

ARMSS

Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors

Quarterly Newsletter

July 2007

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The 11th Annual ARMSS Convention Summary

by Ray Bayley

While it could seem to present a problem, attendees at the 2007 convention of the Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors who arrived by air actually were on solid ground when they alighted, despite having come down considerably less distance than they went up. The thinner air in Mile-High Denver did not deflate the convention enthusiasm. The spirited piano playing by retired minister Al Siegel and song leading by his spouse, Lois, set the tone throughout the four days.

As would be expected, worship was central to the activities, but unexpected were the innovations in worship. Former ARMSS president Warren Rutledge introduced a period of Taizé-style worship including a talented chorus from a local church which led and accompanied the singing. In a meditative style oft-repeated phrases took on new meanings.



Convention attendees "unwind" after Friday morning worship in Denver. Yarn will be used to make prayer shawls.

Kenneth Smith surprised everyone, throwing eight unraveling balls of yarn, admonishing worshippers to keep them moving while he developed the theme, "String Art: God's Yarn." Better experienced than explained, it was an effective worship exercise.

Kay-Robert Volkwijn employed quick-tempoed songs to assist his admonishments about spiritual gifts.

Sunday closing worship, including Holy Communion, was conducted by several Denver clergy. The sermon was a role-switch, with Elder Chuck Sparks, moderator of Denver Presbytery preaching to the ministers.

The two keynote speakers offered a distinct contrast. Rev. Dr. Judith Rock was in her prime as a dancer and choreographer in the 1970s. Paraphrasing her, "So this body function doesn't work too well any more; others do, so use them." And a quotation: "I have to be making." She showed a video of a dance choreographed when a crisis arose. Four weeks before a major performance a severely injured leg was encased in a cast. Rather than canceling the engagement she developed the dance "Learning to Sit Still." On a chair

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ARMSS Quarterly Newsletter

This Newsletter is distributed quarterly by the Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors.

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James F. Reese

A Message From the President of ARMSS

The Return From Denver

“...when it was time to leave, they went home another way.”

Matthew 2:21 (Holy Bible,
New Living Translation)

The above words were written of the Wise Men who had seen Jesus and were about to return home. Undoubtedly the description is referring to returning by another route because of the ever-present threats from King Herod.

There is the possibility, its just possible that they went home with changed lives, new perspectives, optimistic and positive attitudes. The scriptures do say they went home with “exceeding great joy” (RSV) and “indescribable joy” (Phillips).

The ARMSS Convention, of which we now have had eleven, ended on June 17. Some of us who attended went home “a different way.” One couple came by train, went home by plane. A couple came from Kansas, went to Seattle, and back to Kansas. Several persons drove, visited friends enroute, went home a different route and visited a different group of friends.

I would like for the reader to stay with me for the rest of this message as together we look at the “return from Denver” not just by a different route but returning “a new way” with new visions, expanded hopes and fresh perspectives.

We were not disappointed in any of our gathered times. Every speaker inspired us, workshop leaders gave us opportunities to acquire and share information, and tours of the Capitol, the Mint, the Art Museum, and churches expanded our knowledge in many ways. Worship uplifted our spirits. The evening program on Sat-

urday night gave us the promise of how we can deal effectively with diversity.

There was a stimulating environment that enabled us to strengthen our gifts of wisdom, insight, and patience. There was a spirit of camaraderie among attendee that gave us the courage that led us to discuss and test impulses that could lead to better approaches to life situations.

The above, and many more instances, made the “return from Denver” a “new way.”

We look forward to the ARMSS Convention in Indianapolis June 12-16, 2008. We look beyond it to the “return from Indianapolis” with new, life-changing areas of work on *Peace: A Dream and a Possibility*.

To “return from Indianapolis” one must first “come to Indianapolis.” Make plans now to be there and your return will be “another way.”

James Foster Reese

CONTINUED: ARMSS Convention throughout, gracefully using her entire body-including the cast-enclosed leg-she performed a meaningful expression of anger, frustration, determination, and triumph. The Rev. Dr. Judith soon was Judy to all.

John Kuzma, using the title “Achieving an Authentic Aesthetic in Church Settings,” developed the realization that music as well as language transmits culture. He contended that God can speak through any music. Quoting Plato and Socrates, among others, he established the long history of discussion regarding the values and uses of music.

Workshops were equally varied in content and form. Judy Rock had her groups doing things physically they would not have believed they could do. Dr. Jerrald McCullom traced the evolvement of a church study group. Subject matter has varied from Bible study to Qi Kong ex-

ercises, from Judaism and Islam to music, art, and drama. His presentation was ably augmented by his staff assistant. Dr. John Burgess led study of “Architecture and Spirituality,” focusing on how spirituality is expressed in church design. Rev. Jim Reese and Rev. Amy Mendez led a workshop that considered celebration of the Christmas story by different cultures. Bill Gannaway led two sessions with presbytery representatives (PRs) to ARMSS. These people are recognized as key to the development of the organization. With 173 presbyteries, Bill’s task to reach them is phenomenal. Bill has served as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, but PR work has prevented strategic planning. By presidential edict Bill will continue for a year with PR responsibilities, while his successor as Strategic Planning Chair, Ray Bayley, will not have PR responsibility.

The Board of Pensions provided a lunch and program. BOP representative, Rev. Phil Gehman used slides to project charts giving assurance pensions are secure, and cartoons to assure awareness that life includes some light-heartedness. Princeton Seminary sponsored an evening gathering for alumni, those who wish they were, and curious and interested folks.

The business meeting received reports from the Treasurer, Lois Siegel, and Finance Chair, Robert Forsythe. Naomi Adamson, Nominating Chair, presented Donna Haines for election to Secretary.

A feature of the Saturday night banquet always is presentation of merit awards to retirees nominated by their presbyteries for services rendered their presbytery in retirement. The 2007 recipients were: Frank Benson, Newton Presbytery; Julio Delgado, Tropical Florida Presbytery; Douglas W. Hix, Coastal Carolina Presbytery; Elizabeth J. Raitt, Twin Cities Area Presbytery; John H. Spaulding, South

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CONTINUED: ARMSS Convention

Louisiana Presbytery; and Sheldon B. Waters, Philadelphia Presbytery. Three were singled out for prolonged service to ARMSS: Robert Boehlke, William Gannaway, and Kenneth Smith. Musical entertainment was provided by a group of eleven Hispanic youth from the ValVerde Church.

Indefatigable convention chairwoman Ella Banton, announced the 2008 ARMSS convention will be June 12-16 in Indianapolis, Indiana, on the theme *Peace: A Dream and Possibility*. Expectations are that in 2009 ARMSS will meet jointly with Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network, probably in the mid-west. Consideration will be given to the far west for 2010. There is conversation about possibly meeting aboard a cruise ship; thoughts can be shared with executive committee members. They will meet in Indianapolis September 23-25.

The 2007 ARMSS convention ended on a high note. Members are encouraged to enlist new members, and urged to plan on attending the convention in Indianapolis in 2008.

Excerpts from Dr. Judith Rock

The following are excerpts of Dr. Judith Rock, from her keynote address "The Word Made Flesh and the Body in the Mirror", given at the 2007 ARMSS Convention in Denver, June 15. To see the full context of the address please visit the ARMSS website at: www.pcusa.org/olderadults/armss

In 1978, I founded a modern dance company in Berkeley, California. We called it Body and Soul Dance Company, and we performed both in the professional modern dance world and in religious settings. We did a lot of touring. After a performance in the worship service at New York's Riverside Church, I was told that "an older woman" - about the age I am

now - looked down at her bulletin and then up, over her reading glasses, at us dancing. "Well," she said, all too audibly, "there's a lot of body..."

