

Saints and sinners: We need the lazy days of summer

I was taking time out from cutting the grass with my push-mower and began to ponder the advice of a poet: "My friend, someday when winter's gone, / Go lie full-length upon the lawn. ..."

Stretched out on my back, I was contemplating the azure sky and billowing clouds when a police cruiser drove by and stopped. He wondered whether I was all right.

Apparently, the sight of a grown man lying on the grass in the middle of the day was a cause for concern. Was I the victim of a heart attack, perhaps? I assured the solicitous man in blue that I was fine.

Doing nothing today arouses suspicions in those around us. It is equated with wasting time.

Our children especially find doing nothing to be boring. In a column in Newsweek magazine, Anna Quindlen, looking back on her childhood

summer, which included "day trips to the beach, pickup games, hanging out," says, "How boring it was."

Quindlen continues by saying, "One of the saddest things about the lives of American children today" is that they are "deprived of the gift of boredom."

"There is ample psychological research," she writes, "suggesting that what we might call 'doing nothing' is when human beings do their best thinking and when creativity comes to call."

It was during a "pause in the day's occupations" one boring summer afternoon when I was 9 or 10 years old that I made my first foray into the world of commerce. I constructed a sign that read, "Wagon Wash — 1 cent," and I put it on the front lawn next to my own wagon.

The fact that no customers came to call I at-



george plagenz

● saints & sinners

tributed to a recession, then plaguing the wagon-wash business.

But it got me through a boring afternoon.

The British philosopher, Bertrand Russell agreed that it is good to be bored sometimes. "A certain power of enduring boredom is essential to a happy life and one of the things that ought to be taught to the young," he said.

It will be found, said Russell, that "a quiet life is characteristic of great men and that their plea-

sure have not been of the sort that would look exciting to the outward eye."

The lives of most great men, he observed, have not been exciting, "except on a few memorable occasions. Socrates could enjoy a banquet now and then, but most of his life he lived quietly with Xanthippe, his wife, taking a constitutional in the afternoon and perhaps meeting a few friends by the way. Darwin, after going 'round the world, spent the rest of his life in his own house."

Russell blamed parents for "providing their children with far too many passive amusements, such as shows and good things to eat. They do not realize the importance to a child of having one day like another.

Too much travel, too much variety of impressions are not good for the young and cause them to grow up incapable of enduring fruitful mo-

notony."

How did our flight from boredom happen? Anna Quindlen agrees with Bertrand Russell that "adults did it." There is, she says, "a culture of adult distrust that suggests a kid who is not playing softball or attending science-enrichment programs will get into trouble."

So today, "instead of making things out of popsicle sticks," kids are enrolled in "music camps, sports camps, fat camps, probably thin camps," Quindlen asserts.

"I mourn," she continues, "hanging out in the backyard, playing Wiffle ball in the street without a sponsor and matching shirts. I mourn drawing in the dirt with a stick."

No, officer, thanks for inquiring, but I'm all right. I was just about to turn over on my stomach and "watch the tides of life that pass, / among the slim stems of the grass."

Missionary in Peru plane tragedy rebuilds his life in North Carolina

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press Writer

GARNER, N.C. — When he got off the plane that brought him to North Carolina, Jim Bowers wondered aloud to his mother if he could ever get the images out of his mind.

The smoke from the guns of a Peruvian Air Force A-37 that shot through the small aircraft carrying his missionary family. The screams in Spanish of the Cessna's pilot: "They're killing us! They're killing us!" The blood on his infant daughter. His wife slumped over in her seat.

More than a year has passed since a single bullet took the lives of Bowers' wife, Roni, and his daughter, Charity, in the sky over the Amazon River. A Baptist, Bowers credits his faith with sustaining him and his 7-year-old son, Cory. He says he's forgiven the U.S. and

Peruvian officials who mistook his family's plane for a drug smuggler's. The two governments have acknowledged errors were made, and President Bush has called him to express regret.

But Bowers still longs for an apology from the CIA, who officials said hired the surveillance crew that first told the Peruvians about the flight — then never explicitly stopped them from shooting.

"From the very beginning I wasn't expecting anything except for someone to admit they did something wrong and to be punished for it," Bowers said recently from his mother's home in this Raleigh suburb. "Then I realized as the months went by that there wasn't going to be anybody punished.

"It doesn't matter how much you forgive a person. When they do something wrong, they should still suffer the consequences."

Bowers, 39, has made dozens of speeches at Bible colleges and churches in the Americas and Europe about his experience.

A book, "If God Should Choose," and a dramatic video about the family are now serving to meet the Bowers' calling: evangelism and encouraging others to become missionaries.

