



“A” Association Devotion—2017

What a great place to have our Sunday “A” Association Reunion and fellowship with the people we grew up with. Of course, good friends and barbeque make for a good gathering any time. It is also a great time to reflect on our past, what is happening at present, and what we can look forward to.

Many of you have asked why we have only the 1954-1961 “A” Association members coming to this reunion. I have asked that myself. I do understand now, however, why we have become a family in lieu of just getting together with someone from the past.

Do you realize that in the 8 years (1954 to 1961) what this group accomplished? In those 8 years, the Abilene High School Eagles had some very impressive years as special teams of the era in which we lived. In 8 years, the Eagles had 3 Football State Championship teams, 4 Track State Championship teams, and 2 Baseball State Championship teams—in 8 years, 9 State Championship Sport Teams . From what I have read, no other Texas High School sports teams have accomplished this much over such a short period of time. If anyone proves me wrong, I want to know. So, to all the spouses here in our midst, you know that you are in the midst of some champions. This is not to brag, it is just the fact that our mentors kept us on the right track and we strived to meet the goals set before us to be the best. This was instilled in us by our coaches, many teachers, parents, pastors and fans. In humility and appreciation I thank these special mentors who helped us achieve our goals.

Gerald and Christy Galbraith—what a wonderful gift they have given us for the last 6 years. This place where the wind blows, snakes crawl, and tall-tales are told. Snakes...remember the snake who woke everyone up on the back row. I thought we had a Pentecostal Revival right here in our midst. That snake did more to excite the crowd than I did preaching for the first 30 minutes. We can laugh about it now; but, it wasn't funny when that thing crawled out of the bushes.

Thank you again, Gerald and Christy. You are gracious host and hostess for this here bunch of old people (I mean “Senior Adults).” The Lord will bless your family in abundance for putting up with this crowd each and every year.

Andy Springer--Thanks for keeping up with all of us. We all appreciate your dedication in seeing that we are informed concerning our “A” Association members. I appreciate how you have dedicated your time in making sure we

have this reunion each year. You are the same old Andy in a lot of ways; but, the Lord has changed you for the better. Keep up the good work.

We truly are getting older and a little less frisky as we were a few years ago.

We have lost some wonderful friends from our high school days. The first year we met here in 2012, we remembered and honored the ones we had lost. Today, 5 years later, we are going to try and do the same. We will ask each of you to help us remember the names of those who have crossed the finish line.

Many of you have had to go through some rough times in the last year or two. Good to see Stan and Michelle Cosby here again this year. We are praying for you...both of you.

Please remember Dale and Dora Graham. Dora had to cancel coming to our meeting due to Dale's health problems. They wanted to let everyone know they hate to miss this gathering and they will be praying for everyone.

Things change, our families change...adding to the family as grandchildren get married...new grandchildren...even great grandchildren.

A lot of other things change with us:

- Our bellies get larger and our pocket books get smaller
- Our minds are placed on-hold at times. Trying to remember where we placed our cell phone, our keys, and our umbrellas (we have outfitted the population of Fort Worth with umbrellas over the years). I think I could have bought a new car with the amount we have spent on umbrellas.
- Our favorite T.V. shows now are the ones we watched 40 years ago...i.e. Carol Burnett, I love Lucy, Get Smart, Dragnet, Leave It to Beaver, Happy Days...and even earlier...Gunsmoke, Ozzie and Harriet, The Lone Ranger.
- Cowboy shows...Name some Western movie stars:
Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Lash Larue, Rex Allen, John Wayne, Audie Murphy...

Speaking of losing keys and other things, I have a story that only Gerald Cumby could tell and still be driving instead of in the insane asylum.

This is a true story...every word a true story (no exaggerations at all).

The story Title: "The Keys to Unlocking the Door to Humility."

Creative Writing class: The professor gave me a "U" because she said, "U surely did not do this." "U" untrue; "Unbelievable.

The Keys to Unlocking the Door to Humility

By Gerald Cumby

William Arthur Ward said, "To make mistakes is human; to stumble is commonplace; to be able to laugh at yourself is maturity."

I am and always will be a practical joker. If it is not my family I am poking fun at, it is my friends and coworkers. However, it would be very hard to laugh at these special people in my life if I could not laugh at myself. I have made mistakes, I have stumbled, and I have put myself in precarious positions in which I laughed with others as they laughed at me.