Ah, there was a lot of body, then. And all the parts worked. The publicity photo I sent for this conference was taken in 1977. Back when all the parts worked. Why did I send you a thirty year old publicity picture? The vanity of an old performer? A cry of it was not always thus? I sent it as a starting point of this talk. To some degree, each of us time-bound human beings is a lower case word of God made flesh - word with a small w. But what's the word we are as parts of the flesh stop working? My dance company once did a piece created for and named after the Messaien organ piece: The Force and Agility of the Glorious Body. Who are we when the body is no longer so glorious and agile?

The first thing God does in Genesis is wade into chaos. Which is exactly what the human artist does. Chaos, the raw material for human makers as well as for God, is, fortunately abundant. In 1987, in the midst of a performance at the Sacramento Jazz Festival, I tore a calf muscle and ended up in a cast from toes to knee. Four weeks before an East coast dance tour. The dance company was, by that time three of us. In order to do a full concert, all of us had to be able to perform. The doctor told me he would take the cast off the day before I left for Boston.

I went home, dragged a folding chair out of the closet, and plunked it down in front of a mirror. And started making a dance out of that particular chaos: the injury, the cast, my anger, frustration, and urgent need, the chair as the limited space in which I would move, since I could barely walk. That chaos took me into new, fruitful, and fascinating movement territory. I called the piece "Learning to Sit Still". When I got the cast off, I made them cut it

very neatly, so that I could put it back on and tape it together. It was now a stage prop. The next day, holding onto walls in order to walk, I got on the plane, the cast and the chair in our company luggage, and went to Boston. "Learning to Sit Still" stayed in my solo repertoire for years.

We're all makers. We all create out of chaos. All of us can develop our ability to create, we can experiment with it, we can push it farther. Books, seminars, speakers, and courses for doing that abound, offering to teach us to be creative in everything from pasturing to parenting to business to retirement to peace-making. We help heal the world when we step out of the way things usually are, out of our familiar normal, and do things more flexibly, more unexpectedly, less defensively.

Creativity as one more self help quick fix doesn't lead much of anywhere. Real making out of chaos is something else again. It's hard, scary, intermittently joyous as opposed to happy, teeth-grittingly detailed, glorious, obsessive, pig-headedly stubborn, hilarious, terrifyingly focused, often apparently useless, low- to no-paying, often nuts-in-the-eyes-of-the-world, and it has long boring stretches that make going to meetings look like a good time.

To open oneself to this kind of creating, creating which is willing to tell only truth, is to open to mystery - whether we create as a working artist or some other kind of maker. To create is to open mystery in much the same way the mystic opens to mystery. Mystery - our tradition calls it the Holy Spirit- is not about personal growth. Not about finding nifty ways to make one's business more profitable. I've never found mystery to be discernibly interested in my happiness or my bank account. I have found it to be very interested in yanking me deeper into my vocation.

CONTINUED: Dr. Judith Rock

The godfather of my vocation is Frederick Buechner, the Presbyterian minister and writer. He says that when you find the place where your own deep passion meets the world's deep need, that cruciform juncture is your vocation.

Poorly advised or not, here we are, all of a certain age, after decades of bushwhacking through the territory of our vocations crossing oceans of mystery without a boat. We set out long ago. Are we there yet? Where is there? You're retired. I can't dance any more. Does a vocation end? One thing about dance is that the performing ends earlier than it does in any of the other arts. Life, like dance, is a time-art. The time comes when some body part or other says, "That's it, we're done. No more plies, no more jumps." And there you are, mid-forties or so, forcibly retired, usually with no money, certainly with no pension and no social security. You're too young to get any pension or social security, which is just as well, because you don't have any to get. When that point came for me, I became a police officer for a few years. For part of that time, I was an auxiliary officer and later sergeant in the NYPD auxiliary unit.

You answer that all or nothing call to be a dancer when you're young. And you pour everything into it. Every cell, muscle, joint, ever curiosity. You turn forty or so-and you understand from your DNA not only how to do everything you've ever done. But what it means, what it is. How to set it on fire and change the world! Or at least the life of someone in the audience. And right about then-you can't do it any more.

