to them and asked, "Are you Annie Oakley?" The lady recognized Ann from the picture in the paper!

Ann hopes - knows - that she will walk and see again. I asked her if she meant here on this earth or when she went to be with God in her new glorified body. She said "Either way." 3 days before her last birthday, God told her, "I don't operate in your time. You operate in My time. I do things when I decide to do them." Six months ago, she saw on the foot of her bed, a sign that said, "The lame shall walk and the blind shall see." She knows that she WILL walk and see again.

"I've got the joy of the Lord in my heart, and I'm going to spread it where I can." I love that spirit. Don't you? I know that God loves it, too.

And I must not forget her message:

"Thank you to my Church (Crossroads Chapel) and to our wonderful community for my birthday celebration and the years in our beautiful desert!"

Linda Gommel

On The Lighter Side ... from the Web

Saying "have a nice day" to someone sounds friendly. But saying "enjoy your next 24 hours" sounds threatening.

Waiting to see how long it takes this police sketch artist to realize I'm describing him.

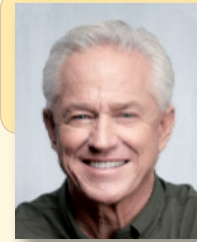
So now cocaine is legal in Oregon, but straws aren't. That must be frustrating.

Someone said "30 years ago", and my mind went "Ah yes! The 1970's", but they meant 1992, and now I need to lie down.

A woman with a salad walked past me in the restaurant and said you know a cow died so you could eat that beefburger. I said if you weren't eating its food it might have lived.

Still trying to get my head around the fact that "Take Out" can mean food, dating or murder.

Being popular on Facebook is like sitting at the cool table in the cafeteria of a mental hospital.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS
We honor Pastor Ray's life by continuing to share the daily devotions he prepared for you, his precious readers.

Wisdom in a Dinghy Ray Bentley Ministries

"Remember, O Lord, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses." —Psalm 25:6

A dear friend, who is now in heaven, had a unique way of ministering to people. She was in her seventies, lived on a boat with her husband, and adopted my wife and me as her surrogate children.

If you visited her, she would often motion for you to follow her to the end of her boat, and invite you to step down into the little dinghy tied to the stern.

With a pleasant smile, she would settle in and begin rowing. Your destination was somewhere out in the middle of the bay, where she would pull up the oars and invite you to say what's on your mind.

She was a great listener and heard countless hours of people's problems and tribulations. She was always sympathetic and concerned, but her advice, tempered by her age and experience, was often simple and direct.



I found myself in her little dinghy more than once and I remember her patting my hand, looking right at me,

saying, "You've got your eyes on yourself instead of God."

She was right.

Sometimes, people would take offense. After all, we found her so easy to talk with that we poured out our hearts, told her our problems and fears, only to hear her gently rebuke us. After a while, though, I realized how right she was.

It's not wrong to hurt.

It's just that it hurts more when we focus on our circumstances rather than what God wants to do, rather than remembering how much He loves us and wants the best for us. My friend, whose own life was shaped by many hardships and heartaches, reminded us to stop and thank God and praise Him for all He has done for us.

Why should I praise God, you ask, when there is so much wrong in my life?

Because...He is God.

And because you are "beloved of God" (Romans 1:7).

He is, Paul wrote, "the Father of mercies." When the Hebrews used the term "father of" they meant the originator, the author of. God is the originator of all mercy, and His mercy is "manifold" (Nehemiah 9:19) and "tender" (Psalm 25:6) and there are "multitudes" of His tender mercies for each of us (Psalm 51:1).

It is God's very nature to comfort you, especially when life is hard.

I can't tell you how many people took that little ride out into the middle of the bay with my friend.

But I do know that she would want each of us to remember, even in hard times, the Lord's tender mercies.

Snakes

Chuck Bell, president of Lucerne Valley Economic Development Ass'n, sent out a warning about the presence of lots of snakes now that it is warm. He listed several points to remember if you or someone in your family gets bitten. The little parenthetical comments are Chuck's. 😊

If bitten by suspected rattlesnake:

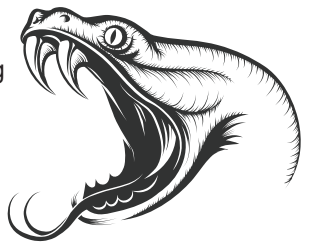
- Try to get a photo of snake (if you can do so safely)
- Apply first aid while waiting for EMS staff to get you to the hospital.
- Lay or sit down with the bite in a neutral position of comfort.
- Remove rings and watches before swelling starts.
- Wash the bite with soap and water.
- Cover the bite with a clean, dry dressing.
- Mark the leading edge of tenderness/swelling on the skin and write the time alongside it.

Do NOT do any of the following:

- Do not pick up the snake or try to trap it. NEVER handle a venomous snake, not even a dead one or its decapitated head.
- Do not wait for symptoms to appear if bitten, get medical help right away.
- Do not apply a tourniquet.
- Do not slash the wound with a knife or cut it in any way.
- Do not try to suck out the venom. (Ya mean those old TV westerns were wrong?)
- Do not apply ice or immerse the wound in water.
- Do not drink alcohol as a painkiller. (Not even a limited amount 😊?)*
- Do not take pain relievers (such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen).
- Do not apply electric shock or folk therapies.

*Comments by Chuck.

This last is not a fun thing to contemplate, but it IS important. Thank you, Chuck. (And don't forget to ask for God's help, and thank Him when you are better!)



LVEDA Meeting

(Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association)

Note Date:

Monday, June 26

(No longer the first Monday of the month)

5:00 pm at the Moose Lodge

on Foothill Road, just west of Tradepost Road.

SEE NEXT WEEK'S

COMMENTARY PAGE FOR

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS.