

ADVENTURE 2012

From The Hobbit

Gandalf: *I am looking for someone to share in an adventure that I am arranging, and it's very difficult to find anyone.*

Bilbo: *I should think so — in these parts! We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!*

ADVENTURE #1 JANUARY

Shelbyville, TN, one afternoon

We were in the middle of kitchen renovations, and making my January deadline was a challenge, but I did it! I invited Minna and Cheryl (my ministry partners) to join me on a trip to sleepy little downtown Shelbyville (pronounced “Shvlvl” by the natives). The first store we explored was full of Americana—Elvis records, old coke dispensers, a baby carriage. Four men sat in a circle off to the side, chewing the fat and talking about killing pigs, of all things. I felt as if I’d stepped into another world! We also checked out various antique shops, each building façade a different splash of color. The salespeople were talkative, laid back, and friendly, and we quickly entered into the saga of their lives.

Indulging in Blue Bell ice cream at the local sweet shop gave us energy to tour the dark, old, four-story county courthouse. **Surprise:** found cheer and warmth in a lovely poinsettia gracing the ladies’ room in the eerie, oppressive basement.

My favorite stop: a little art shop run by Dina d’Argo. Her main theme was horses, painted with vivid, vibrant colors. I startled her when I asked if she’d ever had an NDE (Near Death Experience). As a matter of fact, she had been thrown by a horse and nearly lost her life. A coma left her brain-damaged. How did I know? Her work reminded me of Akiane, child prodigy, mentioned in the book *Heaven Is For Real*. Check out her artwork at:

<http://dina-dargo.artistwebsites.com/index.html>

ADVENTURE #2 FEBRUARY

Caribbean Cruise, 9 days



Celebrity Solstice cruise ship. Decadent luxury. Touring stops included San Juan, Puerto Rico; St. Martin, St. John, and St. Thomas. With all those saints, I wonder if they’re any holier than we are! Every night we ate with two other Christian couples. One guy was a President Bush look-alike, and he was from Texas (no kidding!) Scott enjoyed a round of golf and participated in improv theatre. On one island I saw noni fruit growing wild and

learned that a tea made of fresh bay leaves, lemongrass, and mint leaves will sweat a nasty cold right out of you!

The **highlight** of this adventure for me was a divinely appointed prayer counseling session with a lady I met on one of our tours. I was praying for a ministry opportunity, and she was praying for God's guidance regarding a relationship.

Surprise: Our Indian server claims he remembered me from our 2003 cruise to Alaska! I didn't know I had such a memorable face!

We began this delightful vacation visiting friends in Ft. Lauderdale and concluded with a cold airboat ride on the everglades, a tour of Banyan Air, and a boat ride on the canal with Don (an MK classmate) and Sueanne Campion.



ADVENTURE #3 MARCH **Holland, MI, 5 days**

Alex & Cindy, 2-year-old Jack, Katie, Scott, and I drove from TN to MI in two cars, stopping in Indianapolis to greet Dave & Ruth (fellow MK) Van Reken and her precious mom "Aunt" Betty. To keep Jack occupied, Ruth brought out a box of cars. When it came time to resume our journey, Ruth offered him a little one "to go." He shook his head and declared, "More!" Then he ran to the pile of trucks and grabbed the biggest one! Made for a great laugh . . . but he left without any in his hand. I think there's a life metaphor in there somewhere.



We found tulips already blooming in Holland's unbelievable 70-80 degree weather. We enjoyed JPs coffee with friends, swimming with friends, walking downtown with friends, lunch at the Curragh with friends, introducing Jack and Alex to the Holland State Park and unexpectedly running into more friends, a trip to Tunnel Park with other friends, and an FOK (Friends of Keegans) potluck.

Conclusion: Nothing beats getting together with old friends. Truly!

ADVENTURE #4 APRIL **Old Stone Fort, Manchester, TN, one morning**

Minna, Cheryl, Vera (from our small group Bible study) and I drove to a little Indian museum at the Old Stone Fort on a drizzly day. We experienced a black-light time tunnel, learned about the art of *flintnapping* (the art of making stone tools), saw a large display of arrowheads,



and watched a man throwing an *atlatl* (tool that uses leverage to achieve greater velocity in spear-throwing).

Surprise: Besides learning two new words, I was amazed to learn that something so special existed so close to home. I also learned that traveling with Vera is an adventure in itself!

ADVENTURE #5 MAY

Lancaster, PA, to visit Sharon, 6 days



Scott and I flew to Philadelphia and spent a day touring the city—a first for both of us. The architecture was magnificent; the history profound. We definitely need to return someday! On our trip to Lancaster that afternoon, we noted Amish buggies and horse-drawn plows.

Sharon had carefully planned each day's activities, beginning with the show "Jonah" at the Sight and Sound Theatre. Incredible sets. Spectacular experience. One day we drove across the border to Delaware, and then in sweltering heat visited Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA. I loved the tree houses and the sculptured gardens, and of course all the variety of trees. The most amazing sight: the Conservatory. My favorite room: the orchids. Breathtaking beauty. We have a creative God!

