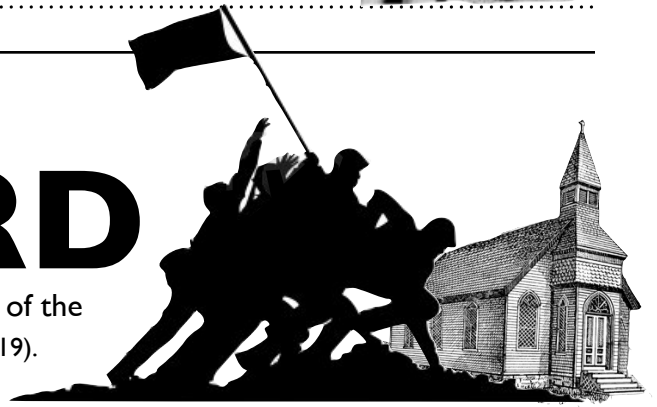


# My Adventure In Christian Living Started 59 Years Ago Tomorrow (October 7, 1955)

## Lifting Up The **STANDARD**

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

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### Headline News In 1942

The Second World War was raging. William Lyon Mackenzie King was the Prime Minister of Canada. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the President of the United States. Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and a madman named Adolf Hitler was the Chancellor of Germany.

In January, 1942, twenty-six countries were organizing the United Nations. During the month of May, German U-boats were operating in the area of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. They had penetrated the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River. In 1942, twenty-two Canadian merchant vessels and warships were sunk and 249 lives were lost. On August 13, Walt Disney was introducing his animated film, "Bambi," and in December, Bing Crosby was crooning about a "White Christmas."



car, they had a 1929 Model-A Ford. They could purchase gasoline for their Ford for fifteen cents a gallon. A new house would cost them about \$3,500.00 or they could rent one for \$35.00 a month. They were poor people so they had none of those new things; however, they might have spared five cents for a bottle of Coca Cola.



On the morning of December, 21, 1942, William Lyon Mackenzie King announced that butter was being rationed in Canada, because of the war. Ken and Mae Kirkland were announcing to their friends who visited them at the Grace hospital in Ottawa, Ontario, that they now had a little boy they named Robert Douglas Kirkland. And so, this is where my story begins.



### The Move From Ottawa

By the time I was three years of age my family had moved to Ajax, Ontario, where my Dad was the foreman of a large sheep farm.

If Mom and Dad wanted to buy a new car to take me home from the hospital in, it would have cost them about \$920.00. They didn't have a new

I guess that makes me the son of a shepherd. I would spend the next ten years on that farm. I have many fond memories from that period of my life. I will not bore you with those stories; however, one thing I do remember was learning how very stupid sheep are. The Lord did not do us a favour when He likened us to sheep.

### Headline News In 1955



**The race for space was underway**, the St. Lawrence Seaway was opened to Ocean Vessels from Montreal to US ports on the Great Lakes, Disneyland opened in California, and "In God We Trust" was added to all US paper currency. The first pocket transistor radio was introduced, the McDonald's fast food restaurant chain was underway. The first Guinness Book of World Records was published and, "The Mickey Mouse Club" made its debut on television.

In 1955 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was leading the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the Rock and Roll craze was in full swing. Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and the average yearly wage was around \$4,000. The minimum wage was 75 cents an hour, a new house cost about \$11,000 or one could be rented for about \$90.00 a month. New cars sold for less than \$2,000 and gasoline had soared to thirty-three cents a gallon.

By this time, our family had left the sheep farm and had moved to a small village in the country that had a one room country school with about thirty students ranging from grade one to grade eight. There was a gas station, a postoffice that operated out of a house next to the school, and a tiny grocery store that was also part of someone's house.

Dad had started a new job as a welder in a factory and with that job came new friends and much more money than he ever had before. He started going to the hotel with his new friends. He was very popular among them and they nicknamed him "the farmer," because he had recently worked on a farm. At first, he only drank with his friends on the weekends, then they started going to the hotel every day after work. He would get drunk, come home and argue with my Mother. Our home was in shambles. I remember Dad getting so upset with Mom that he threw his plate of food at her. I can still see that spaghetti sliding down the wall in the dining room.