Losing full out dancing, performing, is not just a joke, it's a death. Sometimes well meaning people still say to me-Oh, but you're still a dancer. Once a dancer, always a

dancer! Well, no. For the dancer, dance is not a concept, not a metaphor, not a renewable group membership. I will always have been a dancer. But when the physicality is over, the identity changes.

The writer Annie Dillard would have understood. Make art as if you were dying, she says. Because you are. We all are. So don't waste our time. We don't have a lot of it. And never mind that stuff we all love best, and go "ahhh" over. Raindrops on roses and so on. We know about that stuff. You tell us, show us, make us see what only you love at all. Show us what only you see and see into, are fascinated and compelled by, she says. We need to know your passion. That's what you were set here on this planet to communicate.

We need to know about each other's passions, what only you or only I see or understand or love, because someone else's passion may be the very thing that brings us to our own, or keeps us faithful to our own. But don't forget, we're all dying. So don't even think about wasting our time with the sweetly trivial. We're running out of time and we need truth. The thing about death is that it's the ultimate limit. Maybe artists are so aware of it because making art requires a passionate affair with limits. No limits, no art. No limits, no shape. No limits, no communication. Dance, like music, drama, and life, is a time art. A time art's structure and shape are revealed during the time of its performance-two minutes, ten minutes, two hours, or eighty years. The structure, the shape, of an art piece or a life, is a crucial part of how the life or the piece communicates. Without limits, which come both from choice and from unalterable circumstance, neither an artwork nor a life has a coherent shape. Without choices and grappling with circumstance, no strong structure is built, a life doesn't speak. No limits, no coherent shape,

no strong structure, no communication.

The secret the artist knows is that every limit, chosen or imposed, opens into more possibilities than can be used. Which catapults you into more choices. And every choice closes the door on an array of possibilities. Each choice gives more shape to what the artist wants to communicate. Whatever thoughts, feelings, insights, or even sublime perceptions of beauty and meaning the finished artwork sparks in you, the audience, the artwork itself is a meticulously wrought physical event, created by a sweating, swearing artist up to the neck in the dazzling chaos of choices and limits offered and imposed by the physical world.

The spirituality of ageing means figuring out how to use the limits imposed and possibilities offered as bits drop off. When deaths, small and large happen. The process of going on becoming who we're meant to be means using those limits and possibilities to hone and shape the lower case incarnation we were made to be. The word made this flesh, this body in the mirror, dancing in the here and now to the music of time. That's why we need each other and the surprise and stimulus of each other's eccentric passions to keep us bushwhacking through the unknown and dog paddling across seas of mystery.

I keep finding that both the physicality and spirituality of aging mean, to some extent, learning to sit still. Or at least stiller. Not in the sense of giving up But in the sense of going deeply into new limits and the new possibilities those limits offer, instead of trying to escape them. The greatest imposed limit that shapes our lives is, as I've said, death. As I consider that from this vantage point, the possibility that rivets my attention is the one that says, open your hands. Loosen your grip on what you no longer need in

CONTINUED: Dr. Judith Rock says to me. To me, who can hardly throw out clothes I haven't worn in three years. Or old dance costumes. Or notes I wrote down a decade ago and might use someday to make something, maybe. I know, this possibility says. Do it anyway. Loosen your grip on what you don't need any more to become who you were made to be.

So what do I no longer need? I no longer need to be crowned queen of my professional world. Or to prevail in the theology and art wars. Or to be the next Martha Graham. Or to have a concave belly. Or to be right-at least not all the time. Or to do ten things at once and win the I'm-busier-and-more-productive-than-you-are world competition. I no longer need to make church really interested in real art and even pay for it. Or to show my father that I've amounted to something. Or to defeat sexism and the rest of the forces of evil in single combat.

And what do I need more than ever? Same thing I've always needed. To make. To make art, love, peace, a mess, sense. And I need my husband, godchildren, friends, fellow artists, ancestors of the blood and the vocation. I need animals and quiet and solitude and beauty and kayaking and my bicycle and warm weather. The list could go on. My hands are opening, but they're far from empty yet.

