

## On the corner “Family”

*By Robert Docter, Editor-In-Chief*

Over the past few weeks I have been blessed with a magnificent celebration of family. It brought home to me the value of life within my nuclear and extended family. Events this June surpassed my wildest expectations. Look at it!

June 3 the Pasadena Tabernacle Youth Chorus presented its bon voyage concert. Technically, we're related by blood to only one member of this 70-voice choir—our grandson, Robert, my namesake and the tallest guy on the back row. Barbara Allen has “whipped” this bunch into a “class act” not just in terms of performance, but also in relation to positive internalized beliefs. Diane and I have seen the group mature and develop over the past decade and have attachments to each member. They are good—really good.

Our Tab family is keeping them in prayer on their trip to Finland, Estonia and England. They are our kids, and we are family.

From June 7-10 the Western Territory celebrated “The Gathering,” and the General was here. It was a remarkable event, a great success and chance to renew acquaintances with our former territorial commander and now General Linda Bond. Well over 5,000 people showed up. Somehow, I felt a connection with many of them, some from my distant and recent past as well as my immediate present. It is a certainty. There absolutely is something about the international Army that welds people together with feelings of family. It's more than fellowship, although that is very present. It's more than a single corps. Go to the Army anywhere in the world and you feel “at home.” I think it's called “acceptance”—of each other and a common Jesus ethic. It's a big family.

On June 12 Diane and I celebrated (rather quickly) 59 years of marriage. It's not divisible by ten, so it didn't get a big wing-ding. However, every day is a celebration with Diane. Her love spreads equally among our six children, their spouses, our 15 grandchildren and, of course, me. That love keys the entire family. She's the anchor, the stabilizer, the pilot, the values “expector” who seems, simply by her presence, able to maintain a steady course. I'm sure she communicates some non-verbal expectation that assumes whatever the issue may be will be resolved with people doing the “right”



thing. She hardly ever tells anyone what to do. She's somethin' else, indescribably wonderful.

On June 16 we celebrated the 60th marriage anniversary of my twin brother, Richard, and his wife Shirley. He's as successful as I am in picking out a wife. His whole family was present: four off-springs and a number of grandchildren. We spent almost the entire day together. It's a family with genuine love for each other.

On Father's Day we celebrated the birthday of our third daughter, Sharon—my Father's Day present on June 18, 1961. Sharon seems to leap into leadership roles wherever she is: the corps, the university, the Girl Scouts, but not our family. Our family has 29 leaders, which makes them all equally autonomous. Therefore, family decision making sometimes becomes difficult—until Diane speaks up or I impose.

Back to Father's Day. We also took time to celebrate me. It was terrific—best one yet. Our oldest son, Richard, never buys greeting cards. Instead, he designs cards with family pictures organized in exceptionally creative ways. This year the inside of the card included a number of small pictures, historic images of both of us, surrounding a big one in the middle. It showed my dad—his grandpa—holding his first grandchild, my son's first son. It revealed a strong commitment to family over time and pleased me immensely. Each of my children expressed love with wonderful gifts, and I reminded them that my birthday is still a month away.

I began to wonder why I have such strong positive feelings and beliefs about my nuclear and extended family and why I transfer those feelings to the broader family of the Army. So, I decided to look at it from an objective, professional way.

Within my nuclear family, I discovered we are all different, yet the same. We both like and love

each other—two different relationship patterns—both essential. Each of us has assigned him or herself a role within the family and within life in general. We are a very independent bunch with considerable autonomy in the face of mutual respect and love.

Most of the time, when confronted with a difficult situation, we don't mix emotions and rational thought. We're able to differentiate which of the two fits the situation. We're polite to each other and gentle with ourselves. We seek growth in all dimensions of our being. We avoid rigidity and know how to manage conflict. We don't invade the space of others. We practice courage and give our selves away generously. We act in relation to our values, which enshrine both morality and honor within the Christian ethic. For the most part, we tend to make wise choices and express remorse and regret when we don't.

We see the Army as a place that nurtures these dimensions and seek with our behavior to spread the love of Christ.