"God has chosen Cory and me to represent him in a bigger way, a lot bigger than I would have imagined," he said at a memorial service for Roni and Charity last year.

Jim and Roni Bowers worked in relative anonymity for five years along the Amazon in northeastern Peru, spreading the Christian gospel among the riverside villages and training ministers through the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism. The Bowers lived with their children aboard a houseboat that

sailed up and down the river.

On April 20, 2001, the family, flown by fellow-missionary Kevin Donaldson, was returning from the Colombian border where they had picked up a permanent resident visa for Charity. CIA personnel aboard a surveillance plane spotted the aircraft and alerted Peruvian officials. A Peruvian interceptor arrived and shot the aircraft as the CIA crew debated whether the plane fit a drug smuggler's profile.

Roni Bowers and Charity, who had been adopted in Michigan only a few months earlier, were dead. Cory and Jim Bowers weren't injured. Donaldson was shot in the legs, but still managed to land the pontoon plane on the river. They reached land and got help.

In the months after the shooting, government reports blamed errors by the Peruvian military, procedural mistakes

and the poor language skills of personnel from both countries for misidentifying the plane.

"They had no reason to suspect us," Bowers said.

Jim Bowers brought the bodies back to America and settled in Garner, a town of 20,000 south of Raleigh, where tobacco fields are giving way to suburban subdivisions. There, he and Cory moved in with his mother, Wilma.

Bowers took a job at Bethel Baptist Church in nearby Cary, leading Spanish Bible studies and church services for the area's growing Hispanic population.

He said he's not bitter, though he does have strong words for the people involved. "It was an accident," he said. "It was terrible negligence and stupidity but it wasn't malicious."

Roni Bowers' parents have a more pointed assessment.

"It was the United States and Peruvian governments that murdered our daughter," Roni's father, John Luttag, said in an interview from Pace, Fla.

An \$8 million settlement from the U.S. government was reached this spring with the crash survivors, Roni Bowers' parents and the Bowers' missionary agency. The government didn't admit liability or assign blame to the CIA as part of the settlement.

When asked whether the CIA would apologize to the family, an agency spokesman referred to the White House statement released in March that said: "The United States government and the government of Peru deeply regret this tragic event and the resulting deaths."

All of the beneficiaries say they will give the money to support Christian ministries. Peru also has agreed to replace the missionary agency's plane.



Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Bible Baptist Church

Pastor: Don Crutcher

Fifth & Broadway

899-7368

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10 am

Evening Service: 6:30 pm

Wednesday: Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

Calvary Gospel Church

Pastor: Rev. Steve Rains

Fourth & College • 899-3605

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am

Morning Service: 10:30 am

Evening Service: 6:00 pm

Wednesday: Adult Prayer and Worship: 7:00 p.m.

Youth @ the Rock House: 7:00 p.m.

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401 Caldwell

899-6185

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Worship Service: 10:45 am

Wednesday: Bible Study: 7 pm

First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

Pastor: Loren Strait

Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233

Sunday: Worship Service: 10:30 am

Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.

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1116 Sherman

899-3631

Pastor: Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:15 am

Worship Service: 10:30 am

Kanorado

United Methodist Church

Pastor: Leonard Cox

399-2468

Sunday: Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10:15 am

Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400

Pastor:

Sunday: Sunday School: 9:45 am

Morning Worship: 11 am

Evening Worship: 6 pm

Wednesday: Call for location

Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423

Pastor: Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134

Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Worship Service: 11 am

Youth Group at Gattshall's at 5:30 pm

Adult Bible Study 6 pm

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center

899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114

Priest: Father Charles Schneider

Deacon: Gretchen Talitha

Adult Forum: Sunday: 8:30 am

Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays

Holy Eucharist: 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30

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Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470

Sacrament Meeting: 9:30 am

Sunday School: 10:45 am

Priesthood/Relief Society: 11:30 am

Word of Life Foursquare Church

223 E. 10th

899-5250

Pastor: John Coumerilh

Sunday: Worship Celebration &

Kids' Church: 10:30 am

United Methodist Church

Brewster:

Pastor:

Worship Service: 10:45 am CST

Sunday School: 9:45 am CST

Winona:

Minister: Rev. Bob Winters

Worship Service: 9 am CST

Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo

Spanish Speaking Church

Minister: Esteban Ortiz B.

1601 Texas • 899-5275

Daily Prayer: Sunday thru

Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm

Sunday: Sunday School: 10 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Pastor: Father Norbert Dlabal

307 W. 13th • 899-7205

Sacrament of Reconciliation:

4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment

Mass Schedule:

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Sunday: 10:00 am

Spanish Mass:

1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

Pleasant Home Church

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Pastor: Jim Cress

899-5784

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