I don't hurry as much now because I no longer hurry well. I make sure that I have time. Ample, unhurried, unpressured time. To write and do the work I do. To sleep. To read. To work with birds. To know where the frogs and snakes live around my house and where the pond chickens nest. I think retirement is something like that. It's a very, very counter-cultural thing, having time. Having time, as opposed to making time. So here's a thought. Maybe, as we become older - and even when we

become - dare I say it - old - what we get is time. Time to work on this time art called life. Time to turn all our attention to putting the work in progress our lives have been into the most satisfying, most communicative shape we can create. C.S. Lewis saw this part of life very clearly, I think, when he said that as we get older our room for maneuvering narrows. As we make choices and live out consequences and grapple with circumstances through the years, we come to a very fine point. If we've let our lifetime of creating tell and communicate the truth about ourselves and life, we become, if you will, a very fine, clear point. As in, finally coming to the point - finally reaching who we were meant to be and what our lives end up communicating.

As I worked on what to say today, I began to see another shadowy possibility beyond my current project of opening my hands. I began to see an even more difficult and breathtaking possibility waiting in the shadow of the limit of death. I think it's the one I have to head toward in order to finish honing and shaping this particular word made this particular flesh. All I know about this possibility so far is an image that kept coming to me as I wrote and thought and made this talk. I kept seeing myself standing on a cliff by the ocean. In fierce light and strong wind. Wind and light that somehow love me. Everything else is gone. My hands are open. Empty. I'm honed and sharpened to something the light and wind almost pass through. And I'm laughing. Laughing

ARMSS Executive Committee Approves Regional Representatives by Bill Gannaway

The ARMSS Executive Committee approved a Regional or Synod level position in order to increase better communication with Presbytery Representatives (PR) in the ARMSS

Network. The PRs are the "heart and soul" of the ARMSS organization. The success of ARMSS depends on the work of the PR. The duties of the Regional Representative (RR) will be to call, email or write the Presbytery Representative in their particular Synod on a regular basis, to recruit new PRs when vacancies occur, and to encourage PRs to develop activities in their respective presbyteries for the retired. Twelve have volunteered to be Regional Representatives for the coming year. We still need RRs for the Synods of Alaska - Northwest, South Atlantic, Puerto Rico and Southwest. If you are willing to serve in one of these Synods as a RR, please call Bill Gannaway at: ~~1-785-234-2148~~

Cuba Mission Project by Bill Gannaway

At the ARMSS business meeting on Saturday morning in Denver, members voted to endorse the Presbyterian Church in Cuba as a mission for ARMSS for the next three years. This endorsement will entail encouraging members to go on a mission trip to Cuba to visit Presbyterian congregations, the Seminary, and to support our brothers and sisters in the Cuban Church. Details of these mission trips will be published in the ARMSS quarterly Newsletter.

Also ARMSS members voted to support financially "The Presbyterian Cuban Connection." Membership in the Cuban Connection is \$110.00 per year and may be sent to the Rev. Dean H. Lewis, Executive Secretary, PO Box 94, Medanales, NM 87548. The money sent to Dean goes directly to projects in the Cuban Church. Your contribution will entitle you to receive "The Presbyterian Cuba Connection" Newsletter which will include a list of other partner projects you may choose to support. As Dean says: "The needs of the Cuban Church continue to be very great and with the increasing restrictions of the US embargo, life is more and

New Chair of Strategic Planning Committee - Ray Bayley

Rev. Ray Bayley took over as Strategic Planning Committee Chair. While in Denver, Ray recruited three members to serve with him on the committee. The Committee will work together to set goals for the mission of the ARMSS membership.



Strategic Planning Committee (left to right): Kay-Robert Volkwijn, Ray Bayley (chair), Neola Reese, and Allen Muruyama

So far a life-long resident of Wisconsin, except for the three McCormick years, Ray Bayley held two pastorates spanning from May, 1944, to September, 1953. These were one open country and three village churches and a Wisconsin Council of Churches ministry to University of Wisconsin students housed some thirty miles from the Madison campus. He spent many weeks directing junior high camps.

