



**( An in-process excerpt )**

**# 226**

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## Introduction

**G**reen hair, and other similar appearances of youth have had their meaning changed by satan from the S.O.S. distress calls that they are, to the 'stay away - unclean' warning signs the lepers of long ago had to wear.

This resource is meant to :

1. call attention to the church's responsibility to reach youth with the Gospel, regardless of hair color.
2. To realize those youth have a direct impact on that church's ongoing life and growth.
3. Draw the humility and compassion into silver-haired folks and see the talents and rich spirit of youth by learning how to lead from behind.
4. the METHODS and flavor of reaching the hearts of these youth may be tweaked toward today's agendas but the MESSAGE of the Bible will not change one comma.

The setting is small intercity church setting about creating a website, that ultimately involves every generation of the church.

# **Green Hair** (n Red Eyes) **Website**

- 1. A Bee in My Britches**
- 2. Oil Can Computing**
- 3. Visit Another Planet**
- 4. David Barker**
- 5. Gittin' In Touch**
- 6. Green Hair Graphics**

## #1 – A Bee in My Britches

Come on! Come on! Come on, you slow poke!” But the computer paid no attention as it blindly went through its boot-up programs. Tanner would squirm and speak to the old computer like he was a newspaper reporter with the news that would be read in thousands of living rooms. The words he typed got backed up with almost every paragraph that was typed. “This is powerful stuff that’ll change people’s thinkin’,” he spoke to the computer monitor as he glanced again, at his scribbled notes. If someone asked, he’d characterize his computing with the phrase, “A bee in my britches!”

But those were the times of long ago and far away. These are the days of silver-hair, short-term memory, sore and aching joints. His labored hearing clearly the tic-toc of the old pendulum wall clock just like the one in his classroom a million years ago. There were no thoughts of computer keyboards back then. He couldn’t count how many times he asked ol’ Grinder McGreedy how she, and he, were supposed to find a word in the dictionary if you didn’t know how to spell it in the first place.

What a contrast it is now. In one ear, Tanner heard the tic-toc of times almost forgotten, and in the other ear he’d hear the computer beep of a typed word not found in its digital hard-drive dictionary. His mind had great trouble sorting the train of thoughts that kept racing through his head, like the steam-puffin’ express delivering the mail. That’s probably not right either... now it’s all email and such.

It was no help at all, when ‘lil Deeter came over last Tuesday evening. Every silver-haired person loves their grandchildren – at least for a little while. Deeter’s mom had her all dressed up in pink frilly clothes that easily captured every grandfather’s heart. Some phone books and a pillow were stacked in the computer chair and ‘lil Deet eagerly climbed on top of them. In a split instant she had her hands on the mouse and ready to play a newly installed toddler graphics game. Every time Tanner tried to show her how to make the program do this thing, or that – Deet

shoved his hands away with an attitude like, “Look out world here I come, frilly britches and all!”

The tic-toc sounds in his quiet computer room brought his thinking back to the task at hand – without an ounce of enthusiasm. “Oh, here we go again, another web site I'll design that'll quickly become tired, outdated, and forgotten, just like me.”

But in the shadows of his thinking, James Tanner Maston knew that God was up to something. He's always got a top-notch plan, custom designed for those in frilly pink training pants and those in worn out bib overalls that shine best when they've sweated through a full day's work – and lovin' it.

It's those shadows of God's workshop, that we can't easily see into, with tri-focal glasses and a 7-cell flashlight. Somehow, we slowly sense a bit of Heaven's shadow workshop actions by polishing up our 'want-to bones'. Is it too simplified to push our 'want-to bones' to pay attention to only what is possible with God, and climb up in his chair of service – and breath, “Look out world. Here I come for Jesus' sake!” And each time the world of aches, pains, and poor memory try to interfere, we'll tell them to shove off, with the determination of 'ol Grinder McGreedy and her burden to change the young lives at the ink-well desks in front of her.

From that shadow workshop in Tanner's heart, came the spirit's voice, boldly stating, “I Promised! The silver-haired grandfather closed his eyes hoping to better see in that workshop. His one hand still touching the computer keys as the other hand was lowered to rest on the desk. The touch of the fingers recognized the feel of his computer manual – unlike any other. Opening his eyes, he saw far more than his fingers touching his computer manual – his open Bible, he saw many verses underlined during stormy skies of years gone by. The shadow workshop voice repeated, “I promised!” Tanner's fingers were touching a grandfather's workshop verse, if there ever was one.

*Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. (And a few verses later:)*

*For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. Psalm 71:18; 72:12*

McGreedy and I say, “polish up your 'want-to bones'. NOW!”  
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## **#2 – Oil Can Computing**

Strange as it seems, anyone young or old, if they want to do their best computing, needs to know how to do what ol' Tanner calls 'Oil Can Computing'. His best always happened on Saturday afternoons in his quiet little church, with no one else around.

Dressed in his favorite faded bib overalls with pencil and note pad in the chest pocket and two screwdrivers in the leg pockets. The always ready oil can and rag were in one hand. A couple Saturday's ago, the pastor smiled as he saw the silver-haired oiler walking from room to room in the church. Pastor knew the oiler wouldn't find many door hinges to lubricate, or hinges to tighten, but Pastor could recognize a labor of love, when he saw some, with or without bib overalls. The pastor probably never did learn the real purpose of oiler's rounds – especially his use of his free hand.

For some reason, not easy to explain, James Tanner Maston was touching every wall, every door and window inside this intercity church. When Tanner had things to think out, shape up like the Bible's directive, 'Let all things be done decently and in order', he's grab his oil can and head for church. Somehow, his touching all the building surfaces, put him in touch a little with that shadow workshop the God is always busy in. His oil can tours were a heartfelt way of saying to God, “Jesus, I ain't much, anymore. But I'm here with my 'want-to bones' at the ready.

Many times, Tanner had decided God had put him on the shelf permanently, 'cuz of some unconfessed sin or not having a pure enough heart. “Oh well. Let's see if this door squeaks...”

Part of the thoughts under that silver hair tried to piece

together some things he'd need to create the church website, the pastor had asked for. Many pictures were taken, and wall poster content was also noted.

As he tightened up the screws of that top hinge, he reminisced over the many many websites he'd done for other churches, and never charging them one red cent. And maybe that was part of the problem with them being neglected and becoming a real digital eyesore to the world. A cliché might be, 'Freely Gotten, Freely Forgotten.' “OOOO. I'd better bring my wood glue with me next time and glue up that chair.”

But there were times in his youth that Tanner did things not at all appreciated – especially by God. There was that time when he helped two other boys tip over Brannigan's out house. Maybe that was why God was holding him back from front-line service. I dunno.

His short memory did serve him some today, as he remembered the pendulum wall clock in the Rockin' Chair Rockets classroom. And then the cardboard computers the primary class was using to connect God's love with computing. The Brannigan mindset asked the question, what would happen if I switched the two. What would happen if I put the wall clock in the primary's class (up high where it wouldn't be touched) and put the cardboard computer and cinnamon paper-mache mouse in the Rocket's classroom.

Hindsight painted a bold vivid picture of the commotion caused by moving the Rocket's wall clock. “Blast off” didn't begin the description.

“Time heals all wounds” almost didn't prove true in the switch described above. It was pretty slow, but somehow the incident brought the Rockets and the Cinnamon Primaries together. Is it possible that some of God's Shadow Workshop results were seen in this month's Soup Supper Fellowship. More than ever before, silver-haired seniors were partnering with youngins with lots of smiles and hugs. This partnering even included youth struggling with war-like home times and finding things to wear that wouldn't cause snickers from others. Never-the-less, Tanner decided never-again, was he going to switch clocks – tic-toc or

otherwise.

Tanner, our silver-haired church website designer knew that websites are saturated with links; connections that if clicked on will propel you to the next connection. Something like touching a chapter title in a book table of contents, that instantly jumped you right to that desired chapter page. In websites their fancy names are 'hyperlinks'.

But the oil can man discovered a link far more powerful than any website can have. It's a link between two generations starved for hugs and attention born nowhere else but in Heaven's Shadow Workshop. Get your oil can or dust rag ready – have a peek. Don't Wait...NOW!  
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### **#3 – Visit Another Planet**

They did it again. Someone's left the light on, in the basement,” pastor spoke to the steering wheel as he started into his inter-city church parking lot. Just then, his headlights spotted Tanner Maston's ol' clunker. The thought flashed through his mind, “anyone who doesn't believe in present day miracles, needs to look at that 'bucket-of-rust-pickup' and wonder how Tanner keeps that thing runnin'.”

Pastor whistled a little as he came closer to the basement room with the light on. “Well... hello Tanner! I had just visited Jim and Donna's and their brand new little bundle of joy. I noticed the light on as I was heading for home. What's happ'nin'?”

