



Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association

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Dear Friends in the Faith:

Any of us who use computers can appreciate the technology—*until* things are not working right! Then frustration sets in. This has been my lot the past few weeks following a crash of my computer hard drive. Fortunately, for most material there was a backup, but many email addresses are missing. For those who use email, I would like you to write me, even if it is only a short “Hi,” so email addresses can be restored:

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There has been a lot of news about hot weather recently, even in some unlikely places. Of course, we expect it here in Palm Springs and are prepared for it. Were it not for air conditioning, invented by Willis Carrier over a century ago, few would be here in summer.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in the year **2020**, there were **151** days in Palm Springs when the temperature got up to 100 degrees or more. This set a record. We know it is “summer” when the LOW temperature, as some nights recently, is 89 degrees!

As I understand it, the area from Palm Springs to Yuma and Phoenix, Arizona, has more days of sunshine than anywhere else in the United States. I like the sunshine. And, despite the hot summer, the sunshine, along with the warmer climate, carries over into winter. We really do not have “winter” here in the sense of extreme cold weather, snow and ice. For this reason, the population swells considerably as people from Canada and colder states come here for the winter months.

An interesting weather statistic: There have been times when the winter temperature in **Palm Springs** will be the *warmest* in the United States; and, **Truckee** will have the *coldest* temperature in the United States—both in California and on the same day!

Truckee, located at a high elevation along the Interstate freeway between Sacramento and Reno, can have extremely cold temperatures. This is known as Donner Pass, named after the Donner Party, many of whom froze to death as their wagon train became snowbound there in the winter of 1846-1847. Some of them resorted to cannibalism to survive, eating the bodies of those who died. It is among the most gruesome tragedies in California history.

Back then, the journey in a covered wagon from the Midwest to California could take six months. This all changed a few years

later when the railroad was constructed through this same pass, connecting California with the rest of the country. The trip now took *days*—not *months*!

Abraham Lincoln, having signed the bill authorizing the transcontinental railroad, the Central Pacific Railroad built east from Sacramento over the Sierras. The Union Pacific built westward, the two meeting at Promontory, Utah. Here it was that the Golden Spike was driven on May 10, 1869. Engraved on the spike were the words: “May God continue the unity of our Country as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world.”

A colorized version of an old photograph shows the celebration on that occasion as two steam locomotives pulled forward for a meet. For *that* time, this event in 1869 was as momentous as the Moon landing was a century later in 1969.



The site, now preserved by the National Park Administration, is a desolate, sagebrush-ridden area, out in the middle of nowhere. (The mainline was long ago relocated further south, avoiding mountain grades by crossing the Great Salt Lake on a causeway.) Nevertheless, in the summer season, on weekends, crowds gather at Promontory to watch a re-enactment of that historic event. Two replica steam engines are fired up and volunteer “actors,” dressed as they were back then, perform.

About 15 years ago, while on a trip (part ministry, part vacation), we included a visit to Promontory. While waiting for the performance to begin, a man came up to me and said, “At the last minute, one of our actors did not show up. Would you take his place?” I was hesitant at first, but it was a minor part with only a few lines, so I agreed. They put a long coat on me and a high hat

(like those worn at the time of Abraham Lincoln). I think the man's name I played was "Cole"—certainly not a major player like Stanford or Durant! The man who played the clergyman, did a relatively short prayer. Afterward, he told me that the original dedication prayer in 1869 was *very* lengthy!

Over the years, I have been in fellowship with a church located in nearby Indio, California, where I spoke on many occasions. And then, for eleven years, I served as pastor (2010 to 2021). Many years ago, the founding pastor (who I understand was quite a musician), purchased a piano for the church from a famous ice skater, **Sonja Henie** (1912-1969). She was Norwegian, but apparently lived here in the desert at that time. It is a lovely, quality piano, a **Steinway grand**.

A few months ago, the church graciously offered to give me this piano (which I had played many times in services). I gladly accepted.

There is a detailed *Wikipedia* article on the Internet about Sonja Hennie, including photos back in the 1930s, when even Adolf Hitler attended her performances. She won more Olympic titles than any other ladies' figure skater, her photo was on the cover of *TIME* magazine, and she was also a film star. The accompanying photo shows her standing by a grand piano.



In some ways, it makes no difference; but in another way, it is "interesting" (at least) that I now have the piano that belonged to her in my living room!

Several years ago, I noticed a church bumper sticker on the car of a young mechanic who was doing a smog check on my vehicle. The church is located some distance from here, the town where he lives. It is a megachurch, has a number of buses to pick up people, has food programs and lots of activities. With enthusiasm, he invited me to a men's gathering to be held the following Saturday morning. "We are going to have a lot of old junk cars in the church parking lot," he said, "along with a bunch of sledgehammers. Each man will be handed a sledgehammer and we will bust up those cars, break out the windshields, cave in the hoods—it will be a great time!"

All kinds of things have been done in an effort to get folks to attend church. I don't want to be needlessly critical. I suppose

activities like this might get someone interested in church. But I think we lose something in the process. Sometimes the church gets so worldly, and the world gets so churchy, the difference becomes blurred.

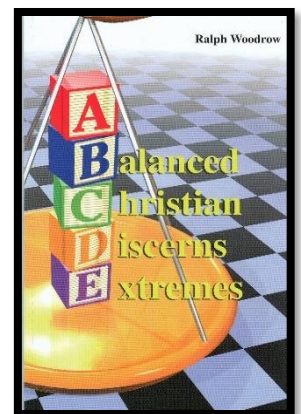
Several years ago, "Buddy" had been picked up as a stray. We rescued him from an animal shelter. That was quite a contrast to the good life he has now as a pampered pooch! I think he is eternally grateful.



Buddy loves to go for walks and rides in the car—long or short. Toward the end of June, we did a road trip of several days which included some of the red rock country in Arizona and Utah, places like Monument Valley. One long stretch of road we drove along has huge rock formations in the background. Because a scene from the movie was filmed here, a sign now designates it as "Forest Gump Hill."



I have had the opportunity over the years to speak at churches and meetings in many states. This has involved travel, interacting with pastors and people, experiences, and often discussions on biblical themes. In my 96-page book **A BALANCED CHRISTIAN DISCERNES EXTREMES**, I share a lot of things I have learned along the way. Things that may have taken me *years* to learn, can be read in a comparatively *short time* in this book. I would like **everyone** on the mailing list to have a copy.



You may write, phone, or email your request. A **FREE** copy will be sent, postage paid. When so many prices are going UP, I am pleased to make an offer anyone can afford!

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