His mid-career twenty years were with Alcohol Problems Council, the last thirteen as executive director. Including newsletter production and other writing, fundraising, and some legislative contacts in Madison and Washington, the work was mainly preaching and speaking throughout the state in churches of many denominations and sizes, in middle and high schools both in assemblies and classrooms, and "any place they'd listen to me and some where they didn't," as Ray describes it. He remains active on the APCW board of directors.

His wife, Hazel, a teacher of the deaf and elementary grades, was teaching

when he left the APCW staff, and was of such an age as to be unlikely to gain employment if they moved. Consequently they bought and operated a small resort for not only the remaining ten years until retirement but eleven years into retirement.

During these years Ray served numerous part-time interim-type pastorates by nearly every descriptive term in the Book of Order, serving eight churches, and others in extended pulpit supply arrangements.

Along the way he was presbytery stated clerk and treasurer more than ten years, hunger action enabler, moderator of two presbyteries, and General Assembly commissioner three times, plus other committee assignments.

Born in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, and after attending public schools there he gained an AA degree at Wayland Junior College, also in Beaver Dam, and a BS(Ed) at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Hazel and Ray recently celebrated their sixty-third marriage anniversary.

Ray is working on a fun-and serious book, *Let' Do It Again Sometime: Stories From My Life*, and has published several articles recently. He is on a local church committee and the board of directors of the August Derleth Society. (Derleth was a prolific writer of Wisconsin history-based short stories, novels, and poetry.) Ray concludes, "I've spent 88 years getting ready; now's the time to do."

Donna Haines Elected as Secretary

You may know Donna as designer of the beautiful Conference banners that she has created for the ARMSS Conventions. Each banner is designed around the theme of that year's Convention. Last year's anniversary celebration was the official unveiling of the banners Donna had made for the first 10 Conventions. Keeping in style, this year Donna made a banner

expressing the theme of "Spirituality and the Creative Arts."



Donna with Convention banner she created

Donna and husband Dennis, currently live in St. Joseph, MO but are building a new house in Independence, MO. They will take possession of the new house on July 31, although they probably won't be there permanently until sometime late September or early October.

Donna and Dennis have 3 children, Daniel, David and Darla and 5 grandchildren with #6 on the way. She retired middle of May in 2003 from a 21 year career with JC Penney doing Custom Interiors, mostly residential. Dennis and Donna have done ministry together for 41 years, she mostly with women's work and children's ministry. Donna directed Children's choir most of that time, helped establish nurseries for small children, has been involved in the community with Business and Professional Women, chaired local beauty pageants, and was president - many years ago - of Welcome Wagon International. Her hobbies include needlework, knitting, flower gardening, and of course grandchildren. She also sings in the local church choir and plays English Handbells. Somehow Donna continues to remain busy in retirement!

ARMSS 2007 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I / We wish to become or continue as a member of the Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors.

Membership is open to retired ministers, their spouses or survivors, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
These Individuals shall become members when each one has paid the \$20.00 annual dues.

Enclosed is a check for \$20/person membership fee. **Please make check payable to ARMSS.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Presbytery: _____ Synod: _____

Status: _____ Minister _____ Spouse _____ Survivor

Please complete and mail to:

Lois Siegel, Treasurer

ARMSS

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Latham, NY 12110

A Pledge for the Continuing Mission of the Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors

I / We pledge ____ \$100 or \$_____ for 2007 and \$_____ for 2008 and 2009.

Name: _____

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Your contributions are greatly appreciated and are Tax Deductible!!!

CONTRIBUTIONS

We are grateful for the contributions which we have received in support of ARMSS.
It is your gifts that supports our broad ministry.

The following persons contributed in support of ARMSS since publishing the last newsletter:

Paul & Arlys Aijian

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Robert & Marlene Forsythe

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THANK YOU!

For your generous assistance.

NOTE: If we have failed to recognize you as a contributor for this quarter,
please contact Ginny Nyhuis at: vnhyhuis@wi.rr.com or: 615-426-1545.

Your support is vital to our program. Please **mark your check E048098** and send contributions to:

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