
VIEWS LETTER

Volume 27, Issue 1

AWD's Views, News & Other Things of Interest

November & December 2002

Ragamuffins

*What is a Ragamuffin? According to Webster' a Ragamuffin is a shabbily clothed, dirty child. Below is an excerpt from **The Ragamuffin Gospel** by Brennan Manning. (Page 65-71) If you are the least bit legalistic in your way of thinking about your relationship with God, and you are happy with your legalism, then don't read this book, because it might change your life. ~AWD~➔*

The ragamuffin spirit of Jesus sometimes surfaces in the most unlikely setting and is often totally absent in places we most expect to find it. Let me close this chapter with a tale of two communities—both cut close to the bone of my existence: one concerns alcoholics, the other involves Roslyn. (*Roslyn is his wife*)

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1000 Saturdays

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the kitchen with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it.

I turned the volume up on my radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning talk show. I heard an older sounding chap with a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in

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TRUST

BY Orel Hershiser

Of all the places on earth I would have wanted to be, this was not it. My wife, Jamie, and I were sitting across the desk from Dr. Frank Jobe. His specialty was sports injuries, and we were waiting for the verdict that could mean the end of my baseball career.

Dr. Jobe stood and snapped sheets of X-rays into the light box on the wall. He folded his arms across his chest and faced the pictures. Jamie and I sat quietly.

Dr. Jobe returned to his desk and sat down. "I'm sorry, Orel," he began. He leaned forward, putting his elbows on his desk. "I'm afraid this is very serious. You've been pitching in a lot of pain haven't you?"

"Yeah, I have," I answered. After months of trying to work through the sometimes nagging, sometimes excruciating agony, it felt good to finally confess the whole truth.

"You've been pitching in tremendous pain," Dr. Jobe added. His face was stern and strong.

"We'll start by scoping your shoulder, but I

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Love Your Enemies

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you. . . ."(Matthew 5:44) **Never anywhere are Christians told to agree with our enemies or to become one with them. Loving our enemies doesn't mean agreement that we serve the same or even similar gods or that we have similar beliefs—especially in the case of**

*Continued on page 7, See; **ENEMIES***

**"Love can sometimes be magic. But magic can sometimes...just be an illusion."
- Javan**

Ragamuffin, *Continued from page 1*

On a sweltering summer night in New Orleans, sixteen recovering alcoholics and drug addicts gathered for their weekly AA meeting. Although several members attend other meetings during the week, this is their home group. They have been meeting on Tuesday nights for several years and know each other well. Some talk to each other daily on the telephone, others socialize outside the meetings. The personal investment in one another's sobriety is sizable. Nobody fools anybody else. Everyone is there because he or she made a slobbering mess of his or her life and is trying to put the pieces back together. Each meeting is marked by levity and seriousness. Some members are wealthy, others are middle class or poor. Some smoke, others don't. Most drink coffee. Some have graduate degrees, others have not finished high school. For one small hour the high and the mighty descend and the lowly rise. The result is fellowship.

The meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer followed by a moment of silence. The prologue to Alcoholics Anonymous was read from the Big Book by Harry followed by the Twelve Steps of the program from Michelle. That night, Jack was the appointed leader. "The theme I would like to talk about tonight is gratitude," he began, "but if anyone wants to talk about something else, let's hear it."

Immediately, Phil's hand shot up.

"As you know, last week I went up to Pennsylvania to visit family and missed the meeting. You also know I have been sober for seven years. Last Monday I got drunk and stayed drunk for five days."

The only sound in the room was the drip of Mr. Coffee in the corner.

"You all know the buzz word, H.A.L.T., in this program." He continued, "Don't let yourself get hungry, angry, lonely, or tired or you will be very vulnerable for the first drink. The last three got to me. I unplugged the jug and . . ."

Phil's voice choked and he lowered his head. I glanced around the table—moist eyes, tears of compassion, soft sobbing the only sound in the room.

"The same thing happened to me, Phil, but I stayed drunk for a year."

"Thank God you're back."

"Boy, that took a lot of guts."

"Relapse spells relief, Phil," said a substance abuse counselor. "Let's get together tomorrow and figure out what you needed relief from and why."

"I'm so proud of you."

"Hell, I never made even close to seven years."

