



Episcopal Priest Brings Club Its Annual Christmas Message



Mother Stephanie Swinnea
 Photo by George Lampton

Mother Stephanie Swinnea, an Episcopal Priest, and a Rotarian, gave us her "Reflections on Christmas" at our Dec. 23 meeting.

Mrs. Swinnea told us the previous Saturday, she rang the Salvation Army bell. She rang the bell "for an hour and a half in the bitter cold," she related.

"Children smiled at the ringing of the bell," and she said "Merry Christmas to more people in that time than I had in all of December,"

she recalled.

The Episcopal clergy said she remembered when her "firstborn, Patrick came home from school, protesting that a schoolmate had insisted that Patrick's

dad was Santa Claus."

"I sighed," she said, expecting that the Santa Claus "mystery had been unraveled." But when she asked what he had said to the boy, Patrick "lifted his chin and puffed out his chest.. (and) told him, 'That's crazy. There's no reindeer in my back yard!'"

So Mrs. Swinnea decided that the "mystery lives,"

about Santa. But she took precautions when her children were small. She said she had heard of children "who, when grown, dismissed the mystery of the Nativity altogether, along with Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy."

So, to "keep our focus on the true meaning of the Nativity, we had an Advent Wreath in our home," she decided.

Several nights a week, "we would gather around the wreath, light the candle or candles for the week... We would hear prophetic scriptures about the coming of Christ, sing a carol or two and have a 'Popcorn Prayer' of

See Christmas Message on Page 2

'Volunteerism' Is Healthy, So Is Local Boys, Girls Club



Lynn Edward
 Photo by George Lampton

"Someone said volunteerism is dead," Lynn Edwards toll us last week. But he took a poll of his Rotary Club, and found that "almost 100 percent" have attended a board meeting of some kind recently.

Several coaches have told him, added Lynn, when you have a state championship team you can find several members of the Boys and Girls Club.

That is because that is where

they learned character and sportsmanship. He said at the Boys and Girls Club, you get them to "work together and to play together."

Lynn recalled his days at Oklahoma Christian College and compared that with what kids do today. He told how an endowment from a former active Boys and Girls Club leader provided shoes for today's members who could not afford them. He concluded with a Bible verse that said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."



Mike Lowber receives special award" from Randy Saunier - Photo by Karl Scifries

ABLE Officials Help Enforce Many Laws Besides Alcohol



Joe Daniels
 Photo by Karl Scifries

The main job of the ABLE Commission is to enforce alcoholic beverage laws, as it was for the ABC, but with about 25 agents, they are also called to help enforce other laws, like in the case of the Oklahoma City Bombing, Special Agent In-Charge Joe Daniels told us last week.

Most of Daniels' stories were about whiskey stills or

"moonshiners", but ABLE officers may be called in to investigate a "meth lab," non_Indian gambling, or even a drowning, if public health and safety are involved.

ABLE and the Wildlife Department are Constitutional agencies, while the Highway Patrol and other state law enforcement are formed by the

Legislature, Daniels said.

Under "Cops and Shops" laws ABLE officers can pose as sales personnel of "low point beer or tobacco." This is so minors who try to purchase beer or tobacco can be arrested, instead of merchants or store owners.

But many of Daniels' stories are about "bones in mash barrels" or "moonshiners in overalls."

Daniels said they run across one or two concrete floors but none of the illegal booze is made under "clean" conditions.

There are now more "wet" counties than dry counties, he reported. But his agents are stationed in 18 counties.

And, he said, although people who make their own wine can make 200 gallons for their own uses, someone usually tastes it and talks them into giving it to someone else, and the wine maker usually breaks the law.

His office is located in the Professional Building, 10 East Washington, Room 103, Daniels said.

Classification Talks from Stephanie Swinnea and Kyle Burmeier

Dec. 30 was the day for Classification Talks from “Mother Stephanie Swinnea,” (Photo on Page one) our new member who is an Episcopalian Priest, and Kyle Burmeier, a new member whose classification is Pharmaceutical Sales.