Always on the lookout for missionaries and MKs, we arranged to have lunch with Bob and Betty Blaschke. That afternoon, Sharon and I took a dip in the rather sketchy indoor hotel pool. It's a wonder we didn't "catch something" in the murky water. Next day we toured Gettysburg National Military Park, which Scott thoroughly enjoyed. We were delighted to finally see where Sharon lives and works at Lancaster Bible College.

We packed in a lot of wonderful activities on this trip, but the grand adventure was **most special because** we shared it with Sharon. The memories live on.

ADVENTURE #6 JUNE

Sewanee, TN, one afternoon

I had made no plans or provisions for a June adventure, so I jumped at Scott's suggestion of taking a road trip to the University of the South in Sewanee, high atop Monteagle Mountain. The perfect weather made for a pleasant day. This Episcopalian school, begun in 1856, sported a new dining hall and improvements on the chapel since our last visit almost 30 years ago. I regretted not bringing my camera to catch the eye-popping architecture of the campus.

I learned the names of various parts of the chapel, listened to the carillon, felt awed by the stained glass windows. We capped off the tour with a drive to the edge of the mountain to see the

large white cross erected originally to honor WWI vets in the area. From the man-made buildings to the canopy of old trees, the whole experience fills the soul.

Decision: we need to return for their annual Christmas concert. Definitely.

<http://www.sewanee.edu/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sewanee/3180105522/>

ADVENTURE #7 JULY

Dallas, TX, 4 days



Minna, Cheryl, and I rented a car and drove to our tri-annual MK Reunion, stopping overnight in Texarkana. Besides all the regular organized events (soccer game, speaker, photo session, and Skit Night) we had an opportunity to introduce M&K Ministry to the group. In spite of logistical challenges, everyone seemed to have a good time. With Cindy's due date upon us, we left early Sunday morning and drove straight home

through a blinding thunderstorm—but Baby Ben managed to put off his appearance for another week.

My greatest surprise? When I volunteered to head up the next reunion! What was I thinking!?



ADVENTURE #8 AUGUST

Gatlinburg/Pigeon Forge, TN, 2 nights

Our 37th wedding anniversary. At Eight Gables Inn we felt peaceful, romantic, and pampered. By mutual agreement, Scott played a round of golf while I enjoyed some alone time reading on a cushioned swing in the garden. We filled the rest of our time touring The Titanic Museum (excellent), The Apple Barn (very country), The Wax Museum (not worth the time and money), the Aquarium (awesome) and my favorite: climbing a heart-pounding trail to the top of Clingman's Dome. Arriving back at our room, we discovered a personalized mini wedding cake awaiting us. Sweet!



Conclusion: B&B beats Hotel any day of the week.

ADVENTURE #9 SEPTEMBER

Sebring, FL, 5 days

My sister Grace (from California) and I took a pilgrimage to our parents' grave site. Sebring, FL, holds a special place in our hearts as the nurses and residents took great care of Mom and Dad in their final year(s). We got invited out for nearly every meal by our dear "aunties" and "uncles" in this retirement village. Connecting with other MKs in the area, including dinner at John and Beaj's peace-filled home capped off a very lovely week.



Conclusion: I don't see enough of my sister. We haven't lived together since I was 12 years old, and we live far apart, but we cherish each other. We're already planning our next adventure together.

MKs always find each other!
Grace, Beaj Reed, Edith Hoving, me, Dan Elyea

ADVENTURE #10 AND #11 OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

Israel, 3 weeks

Our tour group got stuck in Jerusalem for an extra week thanks to Hurricane Sandy, and we made the most of our time, exploring the Old City on our own. What an amazing ending to a grand expedition with Charlie Dyer and The Land and the Book. From Tel Aviv to the Sea of Galilee, down to the Dead Sea, and on up to Jerusalem with numerous stops in between, our trip to Israel tops all adventures of the year. We stuffed our memories into our cameras and our hearts, and our lives have been changed forever. We now read the Scriptures in 3-D!



Want to see photos? I've posted an album on FB.

Response: speechless! Period.

ADVENTURE #12 DECEMBER

Monteagle Mountain, TN, one afternoon

After touring Israel, any other adventure feels a little anti-climactic but, determined to finish my year-long goal, I tagged along with Sharon when she made a lunch date with a childhood friend from Chattanooga. We met at a mediocre Mexican Restaurant on top of Monteagle Mountain, and then I headed over to the South Cumberland State Park. I wasn't adequately dressed for a hike in the frigid temperature, and since I only had about 45 minutes to kill, a trip to The Visitor's Center seemed adequate. I was not disappointed. MTSU students, along with the Geological Society, had donated an amazing, large 3-D relief of the Cumberland Plateau, made out of soap! Regrettably, I neglected to take pictures. A one-room log cabin, lovely oil paintings, and a depiction of a one-man coal mine kept my interest while the caretaker chattered on about local trivia. (She admitted to being lonely, working on this second day after Christmas.) Someday I hope to hike to this natural bridge.



Grand Conclusion:

If you don't take the first step of a journey,
you'll miss out on the adventures along the way.