As the meeting ended, Phil stood up. He felt a hand on his shoulder, another on his face. Then kisses on his eyes, forehead, neck, and cheek. "You old ragamuffin," said Denise. "Let's go. I'm treating you to a banana split at Tastee-Freeze."

The second scenario occurred when Roslyn was taking a graduate course in religious education at Loyola University in New Orleans in the summer of 1981.

Dr. Meghan McKenna was lecturing on the New Testament milieu in which Jesus' ministry began. The four dominant religious groups were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes. The Pharisees separated themselves from everyone who was not faithful to the law and the traditions, in order to form closed communities, the faithful remnant of Israel. Their name means 'the separate ones,' i.e., the holy ones, the true community of Israel. Their morality was legalistic and bourgeois, a matter of reward and punishment. God loved and rewarded those who kept the law and hated and punished those who did not.

Dr. McKenna discussed the position of the Sadducees, mostly conservative and largely composed of the wealthy aristocracy; the Zealots who viewed submission to Rome as an act of

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Many a man thinks he is buying pleasure, when he is really selling himself to it. -Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

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unfaithfulness to God; the Essenes who rejected everyone who did not belong to their sect. They separated themselves completely from society and lived a celibate and ascetic life in the desert. All outsiders were to be hated as the sons of darkness. Love and respect were reserved for members of their group—the sons of light.

The “sinners,” McKenna continued, were social outcasts. Anyone who for any reason deviated from the law and the customs of the middle class (the educated and virtuous, the Scribes and Pharisees) was treated as inferior, as low class. The sinners were a well-defined social group.

As her lecture ended, Dr. McKenna suggested: “Let’s do a little exercise right here in the classroom. Would all those who do not smoke stand, walk to the left and stand by the wall. And reformed smokers stand in the center of the room. Those who still smoke form a group on the right.”

Thirty of the professionals had never smoked, twelve were reformed, three were active smokers. “At that time,” Roslyn said, “I belonged to the latter group. An immediate sense of separation was obvious.”

“Let’s discuss two questions,” McKenna said. “First, how do you feel about the current smoking regulations on campus, in restaurants, airports, the corporate world, and so forth?”

All three groups unanimously agreed that the regulations were good, ecologically important, and sensitive to the health and welfare of others.

“The second question: How do you feel about smokers personally?”

“They are disgusting and inconsiderate,” said one non-smoker.

“Obviously anyone who smokes has low self-

esteem and a lousy self-image,” voiced another.

“They have no will power.”

“Rotten role models for teenagers.”

“I have serious questions about the quality of their faith and depth of their personal relationship with Christ.”

“Don’t they know they are poisoning the atmosphere?”

Roslyn: “I cowered against the far wall feeling like the woman caught in adultery. Suddenly, the environment was so hostile. For the past four years of graduate school, I had prayed, worshiped, gone on picnics, taken coffee breaks, studied, and conversed with these people. I felt a deep sense of bonding because of our shared life and ministry. The reformed smokers were much more understanding because they had been there—the place of addiction. At first, I was angry. When the inner rage finally subsided, I wanted to weep. I have never felt so alone.

“The bell sounded and class ended. We filed out of the room in silence.”

The next day Dr. McKenna, following her usual procedure, asked her students to share their feelings and reactions to the exercise of the previous day.

“Yesterday I learned something about myself,” said the woman who had made the harshest and most judgmental comments during the exercise. “I need a lot more compassion for people who are different from myself.”

“How did you feel yesterday, Roslyn?” inquired the teacher.

“When I was standing against the wall, I actually thought the Group #1 people would have thrown stones at us were they available. I realized how difficult it was for me to look at them and say, ‘Father,

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Seven blunders of the world that lead to violence: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.

-Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

they do.”

Dr. McKenna’s exercise achieved what it set out to accomplish. The fierce words of Jesus addressed to the Pharisees of His day stretch across the bands of time. Today, they are directed not only to fallen televangelists but to each of us. We miss Jesus’ point entirely when we use His words as weapons against others. They are to be taken personally by each of us. This is the form and shape of Christian Pharisaism in our time. Hypocrisy is not the prerogative of people in high places. The most impoverished among us is capable of it. “Hypocrisy is the natural expression of what is meanest in us all.”

The ragamuffin gospel reveals that Jesus forgives sins—including sins of the flesh—that He is comfortable with sinners who remember how to show compassion, but that He cannot and will not have a relationship with pretenders in the Spirit.