### On October 7, 1955, Everything Changed

On that cold October Friday, about 8:45 a.m. before leaving for school, I noticed my Dad's suit laid out on his bed. My Mom had put it there because he was going to go out with us that night as a family. I was so happy! I could only recall one other time when we went out together as a family and that was to a restaurant for supper. Before the meal came, Dad got into an argument with Mom and we left without eating. Tonight would be different! We were going on a bus to the big city of Toronto. I wasn't much concerned where we were going. It didn't matter as long as my Dad was going with me.



**As it turned out it wasn't different!** Dad purposely stayed away until the bus left, then he came home, put on his suit and went out to a drunken party. There was only one empty seat on the bus, it was the one where my Dad was supposed to be sitting. As a twelve year old boy I stared at that empty seat and came to the conclusion that Dad would rather be drinking with his friends than spending time with me. While he was getting drunk again, my brother, my Mother, myself, and most of my school friends were at the Coliseum at the Exhibition Place in Toronto, Ontario, listening to Dr. \*Billy Graham preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. We were sitting in the very back row, as far away from the speaker as one could possibly be. I do not remember his text or anything he said in his message; however, I remember when the choir started singing "Just As I Am," and the invitation was given to receive Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. I remember how the conviction of the Holy Spirit gripped my soul. I wrestled with God through all of the verses of that hymn. (\* Dr. Billy Graham is now an apostate and a disgrace



Coliseum - Exhibition Place, Toronto

to the cause of Christ. The fact that I mention that I was saved in one of his crusades should not be taken as an endorsement of his unscriptural ministry.)

I was not about to walk that long aisle with all of my school friends watching. Finally, the song was over, and I hoped when it was, that the pressure to respond to the invitation would stop. The preacher said, "someone still hasn't come, we will sing one more verse." It was as if he said, we are going to sing one more verse because a twelve year old boy named Bob is sitting way back there at the back and he needs to be saved. I remember thinking, that God, the Creator of the universe was talking to me, and I was worried about what my school friends were thinking. How stupid is that? My brother whispered to me, "do you want to go?"

**That was all I needed. I said "Yes!" On Friday, October 7, 1955, at about 8:30 in the evening I received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour.**

The crusade reports said that during the crusade, "more than 7,000 men and women left their seats to stand for Christ." Only God knows how many of those "men and women" were sincere; however, both God and I know that at least one twelve year old boy was.



**One thing that puzzled me** as I walked that long stretch to the front, was the amount of people who were coming out of the choir to trust Christ as their Saviour. I was wondering what they were doing singing at that meeting, if they were not born again. Within a few minutes I had trusted Christ as my personal Saviour and my adventure in Christian living was underway.

### **My Gideon New Testament**



A few weeks earlier, at our school, the Gideon's had come and presented the students in grade five with a New Testament. In the back was a place to sign your name if you wanted to receive Christ as your Saviour. I read it carefully and not being sure what it meant I asked my Mom to explain it to me. It was obvious that she did not know what it meant either, so I put the New Testament on a shelf in my room without signing it. I somehow understood whatever salvation was it was far too important to sign that page, if I did not understand it. I did two things the night I was saved before I went to bed. First, on the bus ride home, I memorized the verses the man who led me to Christ told me to memorize. Second, as soon as I got home I went to my room, got the New Testament down from the shelf and signed it. I took it out and showed it to my Mom and said "now we know what it means."

### **Dad Came Home Drunk**

In the middle of the night I was woken by the sound of a car horn blaring in our driveway. I ran outside and there was my Dad, unconscious, leaning against the steering wheel causing the horn to blow. He was so drunk he did not even know where he was. I pulled him back off of the horn. He looked at me and asked "what are you doing at the party?" I finally got him into the house where he collapsed on the floor, where he stayed most of the night. He finally realized where he was and made it to his bed to sleep it off.

### **Saturday, October 8, 1955**

The morning after I was saved, I sat at the dining room table and wrote the following poem.

