



*Seasons  
Greetings*

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## THE CALIFORNIA CALL

Geriopitist Number

430 Ellsworth Court - San Mateo, California

December, 1957

**WHENCE THE TITLE?** - Last spring I served on a committee which set up a conference on Aging which was held in August at the San Francisco State College, sponsored by that College and by the California State Departments of Mental Health, Education, and Social Welfare. One of the speakers, Mr. Glenn H. Johnson of the Veterans Administration Regional Office, San Francisco, combined Geriatrics (the science of old age diseases and their treatment) and optimism which is the attitude he tries to develop among the elderly people with whom he works. When I read part of his report to Mary and came to the word Geriopitist, she said "That's you." I felt highly complimented and decided to use it as my theme for this letter.

**A CURE FOR SPUTNIKITIS.** - The fallout from Sputnik seems to be fear as we grope in the darkness of eclipse caused by the coming of this new satellite between us and the Son of Righteousness whose birth we are about to celebrate. The present day crapehangers seem to delight in telling us that we should try to keep up with the Russians (it used to be the Joneses) in their mad race into material accomplishments. The motive which should drive us along that way is fear, and perhaps a little jealousy. Isn't the season of Advent a good time to recall the fact the Babe of Bethlehem also lived in an age of fear and force while he won his victory with faith, hope and love?

**A SERMON OF HOPE.** - While the sermon in our church the Sunday before Thanksgiving was not an attempt to prescribe a cure for Sputnikitis it was a straw blowing in the direction of a possible remedy. It reviewed the way the Pilgrims dealt with their adversaries. They tried to escape their persecutors in England by fleeing to Holland, only to find themselves a minority group with difficulties they didn't have at home. On the Mayflower they couldn't agree among themselves but finally produced the Mayflower Pact, which later helped to serve as a foundation for the government of this land. In New England the rigors of winter reduced their number by half, and the Indians threatened to dispose of the other half. It was after all these conflicts that they decided to try a new policy: they invited their enemy for dinner and signed a treaty of peace which lasted for forty years, providing a basis for co-existence. Here is the closing paragraph of the sermon which might well be considered for a closing meditation in 1957:

*"It is not enough to sit behind the Maginot line of bombers, missiles, and growl threats at the Status Quo. It is time, now, for us, as it was for the Pilgrims, to "win friends and influence people." It's time to invite a few wild Indians to dinner; it's time to destroy the enemy as Abraham Lincoln proposed he be destroyed, by making him our friend. When we give prayers at Thanksgiving in our homes, I will be a bit more comfortable for having shared in our 'share our surplus', but this is just a beginning. I hope that you will join with me in praying that America today be as realistic as our Pilgrims, and as directly and constructively setting out with God's help to dissolve the enmity that faces the world today.*

*Let us pray: O Thou who didst send thy Son to sit down at dinner with men whom the rest of the world could not love, grant that the table He established may grow until all mankind may be joined there in giving thanks to Thee. Amen."*

**MINISTRY TO AGING PERSONS.** - As I mentioned in our last year's letter this is the name of the Commission of which I am chairman in the Northern California-Nevada Council of Churches, and I have greatly enjoyed the contacts that this activity has brought me. As a member of Senior Citizens of America I was asked to request Governor Knight to issue a proclamation designating May as Senior Citizen month. He promptly did so and sent me an impressive document with the golden Seal of California and his signature at the bottom. Another interesting job is that of serving on the Public Relations

Committee of the Senior Citizens of San Mateo County. This group meets in Burlingame every Friday and recently held a bazaar in our church where they made \$600 for their building fund. They now have the services of Mrs. Arnold Scheier who was formerly director of Little House in Menlo Park (the nationally known Senior Citizen Center).

Our Commission on Ministry to Aging Persons is now planning a Retreat on Aging to be held at the Somona Mission Inn next April. We are inviting the ministers and lay people interested in that subject and hope to increase the interest in and activities for elderly people in the churches. The San Francisco Council of Churches is doing a splendid job along that line and we are asking the United Church Women to lend us a hand in getting more done in the churches throughout this part of the state.

**THE DOG THAT IS BEING WAGGED.** - What I have written above is really the tail of my activities; the body is my half-time job on the staff of the Congregational Church of San Mateo. During 1957, two members of the staff have left for work in other churches and we have an excellent young man now in charge of our Christian Education and Youth Work. We are also looking for a "giant" who can take charge of many administrative tasks and leave our pastor more time for sermon preparation, for counseling and for calls in the parish.

The Board of Deaconesses has been increased from 18 to 36 and they have been of great help to me keeping in touch with members and new people. The deacons have been released from some of their work as ushers with the formation of an Ushers Club which has some forty or fifty volunteer members. Once a month I have dinner with the deacons, and other volunteers, after which they go out to call on people who have shown an interest in church membership. I don't have the exact figures yet, but I believe that we shall again add more than 200 new members during 1957, as we have done each of the four years since I came here.

Thus my seventy-second year has been a busy and happy one. I thank God from the depths of my heart that he has led me in such pleasant pastures and besides such streams of friendly people. I look forward to 1958 with much hope and eagerness. These are being for deepening the spiritual life of the church and I press forward full of expectation and expectancy, as should all members, young and otherwise, who are members of the Fellowship of Gerioptimists.