Perhaps the real dichotomy in the Christian community today is not between conservatives and liberals or creationists and evolutionists but between the awake and the asleep. The Christian ragamuffin acknowledges with MacBeth: “Life is but a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more.” Just as a smart man knows he is stupid, so the awake Christian knows he/she is a ragamuffin.

Although truth is not always humility, humility is always truth: the blunt acknowledgment that I owe my life, being, and salvation to Another. This fundamental act lies at the core of our response to grace.

The beauty of the ragamuffin gospel lies in the insight it offers into Jesus: the essential tenderness of His heart, His way of looking at the world, His mode of relating to you and me. “If you really want to understand a man, don’t just listen to what he says, but watch what he does.” †

Caution! Reading this book may change the way you think! You might find that all the things that you thought you had to do to be ‘a good Christian’ may just be a waste of time, especially if the reasons for doing them are just to be ‘a good Christian’ and, not the returning of love that God so freely gives to us. ~AWD~

Israel Soon to be a 'Christian' Nation?

The Jewish majority in Israel faces a significant demographic threat.

Israel's Minister of the Interior Eli Yeshai said this week that at the current rates of growth, Jews will not be the majority population between the Jordan and the Mediterranean within eight years.

As it stands now, Yeshai noted, there are a growing number of IDF soldiers who refuse to take the oath of allegiance on the Tanoak (Jewish Bible), but rather insist on doing so on the New Testament. Yeshai calls for an "emergency public debate on the matter before it's too late."

In order to limit the number of non-Jews who take advantage of Israeli repatriation laws, Yeshai recommends that the Law of Return be changed.

Under the current law, individuals with one Jewish grandparent may obtain automatic citizenship - even though Judaism recognizes only the offspring of a Jewish mother or a halakhic [Jewish legal] convert as Jewish.

Housing Minister Natan Sharansky, however, says that now is not the time to discuss changing the Law of Return.(Arutz-7)

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Israel opened its doors to Russian Jews who sought to emigrate. Many did. Of these new immigrants to Israel, many were Christians who claimed a distant ancestor as being Jewish. Still others anxious to leave Russia falsely claimed they were Jewish.



June 14, 2002, from NewsMax off the internet. I found this most interesting. If Eli Yeshai is around when Christ returns, is he going to be surprised or what? ~AWD~=====➔

**"It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation (*the USA*) was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religions, but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, peoples of other faith have been afforded asylum, prosperity and freedom of worship here."
-Patrick Henry (1736-1799)**

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think you may need some reconstruction," Dr. Jobe said.

I nodded, knowing that the best case scenario would mean months on the disabled list. But I also knew that this could be the end of my career. No professional thrower had ever come back from something like this.

We scheduled the surgery for early the next morning. Waiting was not an option. I was assigned to a private room at the hospital. Laying my head back on the stack of firm hospital pillows and stretching my legs till my feet hung off the end of the bed, I began to think through the events of the past few weeks, months, years.

A great career

Wow, what a ride. Even though the future did not look very promising, that thought brought a smile to my face. Exactly one year earlier, the start of the '89 season, I had walked onto the field as one of the premier pitchers in the major leagues, the highest paid player in the history of the game. I had finished the previous regular season by breaking one of baseball's most "unbreakable" records: pitching 59 scoreless innings. Then the Dodgers and I had taken the National League Championship Series from the strongly favored New York Mets and the World Series from the powerful Oakland A's. In both of these series, I had been named the MVP, the first time in history a pitcher had reached such acclaim. The media handed me their top awards including Sport's Illustrated's "Sportsman of the Year" and The Sporting News' "Major League Player of the Year." Sports writers had unanimously awarded me the National League Cy Young Award.

But that was then. Now I was lying on a hospital bed, just a few hours before undergoing radical shoulder reconstruction. Except for the sounds of the occasional calls to doctors on the loudspeaker and the nurses' shoes squeaking on the polished hallways, everything was quiet.

"Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him" (Psalm 37:5). It's been 3,000 years since King David penned this. But that lonely night in 1990, stretched across a hospital bed waiting for surgery the next morning, I knew these awesome words of trust could have been written just for me.

Commit your way to the Lord

After signing with the Dodgers in 1979 and going 4-0 in their Class A club in Clinton, Iowa, I was assigned to the Arizona Instructional League in the fall. My roommate was Butch Wickensheimer, and our home was a room at the Buckaroo Motel in Scottsdale.