My wife, Sherry, has many places to go. She is a busy person...volunteering for an array of various non-profit organizations doing humble, yet gratifying things to being the President and/or Chairperson of organizations receiving accolades and media attention. She loves the volunteer work in the "helping others" category in lieu of the limelight of the sparkly and well-known prestigious organizational work. I sometimes have to eat lunch by myself due to her time consuming activities.

My place to eat lunch on a particular day was Arby's. I was to place my order, eat inside, clean off my table and leave for home. After cleaning off my table after lunch, I went to place my accumulated trash (and a little bit of others' left-over remnants) in the trash receptacle nearest the door to my vehicle. To my surprise, I found that there was an employee sitting in the floor with trash all around her. She was covered with Arby sauce, mustard, a few pieces of roast beef, ketchup, and paper products saturated with all kinds of unappetizing, half-eaten food products on the floor around her and in her lap. She said in a most disgusted manner, "You will have to use the receptacle outside." Then she commented under her breath, "I think the idiot ought to be shot!"

Of course, my next question to her was, "What are you looking for, Ma'am?" "Keys"...replied the sloppy, disgruntled looking lady. "The kid in that vehicle out there lost his keys to his car and he thinks he must have thrown them in the trash." I looked at her badge and I could see that she must be the manager of Arby's. The badge was covered with ketchup and Arby sauce, but I could make out her first name and MANA... Myrtle, Manager (I guessed she was a pretty hot manager..."steaming" might have been a better word).

I went outside and saw only the rear-end of young man who had taken the front seat out of his car to look for his keys. Talking to him and staring at only his rear-end, I asked if he needed help. He, with the same attitude as the manager, stated, "No...I have already called my dad to bring my other set of keys. He lives in Azle." I thought, "Boy, that is a far piece from Burleson." After asking again if I could help and hearing a blunt refusal, I told him, "Good luck" in his quest to find his keys. I then headed for home.

Walking into the house I was surprised that Sherry was home. After a casual hug and kiss, she asked how my day had been. I told her that everything was great, but I never felt as sorry for three individuals in my life as I did for those people at Arby's. Sherry laughed with me as I explained to her

the situation in which the manager was in...the mess, the attitude, and the genuinely disgusted tone she had for the young man who placed her in that situation. Just as we both were at the high point of our laughter, I reached into my pocket and pulled my keys to my truck to leave on the kitchen cabinet as I always do. To my surprise...yes, you are right...I had two sets of keys in my pocket. I looked at Sherry and she looked at me. She said, "You didn't?" I said, "I did."

Well, to make a long story short, I immediately told my wife of 52 years at the time... "I know what you are thinking...No, I am not going back to Arby's and reveal my act of stupidity." Of course, she said, "You get yourself in that car and head to Arby's and tell them the truth." I will not reveal what I told her...but, it wasn't the Christian thing to say. I even asked her to go back up there for me. That went over like a pregnant pole-vaulter; so, off to Arby's I went. I thought of everything as to what acceptable excuse I might give as to how this unfortunate incident could have happened. I even thought about pitching the keys in the back of the drink machine and then casually walking out. None of the things would be acceptable to God or Sherry. Me maybe...but I gave in to my better inner self and trucked on down the road towards Arby's. I started to turn the car around and tell my wife I was the boss of the house and she does not tell me how to live my life. That was a short and ill-fated thought.

When I opened the door to Arby's I encountered a very clean employee at the service desk. I asked where the manager was and he said, "She's gone home to take a bath; but, she will be back." I wanted to chuckle, but it wasn't the time to be cute or "the guy with the funny come-back." I then knew it was the time to reveal my stupidity and I reluctantly stated, "I don't know how it happened, but I accidentally picked up the 2nd set of keys when I ..." The young employee stopped me in mid-sentence and said, "You better get out of here while you can. If Myrtle comes back while you are here, she will kill the man I am speaking to."

Since I knew who he was talking about...and loving myself a little more than what others do, I scooted out the door at a very fast pace hoping the manager of the store would enjoy her bath and come in at least 10 minutes after I had left. I have not eaten at Arby's since that frightful day.