I was sitting there relaxed, listening to the preacher.  
But my heart began to pound when  
I heard the preacher say,  
“Unless you’re born again you will  
never get to Heaven,  
Why don’t you come and be born again today?”  
My heart was getting heavy,  
and the Devil said, “STAY HERE!”  
But I heard the Lord whisper softly in my ear,  
“Don’t let the Devil keep you,  
come on and take your stand,  
I’ll guide you through your troubles,  
I’ll always hold your hand.”  
I began to think back at all the sin I’d done.  
My heart was loaded with them,  
and I could no longer run,  
So I took the Lord’s advice and I stood up on my feet.  
And back from the Lord I would never, ever, retreat.

A Christian lady in the area who was responsible for us getting to the meeting came by to visit. I read the poem to her and said I needed a title for it. She said, “*that’s conviction!*” I asked her how to spell it and named the poem, “*Conviction.*”

When my Dad finally woke up I went to him and told him I was a Christian now, I had quit smoking cigarettes, and I wanted a Bible. He was stunned! Not only because he found out I had been smoking, but mainly because I said I was a Christian!

### **Sunday, October 9, 1955**

**The next morning, Sunday, October, 9th.,** Dad went to make some overtime money at the factory where he worked, and the Christian lady in the area took my Mom, my brother and myself back to Toronto for the afternoon meeting. After the meeting we went to a restaurant for supper and planned on going to her church for the evening service. Dad came home and found the house empty. He was not happy! He went to the home of the Christian lady thinking we might be there. We were not. She had a little sign on her door that said, “*Jesus Saves.*” That sign made Dad very, very, angry. He drove ten miles to the town where the restaurant was.

I have no idea how he knew where we were. He came in yelling and everyone in the place could hear him. Once again, we left before the meal came because my Dad was arguing with my Mom. Things were different this time. My Mom did not argue back. She had a very submissive and sweet attitude which made Dad even more angry. The fact is, the Lord used the change in my Mom to convict my Dad of his sin.

On Monday morning, before going to school, I pulled the grips off the handlebar of my bike, and threw away the cigarettes I had hid in the handlebars. I put a New Testament in my shirt pocket and headed back to face my school chums who had watched me go forward in the meeting on Friday night. One of my friends tauntingly shouted, so everyone could hear, “*...why do have that Testament in your pocket?*” I shouted back, loud enough for everyone to hear, “*to testify!*”

It happened to be the day when school pictures were being taken. The teacher said I should take the Bible out of my pocket as it was pulling my shirt down and it would not look good in the picture. I said thank you, but the Bible stays. Pictured here is part of that group picture with my New Testament in my pocket.



On Wednesday evening of that week I went down in the basement of our home for something and saw Dad down there weeping. I had never seen him cry before. I turned and went back upstairs before he saw me. The Lord continued to work on his heart and on the final night of the crusade my father decided to take us to the meeting. That night the message was from Joshua 24:15, *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”* When the invitation was given I prayed earnestly for Dad to be saved; however, he did not go forward during the invitation.

### **My Dad Got Saved In His 1953 Ford**



The next day after work, while driving his Ford to the hotel with his buddies, he was under such conviction he prayed and simply surrendered to the Lord. He later testified that as he pulled up in front of the hotel he actually had a distaste in his mouth for beer. He told his friends that he was not going in that night.

Prior to that day he smoked two packages of cigarettes a day. As he was driving home he threw them away. He came home, walked to the closet where he kept his beer, dragged several cases into the bathroom. He then came out to the kitchen, got his bottle opener and dumped all that booze down the toilet. He said, ***“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”***

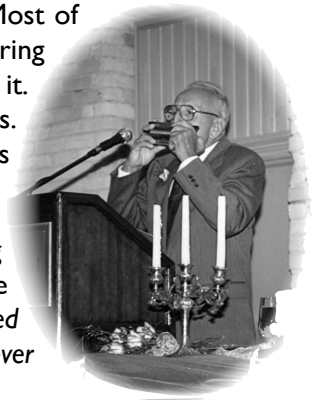


Dad went back to work the next day and told all his drinking buddies why he did not go into the hotel the night before, and why he would not be going there anymore. He said, *“As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”* They laughed at him, and ridiculed him. They said, *“the farmers got religion!”* They told him he would soon get over it and that he would be the life of the Christmas party, as he always was. I guess they have had dull parties for the last fifty-nine years.