Everyone on the team knew that Butch was a Christian. We'd see him reading his Bible on the bus, sometimes late at night under the dim spot of the overhead light. We kidded him about being religious, and he took it in stride. I secretly admired the way he lived and was mysteriously drawn in.

Late one night, I pulled the Gideon Bible from the nightstand and began reading from the Gospel of John. Without any prompting, I slipped to my knees next to the bed. Openly confessing my sin, I invited Jesus Christ into my life and received Him as my Savior by faith.

As I crawled back in bed at the Buckaroo and continued to read from the Bible, somehow, I knew that this would be the beginning of a new journey. During my professional years, the temptations of thousands of lonely nights on the road would bring challenges to my character and my integrity. I trusted God for strength. He had not only put me in the spotlight of professional sports, but he had brought two sons into our family. I trusted Him for patience and wisdom.

And in spite of my best efforts, I knew that there were so many circumstances that were beyond my control, so I trusted Him with my life and my future. I love the certainty of God's promise. Once I have committed what I can see

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Most people are mirrors, reflecting the moods and emotions of the times; few are windows, bringing light to bear on the dark corners where troubles fester. The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows. -Sydney J. Harris

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and trusted God for what I cannot see, I have the confidence that He will keep His end of the bargain.

•••

The shoulder surgery was successful, and on May 29, 1991, I walked to the familiar mound in Dodger Stadium. The noise from the hometown crowd was deafening, but I could clearly hear the sound of my first warm-up pitch burying itself into catcher Mike Scioscia's glove. Glancing into the stands, I caught Jamie's eye. Mine filled with tears at the awesomeness of it all. No pitcher had come all the way back from shoulder reconstruction. As I finished my warm-up throws, I stepped off the mound. Slipping my cap off, I breathed a prayer of gratitude. I had committed, I had trusted, and God had chosen to do the impossible. Left-hander Steve Finley, the first Houston batter, stepped in. My first pitch was low and away, and Finley chipped a foul ball into the stands.

Just having thrown that pitch in a big-league game would have been enough, but as a bonus, God placed my good friend, Harry Scolinos, in just the right spot behind the third base dugout. Finley's foul ball landed squarely in Harry's hands.

A few days later, Harry presented me with that baseball mounted on a stand. The plaque below it reads:

Orel Returns

May 29, 1991

For nothing is impossible with God.

Luke 1:37

After 510 major league appearances, Orel Hershisier retired from pitching July 7, 2000. Today, he is an associate to the general manager of the Texas Rangers.

†

This piece was taken from Focus on the Family Magazine, July, 2002.

Orel Hershier is a real person and a real Christian. More than several years ago, I remember seeing him interviewed by Johnny Carson on the Tonight Show. Johnny had watched Orel pitch in several games, and he noticed several times during the game that Orel

would be standing on the mound or sometimes off by himself with his head bowed, cap off and eyes closed in deep meditation. During this interview he asked Orel what was going on out there during these particular moments.

Orel said that during these times he was saying a prayer or singing a hymn of praise to God in his heart.

Johnny asked if he would sing the hymn of praise aloud for the audience.

Orel's reply was, yes and then he softly sang:

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him all creatures here below;
Praise him above ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

You could have heard a pin drop in the studio during this short solo acappella hymn. Then—thunderous applause, and finally Johnny's remark was “that was very sweet.” I thought so, too, as I was moved by this simple demonstration of faith and adoration. ~AWD~==>

Around the Doudney House

By Jasmine Doudney Schnauzer Dog

Another long, hot summer has finally passed; fall is here and rapidly waning away. There is a crispness in the breeze that makes a dog feel close with nature. I am overcome by a gladness to be alive and to again experience the miraculous changing of the seasons. Oh, how wonderful it is to bask in the Creator's love.

The boss has been in Airbus school trying to learn how to fly all over again, the “French way.” This change of equipment will lock him in for four years, and since the old geezer hasn't got four years left before “retirement” this will be his final

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All labor that uplifts humanity has
dignity and importance and should be
undertaken with painstaking
excellence.

-Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

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the broadcasting business himself.

He was talking about "a thousand marbles" to someone named "Tom." I was intrigued and sat down to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well, but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital."