The quote of the day is worth repeating: Ralph Steadman said, "God invented mankind because he loved silly stories."

Now for today's devotion:

All of us have wanted to be on the "A" team.

What does it take to be on the "A" Team?

Whether we were in Sports, Academic Pursuits, Military endeavors, or members of a Bible Memory Verse Team, the goal and emphasis was to work hard to be on the "A" Team.

Definition: “A” Team: 1. A subunit of the Special Forces, usually consisting of 12 soldiers. 2. A group consisting of the best members of a larger group; an elite group. 3. An A-team of foreign-policy advisers.

Very few people strive hard to stay on the “B” Team or the Team with a desire to be 2nd best. Everything changes...Varsity and Jr. Varsity now. Janitor = Sanitation Engineer now.

Can all be winners? Can all be on the “A” Team?

Why even have an “A” team if the goal is not to be the best.

2 Timothy 2:15

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Isaiah 48:17

“This is what the Lord says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.”

Some great truths we need to know to be on the “A” Team of Life.

I call it the “ABC” List for being a Quality Leader (whether it is on the job, as a coach or teacher, or as a parent):

BE:

A = Accountable: to family, to your church, to God...and to yourself. We go through life making choices. Some have been good, some bad. All of those choices we have had to buckle up and accept...to be accountable for our mistakes, our less than perfect acts. Our mentors taught us that. We were accountable to our team, or our church. To the athlete on a team: You might have dropped a baton a baton on the last leg of the relay team...you lost; missed the bar by ½” as you came down on your last jump; over-threw a pass to a receiver open in the end zone. You might have missed on being a perfect parent...but, none of us were and are today.

However, we were and still are accountable to ourselves and others in our life. How we handle life is very important for our standing in our world...then, later and now.

B = Bold, but Balanced

What I mean here is we need to be willing to speak up for the truth (as you see it). Bold enough to let people know your beliefs, your likes and dislikes if the right time wills it; but balanced in your beliefs. I'm not saying to have a "wishy-washy" faith or belief system; some might call it "sitting on the fence" with your beliefs; but bold enough to speak up when your principles are challenged.

Thomas Jefferson made a great quote when he said, "In matter of taste, swim with the current; in matter of principle, stand firm like a rock."

Peter, the apostle, was bold but not balanced before the resurrection of Jesus; but once he saw Jesus had resurrected, he was bold, encouraging, and balanced in his thinking.

C = Compassionate; Competitive; Consistent; Cooperative; Courageous; Curious

All of these traits are very important in fulfilling the role of good leader, whether as a parent, on our job, as a part of a team.

To be **compassionate**, I saw that in you as we called out the names of the Eagles who have already gone from this life; of those who are going through the physical and aging troubles...

Competitiveness...You guys and gals would not be here today if you were not competitors in life (in high school and today). You don't like to lose. We all learned something when we lost...we have to pick up ourselves and strive to make ourselves better.

Consistently desiring to strive to be better as we are aging. None of us want to be an old codger that nobody can get along with in our last days.

Thus being **cooperative and courageous** as we head for the finish line. Not giving up until our last breath.

Curious...that is what caused me to start thinking about Christianity. Curious as to what made my cousin change his attitude when he said he became a Christian. Curious enough to check things out...and I made my choice. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. And, no one can see the Father except through Him."

Is the Bible true? You have to make up your mind.

On Sherry and my website, we have about 186 individual Bible Studies with 19 different Bible study subject matters; 11 Training sessions, and 78 devotions. I am very humbled and honored to know that since its inception, we have over 78 countries represented of which we have our website viewed every month, some every day. Our web provider gives us an update day-by-day if we want to know how many hits we have on the website, what country they are from, what subjects they were interested in and how long they stayed on it when they hit on it. Little bit scary, but it sure gives us some idea as to where the Bible information is going. Long after Sherry and I have crossed the finish line, this website will remain available for the world to see what the Lord is doing and why we were on earth in the first place.

One of the Bible Studies is actually a book I wrote and will eventually publish on the Book of Philippians. The title of the book will be "Joy in the Camp."

In that book, I want to read to you why I know that the Bible is true.