“Mother Stephanie” said she was a “military child,” and got to travel to Japan, Germany, France and many different states. But she was born at Fort Sill, in Oklahoma.

She married her “childhood sweetheart,” Sam, and they have been married 36 years.

They have three sons and a daughter. The daughter attends OSU. One son is married and lives in Denver. A second lives in Tulsa and the third son lives with his parents in McAlester and attends Eastern Oklahoma State University at Wilburton. “And we all like each other,” said the Episcopalian clergy.

She said she felt that a parent is to provide leadership to their children, so she “stayed home and raised them as responsibly as I could.”

If they “love you and follow your leadership” they are less likely to grieve you or disappoint you, she confided.

Then she said she and her husband talked about what they would do, since the children were raised. “There’s only one thing I had a

passion to do,” she told him. And that was what she is doing.

So she went to a Seminary, became a deacon then a priest, and got her Master’s Degree.

She had written a novel, “I, Patrick, a Sinner” and four screen plays, two of which are currently being promoted, “Lotte My Love” and “Two Robins.”

Kyle said he went to Texas A&M and majored in history. He has a classification as a Pharmaceutical Representative.



Kyle Burmeier
Photo by George Lampton

And he is “thrilled to be a Rotarian,” and likes McAlester.

He has been married 16 years and he and his wife have five boys and a girl.

The good news is that they all like basketball, he said.



Fred Turner receives Award



Brett Smith and Fred Turner
Photo and story by George Lampton.

On Tuesday, January 6, 2009 President Brett Smith surprised Rotarian Fred Turner by presenting him with a certificate designating him an “Honorary Rotarian”.

This is the highest award that the McAlester Rotary club can bestow on a member of our club. Fred was cited for his many years of service to the club including presiding over the club as President

for the Rotary year 1988-89 and editing the McRota newsletter for many years.

President Brett stated that Fred was a perfect example of our motto, “Service Above Self” and principals of the “Four Way Test”.

Fred has requested that no one tell his wife Barbara of the award. It seems that their family sets aside money each year in the family budget for Fred’s Rotary dues. Now that he is an Honorary Rotarian, he no longer is required to pay dues. Fred stated he plans to use his dues money to make a donation to the Cherokee Indian Tribe (via the Slots) .



Christmas Message, from Page 1

thanksgiving around the circle, each one passing the prayer to the next.” That kept her family “Jesus centered instead of Santa centered,” she explained.

The family also had an Advent calendar, which had a “treat” and a suggestion “behind each door, such as, ‘Write a letter to a friend (or) Visit someone in a nursing home today.’ Others were “bake cookies” and “make someone laugh.”

“Remembering Jesus’ birth and doing good deeds, like Jesus did, kept us in focus,” she said.

She also explained to each child that “Santa Claus is a wonderful game we all play at Christmas time. Suppose every person was suddenly transformed to reflect the character and spirit of Jesus. Wouldn’t all people be happy and generous, caring and kind, giving gifts to those without power or means—the children?”

“Santa Claus,” she said, “is an image of God’s goodness, come to earth that first Christmas, especially God’s love for children.”

She read three poems, one humorous and one that she wrote, about Christmas.

Attendance, Visitors and Handshakers *And The BigPot*

Attendance last week was just 37. There were no guests. The previous week, there were 40. Kayln Bowden was a guest of Orlean Smith. On Dec. 30 there were 28 present, but on Dec. 23 there were 40.

On Dec. 16 there were 51 members and guests. Joe Hill was a guest of Helen Wheeler. Kyle Burmeier was a guest of Randy Saunier.

HANDSHAKERS-Wayne Hanway had the dollar last week, and gave it

to Lynn Edwards. The previous week, Steve Smith handed a buck to Dick Dudley. On Dec. 30, Jim Thompson had the dollar (again,) and I think, gave it to Iva Due. Before that, I’m losing track.

But the Big Pot had a lot of potential takers. Ron May drew a 10 of something last week. He looked like he got 10 fingers back. Shayne Javersak drew one wrong card. Randy Saunier drew one. And someone else. Anyway, no one drew the right one.