Silver-haired Tanner replied, “Hi ya Pastor. I didn't want to disturb your super busy schedule. While you were visiting the new baby and parents, I was visiting another planet.” He let the words cook a little, with the expected result of a confused expression on Pastor. He then continued, “Can I explain my visit to you?” Tanner knew he'd get an OK, otherwise Pastor would wonder all night, what the old church member meant by 'visiting another planet'.

“Now, visiting another planet my way, doesn't take any

rockets, space suits, or even months in orbit. I'll tell you what. Let's just do it." Without a hesitation, Tanner said, "You come do just what I do. It's simple and won't take long." Just like most Saturday Oil Can tours, Tanner and Pastor slowly walked around the basement Sunday School room with one big chair and about 15 chairs only preschoolers could fit in.

"Pastor. What we want to do is connect our hearts with God's heart and the heart of the teachers and helper in this room. See, this is super important – especially for silver-haired folks to do, 'cuz the ones sitting in these little chairs will someday be making decisions on how this church is to be run, and its spirit."

"Now the next thing we want to do is touch each chair, with more than a tap, and giving some real thought about the little one who'll be sitting in that chair this Sunday. We both know that so many families in our inter-city church are on the hairy edge of calling it quits. Many of these youngin's hear arguing from morning till night and even the night through. Their refrigerator is empty except for a couple cans of beverage that only adults drink."

The rough calloused hands of Tanner pointed toward Pastor for emphasis, as he said, "Pastor, it almost scares me to think God puts such great love on these little ones, He's assigned an angel to guard each one – are we doing enough? Are we doing all we can, or are we just providing Sunday babysitting services for them?"

"You're quite a bit younger than I am, Pastor, so you don't know about living in a world that had no televisions. You were born with them in fairly easy reach. Me. My world started even before there were electric typewriters, with eraser ribbons and such."

"Pastor, you've been to preacher college and I haven't. I was happy to make it through high school," Tanner said with a sheepish grin. If you'll take a drop of advice from an old man like me, please give serious thought and prayer to what I'm about to say."

"The first step of seniors recognizing their opportunity and responsibility to our church's future is to understand these children and many before them, can't imagine what life would be like without computers. Their thoughts of life are saturated with on-line this and computing that. Pastor, I know many of my generation

consider computers as a tool of the devil and something to be feared. But we both know the Bible tells us it is one of God's gifts to be used to magnify Him and build up the saints.”

Tanner knew he was speaking to a very tired pastor of his church. But his purpose was to begin building a not-so-tough bridge of love and understanding between two generations, like so many churches, are worlds apart.”

“Pastor, I know I'm 'preaching to the choir' when I say this, but my old Bible tells me it contains the directions to build this bridge between our church goals and the outreach to the future leaders God has put within our short-range radar, as they say today. One of my favorite verses ends with the Bible's promise of itself, *'thoroughly furnished unto all good works'*.” 2Timothy 3:17.

“I got only one other thing to add, Pastor. I don't know nothin' about rocket fuel, space stations, and such. But I am certain of the fuel needed to reach the planet and hearts in these little chairs. The fuel, we all possess. The fuel to reach hearts, young and old, is in Psalms 126:6 *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* It's tears.” No doubt, you'd got unused tears.

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## #4 – David Barker

The church turned quiet as its pastor walked to the pulpit, placing his hands on each side, like he was hanging on. His eyes moved all along many of the filled pews as he began to speak. “Thank you all for coming to our evening service that I promise is going to be really exciting. I've invited this person here to share his facinating testimony with you, and evidence he's from another world. WOW! I'm all excited already. David Barker, will you come out and meet the many people who've come to see you?”

First appeared a dog you'd characterize with a happy tongue that matched his wagging tail. His harness was held by a man about 25, with a cane in the other hand. As David walked toward

the pulpit, the dog slowly kept pace with him.

“Thank you all for coming this evening. I've come at your pastor's invitation to share my heart with you. First off, I should say that this dear friend with tongue on one end and tail on the other, is Barker. Umm, you'll have to trust me, he is a barker too. At another church meeting, he barked once and shook the shade on their piano lamp. I'm David Glish, and as you can see I'm from another world – and that's what I want to talk to you about.”

“Unlike your world, my world has no rainbows, sunrises or sunsets, or birds in the trees. Colors in my world have very little meaning, except blue is cold like an ice cube and red might burn your fingers. My world has very few smiles and pictures of anything. Some people would tell me that God is punishing me for something. But the very opposite is true. Barker and I are here to tell you that we both are bridge builders. These are not steel and paint bridges to carry cars, but a bridge that is alive – that breathes and moves. Though my words probably seem strange, you'd better take my words to heart – from mine to yours. Here's one reason why.”