Taking the time to write, we, as modern day recipients of the precious letters written by Paul and other authors of the Bible, are blessed beyond measure as were the specific people and churches in which the letters were addressed. Today we cannot understand how difficult it must have been for Paul and the authors of the New Testament to acquire enough paper to pen some of the greatest words to individuals and churches while in prison and/or while being under horrific persecution.

Obtaining the resources to pen such historic and life-changing words was a miracle in itself. However, the preservation of these words (Words approved and anointed by God) can only be explained as something that only God can and did do. The plan by God to accomplish the penning of God's revelation to man through man's experiences and God's revelation should be enough of a miracle to cause the Atheist, the sceptic, and anyone not understanding God's wisdom and power, to marvel at this preservation of these wonderful words of life. Although the skeptic might not see the words as "wonderful" or "life-changing", the simple truth of its penmanship and preservation through the years is a spectacular, marvelous, and historic event.

To help one understand the validity of the Word of God (the HOLY Bible), one must see the truth and absolute miraculous power of God Almighty as to helping to preserve the "Wonderful Words of Life" of which we are blessed. The Bible can be verified by external events such as archeology, geography, customs, politics, culture, known world history and writings in other ancient texts. In all aspects of these external event verification, the Bible has been proved to be accurate in all respects. New discoveries always support it, never vice versa. It has never once been proven faulty on single detail or fact, although many have mightily tried and failed.

These 66 separate books were written by about 40 different writers: Kings, such as David and Solomon; Statesmen, such as Daniel and Nehemiah; and Priests, such as Ezra, men taught in the wisdom of Egypt, such as Moses; men taught in the Jewish Law, such as Paul; herdsmen, such as Amos; tax collectors, such as Matthew; unlearned and ignorant fishermen, such as Peter and John; a physician, such as Luke; and mighty overseers, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah.

Where were these books written? Different parts of the world, such as:

- The desert of the Sinai,
- In Arabia,
- In the hills and towns of Palestine,
- In the courts of the Temple,
- In the schools of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho,
- In the palace of Shushan in Persia,
- On the banks of the Chebar River in Babylonia,
- In the dungeons of Rome, and
- On the lonely island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.

Yet one of the most amazing and miraculous things about all this, is that after 1600 years and 40 different writers, they all talked about the same thing, with no

contradictions and no errors (in the original languages of the Hebrew and Greek). They all spoke about the plan of God for man. Most of these men never even read the writings of the others. Everything recorded between the opening pages of the book of Genesis and the closing pages of Revelation was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Trying to preserve the old cities and its architectural structures from that era has been a feat in itself. To preserve the writings from that time is even more of a phenomenon. Paper of today lasts a few short years before turning brittle, crisp, and subject to the volatile forces of nature. Even photos start turning yellow and details of the pictures and/or writing on the photos yield to the elements (light and air) over a few decades.

The penning of God's revelation to the world has always been seen as a miracle by those who have faith and live their lives by faith in the One who created life and the One who said, "You can live it with joy." Faith in the One who gives us life gives us joy unspeakable and full of glory. Only the Creator of life, liberty, and the idea of pursuing life with joy can do that for the individual.

I am a believer...and I will defend it to death.

I am not a preacher or pastor. I have not been ordained or act like I am called to be anything other than what I am. With that in mind, I consider myself a Bible teacher who acknowledges that I am only a messenger delivering what the Holy Spirit has acknowledged in my spirit. I make mistakes, I love my family, my country, my friends and my God.

Never would I want to press you into a belief that went against your character or principles. I do, however, strive to do my best in presenting myself a sojourner on my way to meet my Savior...and I want as many to go with me on that journey as possible.

Believe it or not, I love every one of you. If I can tell you that I love Andy Springer then you know that I can love you.

May God's grace be on each one of you this coming year. I pray for your safety and your health as you strive to make it through 2017 and be back to this gathering next year. Keep the faith!

Let's pray:

"Father God, I don't know who are and who are not the ones here who believe what I spoke about today, but You do. The Bible is true and I believe in the One who talks about the afterlife...heaven. I plan on going there. I have accepted the plan of God as to how to get there. I believe it...and I pray that this lesson will at least cause someone to check out the Bible and find out what I have found out. I plan to see my precious daughter in heaven. As in track many moons ago, I plan on stretching for the finish line as I get ready to cross over. Bless everyone here today and give them a safe trip home. In Jesus Name. Amen.