--- Harold

#### POSTSCRIPT by M.S.R.

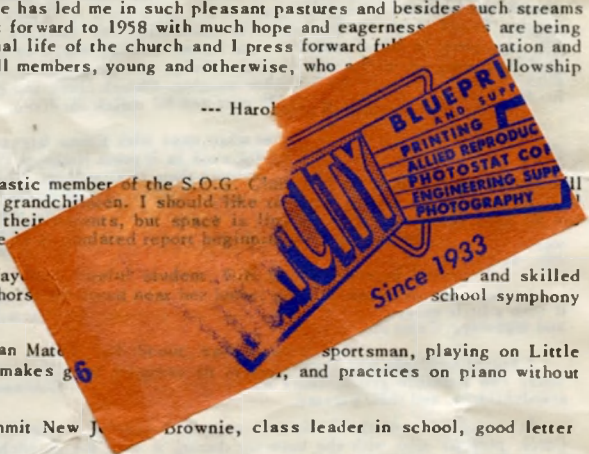
I am still an enthusiastic member of the S.O.G. I should like to report news of our nine grandchildren. I should like to report interesting activities of their parents, but space is limited. I report of all of them. Here is a partial report beginning with the first:

Katie Robinson, Lafayette, is a bright student, a good horse rider, cares for her own horse, and is a member of the school symphony orchestra.

Stephen Ratcliffe, San Mateo, is a sportsman, playing on Little League Baseball team; makes good music, and practices on piano without being urged.

Carol Robinson, Summit New Jersey, is a brownie, class leader in school, good letter writer.

Jenny Robinson, Lafayette, likes school and books, budding young scientist with special interest in reptiles and astronomy; practices duets with Katie in preparation for symphony later.





Bruce Ratcliffe, San Mateo, likes school, tumbling, tennis and other sports; present ambition to be "the greatest piano player in the world", may rival Grandpa as story teller.

Lynn Robinson, Summit, New Jersey; Brownie and active in school affairs. It should be added that letters and long distance telephone calls do not give grandparents a chance to know their grandchildren's special talents.

Tom Robinson, Lafayette, second grade, devoted to having a good time, but good student; with his father belongs to Indian Guides.

Patty Ratcliffe, San Mateo, nursery school graduate, now happy in kindergarten, where she plans soon to learn to read; because of her long braids is proud to be Goldilocks when that story is dramatized.

David Ratcliffe not yet three has not told what he wants to be; his favorite picture books are National Geographic Magazines, his most loved toys, any cars on wheels, so it may be assumed that he will be a world traveler.

Apropos of travel, the Ratcliffe children permitted their parents to have a wonderful six weeks' vacation in Europe last spring, which they are now sharing with their friends by showing beautiful slides of pictures they took.

What of Grandma? Homemaker and housekeeper, sometimes baby sitter, with outside interests to keep her busy. I pay dues to the League of Women Voters and attend membership luncheon meetings. Last May I had an interesting day with about twenty other Leaguers visiting Sacramento and seeing our state government in action. We were entertained at lunch by our state senator and assemblyman.

Both Rob and I serve on the Board of the local Council of Civic Unity, which works for civil rights for minority groups, especially in housing and employment. We attend the monthly meetings unless there is a conflict with some important committee meeting or church engagement. During the past year I have been a member of the Christian World Service Board of our church, which is stimulating new outreach and interest along that line. As Woman's Gift chairman for our woman's fellowship, I have worked with our president to promote more interest in that activity, and planned the dedication service when gifts were presented at the November meeting. Church clubs and circles give opportunity for fun and friendship, while friends near and far enrich our lives.

Last summer we had happy vacation days with China friends, Adelle and Rowland Cross with whom we spent a delightful week in Sequoia National Park. The Crosses came home with us for two days, then we drove them to Claremont, visiting China friends enroute. A few days at Pilgrim Place gave many opportunities to renew friendships with missionary friends who have retired there. From Claremont we went to my brother's home in Fallbrook, where because of the "unusual" heat, we just relaxed and rested. We had a weekend in Long Beach, meeting old friends there, and drove the 443 miles home in a day, weary but happy.

I must mention our new car. We sold the 1954 blue Ford to friends and have replaced it with a little coral-red Volkswagen. Now you may see and hear us spinning along streets and highways. Come ride with us!

A recent highlight was Thanksgiving dinner at the Harold Robinson home in Lafayette, where two Ratcliffe grandparents shared the fun with two Robinson grandparents, seven grandchildren and their parents.

In anticipation of the Christmas season, I have been rereading Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, perhaps also with the hope of sharing it with the grandchildren. But somehow I doubt if the modern Disney-led space traveled child would appreciate the guidance of Marley's ghost. However as a Christmas greeting to all of you I wish to quote a few lines from the last paragraph of the story, concerning Scrooge after his travels with the ghost. "It was always said of him that he know how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed that knowledge. May that be truly said of all of us. And, as Tiny Tim observed,

*God Bless Us Every One!"*