“I am an on-line customer service manager for the credit card company whose plastic you likely have in your pocket or purse. Though in one sense, I'm from another world, I have quite probably talked to some of you on the phone, using my computer without a monitor. Each weekday, Barker quietly rests beside my company desk while I have my audio headset in place. You'd really think I was from another planet seeing all my other teammates have keyboards, mice, and monitors at the ready. But me? No monitor. I don't need one.”

“If you were to call me for help with your account, your voice would come into one side of my headset. The special program in my computer speaks the words and numbers nearby my mouse cursor and I can read your account data and we can work together to make life better for you and your finances. Do you see? I hope so, 'cuz I can't,” Dave said with a smile. “I wouldn't have a job without computers, and some of you with pacemakers wouldn't even be alive without them... or you wouldn't be able to hear me without computerized hearing aids and cochlear implants.”

“Now, I have Barker to help me around town, and using my soft soled shoes, I could walk out here being careful to step on that rope laying on the floor over there. But I want especially to talk to you silver haired folks about the bridge than needs to be built, with your hands, from the shoes you walk in, to the little chairs in the classrooms below us. Your first step in building this living breathing bridge is to understand that most all our youth were born into a world that has never been without computers.”

“You, Pastor, and I need to share God's love and the Bible's promises with a bit of computer flavor. God has provided many non-technical ways to do this – even if you've never trusted computers. Pastor has told me that some of you are designing an on-line website for your church that includes maps and such.”

“I'll tell you what. If you'll invite me back, we'll have a little WOW workshop and learn how to make toddlers key designers in that website. Building breathing bridges is fun but they should be painted with tears, for the hearts from another world God gave you.”

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## #5 – Gittin' In Touch

Sunday Evening Share Time took on a whole new emphasis about two weeks after David and Barker visited the small inter-city church. Matti walked toward the podium dragging Clementine along behind. Matty was dressed in her housekeeping work clothes with a bandanna tied around her head, just as she always does when cleaning the church each Tuesday.

Ol' Gerdie in the back row gasped deeply putting her hand over her mouth, looking all around her to see if anyone else found this gross disrespect of the pulpit so appalling. It was just her.

Matti began to speak with, “Thank you for letting me stand up here with Clementine my vacuum cleaner, and my work clothes. I have a strong purpose in giving you all a bit of a shocking insight to something I've been learning the last couple of weeks. Clem and I were doing our usual housekeeping duties in the

teen room down stairs... You know, I just thought of something. Why are all the classrooms for the youth in the basement? Is this an "out of sight, out of mind" kind of thing. Yes, I know it's hard to look at their odd 'out of this world' appearance, sometimes. But that's what I want to tell you about."

Matti let go of Clem's handle, making sure it stayed upright. "So anyhow, getting back to my teen room experience... using my dust rag I was wiping down all the needed surfaces, when I took a deeper look at the chairs that this church's future leaders are now sitting in. I laid down my dust rag but kept on moving my hand slowly over the same surface I'd just dusted. Now listen carefully. Me and Jesus go back a long way, and I love restoring beauty to His house we worship in."

"It seemed my heart was speaking to me, 'Matti. I've given you time for dust rags. And I've given you time without dust rags. You might call it Getting in Touch time. And Matti I've given you a mind and heart to decide which ought to come first, before the other.'" Matti slapped the pulpit hard enough to make sure everyone knew she meant business. She continued, "In a moment I sat down in a corner chair of that classroom and quietly looked at every part of the walls, tables and chairs."

Matti looked at Pastor and held up a hand like she was taking an oath of honesty, and said, "Pastor. I tell you the truth, it's like I had opened a door just a crack and could hear teen voices saying, "we're drowning in all these technology dead-ends, that don't give us peace and don't give us a reason for living".

"I've since found out from a teen that constant inner spiritual pain is so tormenting, they try to hide that inner pain with outer pain by literally repeatedly cutting themselves." Matti wiped her nose with a pocket tissue and continued. You don't have to believe this, but I think the green hair, black clothes, and facial jewelry are actually calls to us for help. I think those help cries all say pretty much the same thing, "Is there anyone that cares enough about me and my world, to at least just listen to my heart, instead of starting off preaching to me?"

"Folks. I got just one more thing to say, and then me 'n Clementine will go sit down. My Git in Tough moments have

made it clear to me, we don't need church gadgets and gimmick programs to reach youth, especially teens. We don't need to quote scripture like a seminary student, or make them start memorizing verses. And you and I don't need to know a bunch of computer stuff. All we need to do is listen – and I don't mean interrogate. My grandpa called that 'leading from behind'.”