He continued, "Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities." And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles."

"You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years."

"Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part."

"It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail," he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to roundup 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in my workshop next to the radio. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away."

"I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your

time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make it until next Saturday then God has blessed me with a little extra time to be with my loved ones....."

"It was nice to talk to you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your loved ones, and I hope to meet you again someday. Have a good morning!"

You could have heard a pin drop when he finished. Even the show's moderator didn't have anything to say for a few moments. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to do some work that morning, then go to the gym. Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast."

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile.

"Oh, nothing special," I said. "It has just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."

HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND AND MAY ALL SATURDAYS BE SPECIAL AND MAY YOU HAVE MANY HAPPY YEARS AFTER YOU LOSE ALL YOUR MARBLES.



By unknown author. . . Off the internet.

Enemies, *Continued from page 1.*

Muslims. It just isn't so. We Christians serve a Risen LORD! "To love our enemies as Christ commanded and not damage the Body, we must first recognize them as enemies and not tolerate them as spiritual friends, parts of our spiritual blood. This uncontested tolerance can kill us." –Tom White, Director of The Voice of the Martyrs. † ~ AWD ~

The refusal to choose is a form of choice; disbelief is a form of belief. –Frank Barron

Around the House, *Continued from page 6.*

airplane to fly with America West Airlines.

There must be some mysterious phantom equipped with some sort of suction machine that goes around sucking the brains out of pilots on their sixtieth birthday. This seems to be the wisdom here in America because a day or two before they reach their sixtieth birthday no one will let them in or near a cockpit. The boss doesn't bring it up too often because it causes him go into an acute state of irritation. The only other thing that makes the boss this acutely irritated these days is stupidity. And, well, there is plenty of that going around so the boss has to try to ignore it as best as he can or he would be in a 'state' all of the time. I don't think his body would take much of that kind of pressure. That sort of pressure has prematurely ended the life of many a good man and woman.

Linda has recovered nicely from the summer marriage and is still working on the back bedroom. The boss is doubtful that she will ever get it finished, and he seldom brings it up anymore. I think he has decided to use his energy elsewhere.

The news on the TV is still the same—horribly dismal at best; young American men and women are preparing to go into harm's way. And, who knows the reason why? You could ask a hundred people and those of them that gave a hoot would give you as many different reasons. The kids who are signing up seldom know the truth. If they did, it would be doubtful if many of them would be so eager to go to war. I'm just a dog so what do I know? But, it seems to me that we may have gotten ourselves into this predicament because of greed and laziness. We want all of that 'cheap' energy, and we are too lazy to invent another form of it or find another place to harvest it. So, we will send our young people over there to a more-than-ever before hostile environment. Just so we may keep our

finger in the 'big oil pie.' Think about it. It is more than probable that biological and chemical weapons will be used on our forces. There is a great possibility of tactical nuclear weapons being used in this conflict! This subject is too depressing—I'm not going to think about it anymore right now!


My sisters are all in good health and enjoying life around the Doudney house. Camry still has an emotional problem, and thank goodness the thunderstorm season is over. I wish the boss would quit turning the buzzer on the clothes dryer on. That buzzer just drives Cam crazy when it goes off. Poor thing!

The boss comes home on Fridays and goes back every Monday. He really is uncomfortable in the school atmosphere. I really feel for him. He will be glad when this Airbus school business is over.

Andy and L'Lana are getting along fine for newlyweds. Ash is a full time college student which makes the boss swell with pride. Linda is the same happy and cheerful person that she always is—the boss says that Linda is beyond changeability.

Thanksgiving is coming soon, and there is supposed to be a big event at Branson for the immediate family. I have little hope of being able to attend. Doudney Dogs aren't allowed in many public places. This is disappointing, but nothing that we three girls can't handle. The boss thinks that even he might not be able to attend because of the Airbus training.

That is about all I can think to say at this time. Hope to see you soon. Try not to scratch too often, keep your nose to the wind, your eyes sharp and your ears perked. See you later.

~ Jazz ~ 

Keep the cards, comments, letters & contributions coming. ViewsLetters5@aol.com or snail mail at 1015 West Dorchester Way, Mustang, OK 73064
Answer to the riddle that was in ViewsLetter #26 is: 'a coffin.'

I never did a day's work in my life; it was all fun.
-Thomas Edison (1847-1931)