### **Dad’s First Day Off Work As A Christian**

Dad usually spent Saturdays at the hotel with his friends. On Saturday, October 23, 1955, Dad asked us to get in the car. We drove several hours to a farm in northern Ontario, where he had worked as a teenager. The people on the farm were Christians and they had witnessed to Dad when he was on their farm; however, his response was to ridicule them for being Christians. Prior to coming to work on this farm he had lived with fourteen brothers and sisters.

Their father was a Presbyterian minister. Obviously, it was a very religious environment. Most of the family found no reality in a religion without Christ, and my Dad was no exception. During his teenage years, when these folks on the farm talked about God, he wanted no part of it. One of the people on the farm would go up in the hay in the barn and have his devotions. My Dad would go out and play *“Turkey In The Straw”* on his mouthorgan while the man was praying. After he was saved Dad loved to play his mouthorgan for the Lord.



The people who owned the farm were standing in the yard when we drove down the long driveway to their home on October 23, 1955. They did not recognize him after all these years. He told them who he was and said, *“I came here today to tell you that I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour.”* They wept for joy as they said, *“we have prayed for you ever since you left, that you would get saved.”*

## They Prayed!

Why else does a drunk get saved while driving his car to the hotel? Why else would God put it in his heart to drive for a couple of hours to tell these people he was saved. We must never underestimate the power of prayer. From the day Dad was saved until he died he talked about the Lord. His favourite song included the words *"I would love to tell you what I think of Jesus. Since I found in Him a Friend so strong and true; I would tell you how He changed my life completely."* His favourite Bible verse was *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."* (Joshua 24:15).

Pictured at the right is Dad and our family taken shortly after we received Christ as our Saviour. Everyone in this picture is holding a Bible.



**We Will Serve The Lord**

I recently conducted Dad's funeral. He was ninety-three years of age when he died. Just before he left this world, *"to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"* (Second Corinthians 5:8), he talked to his doctor about the Lord. Dad said he would soon be going to meet Him and then asked his doctor, *"where are you going when you die?"*

When my brother and I went into the funeral home to make arrangements for Dad's funeral, the funeral director remembered him witnessing to him about nine years previously, when he and my Mom went in to make their funeral arrangements. I later had the privilege of leading the funeral director to Christ on the strength of Dad's testimony.

## No Slick, Salvation Sales Promotion

Just think, all that happened without a slick sales presentation offering Heaven as an incentive for just praying a prayer. May God deliver us from our incentive sales program and get us back to preaching the Word of God. An incentive is a thing that motivates or encourages one to do something. I was taught to ask a sinner if he wanted to be sure he was going to Heaven when he died. Getting saved has nothing to do with going to Heaven. It is a wonderful byproduct; however, Jesus said, *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3). Our incentive sales pitch says, *"If you will just admit you are a sinner God will let you into Heaven."* It simply isn't Scriptural.

Balaam said, *"I have sinned,"* (Numbers 23:34), and Judas said, *"I have sinned,"* (Matthew 27:4), and according to the Scriptures they both died and went to Hell. Sinners need to understand that even if there was no Heaven, they need to repent of offending God with their sin. *"I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:3).

## All Things Are Become New

The Bible says, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (Second Corinthians 5:17). That certainly fits the salvation testimony of my Dad, myself, and everyone else who is truly born again. No one had to preach against booze, or cigarettes. No one had to preach about witnessing for Christ. It was simply the natural result of knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour.

That is why one of the first things I did after I was saved was to throw away the cigarettes I had hidden in the handlebar of my bike. I was *"a new creature."* That is why everyone in the family picture above is holding a Bible. That is why I had to tell everyone about Christ. It was just the natural thing to do. Anyone who professes to know Christ as Saviour and is ashamed to tell people about it is just fooling himself. He or she, may have had a warm and fuzzy emotional experience of some kind; however, unless *"all things are become new,"* they are simply not saved.