“And that leading from behind or getting in touch is not hard. All ya gotta do is pretend like the teen knows more than you do, and let them teach you.” With just a bit of a smile, Matti reached out and took hold of Clementine and said, “God has given us silver-haired folks lots of empty hours in each day, for a purpose. I think He wants us to go back to school. He wants us to 'lead from behind' and get in touch with our youth. The secret is simple. Our generation is the best prepared to just LISTEN. Listen Before You Leap on the attitudes and appearance of youth and their Help Cries.”

Tom Steen jumped to his feet, and blurted out, “Matti, I got a couple extra screwdrivers and three old computers your teens – I mean OUR TEENS, could tear apart while seniors are listenin' and learning!”

Pastor was quickly scribbling notes for a vision everyone needed to see. Building a bridge between two worlds using computer junk and... and using... and using tears for help cries.

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## #6 – Green Hair Graphics

A knock at the Pastor's church office door was made by Matti Gless. “Pastor, can I talk to you a minute? It's sort-of important, I guess. She was welcomed in, and offered a comfortable chair as the pastor switched off his cellphone ringer.

“I don't know what to make of it, pastor. But two days ago I found this drawing taped to my Clementine – that's my vacuum. I have no idea who drew it or why. The pastor of the inter-city church he loved so much, was handed the pencil sketch drawing.

The mysterious artist had drawn a lady in something of an way that Matti dressed when she was cleaning. Right next to her was a sketch barely recognizable as a vacuum cleaner. On the other side of the vacuum was drawn a teenage girl. Both people were drawn with the style you see pretty often among young-adult artist. The eyes were a little oversize with the head tilted down in a sad pose. The hair was drawn with long almost straight lines that all came to a point, like broken jagged glass. The posture of the teen girl was definitely drawn as with a broken spirit – a broken heart and probably broken dreams.

“Well, Matti, who drew this sketch of you, your vacuum, and a teenage girl?” Matti showed a stressed expression on her face as she confessed, “I have no idea who drew this or why? I thought maybe you might. On the wall of the teen room I did notice another sketch drawn in somewhat the same style. I'll take you down there and show you the other sketch.” Pastor accepted and they both went downstairs to look at the sketch. The two detectives compared the drawings and felt sure they were done by the same person – probably a teenager right there in their church.”

“Matti, look closely at this sketch of you and your vac. Look up in the hair area. Right here there's just a touch of green. It almost looks like the artist was going to give the teen figure green hair and then decided not to.” A few minutes past, then, “Matti, we've got a teen girl that comes that wears a lot of green hair. Would you like to visit her and see if there's any connection? If she is the artist, maybe she would like to help Tanner with the website. Why don't you also take along a good Plan of Salvation tract you can share with her, as God so moves.”

“WOW! You're a really good artist. But I bet you can't draw a sad girl looking at a one of those flat computers,” were the words Matti put on a sheet of paper. She taped it onto the vac handle, where the original sketch had been found. With lots of prayer, Matti hoped her note would 1) compliment the artist, 2) challenge the artist.

Two days later, the beautiful sketch appeared. Matti made a Xerox copy of the sketch then retaped the original to Clementine's handle with another request. Now I need you to draw me standing

behind the sad girl with my arms around her, planting a small kiss on her hair. I bet you can do that. I sure hope so. 'Cuz that's how my heart sees your picture. Oh. One more thing. I need you to color the teen's hair green.

“I've blown it! I've been too pushy! I'll never find out for sure who the artist is. Clementine and me are just not the kind of servants God needs to reach teens!” Matti (and Clementine) were working on the last room of this week's cleaning. She was startled when someone tapped her on the back. Matti turned in an instant.

Standing in front of her was a teen girl with red swollen eyes full of tears... and... green hair. Before Matti could say a word, the teen said, “I sure could use that hug now. My world has really been wobbly this week. That hug both had been craving was followed by a little kiss on each other's cheek and more hugs.

Now what you read here does not say that every S.O.S. for help has to contain green hair. But it does say that we all need to be constantly watching for those cries for our help, in whatever form they come. Jesus heard our cries for His help with our sinful nature. He more than met our need for love and forgiveness with His shed blood on the cross of Calvary. But He wants us to spread the word – The One Who loves us most has every hair on our head counted – nomatter the color.

Humbly tell Him about your world and then listen as He tells you about the world in Eternity where He wants you to live with Him.

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