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Keyboard Goo

[Theme: All keyboards have drawbacks.]

This year's Glover Computer Camp is the best ever, with the strangest of events yet to come. Several small workshops have taught lots of interesting things about the development of different parts of the computer. Would you believe that the first disk drive was the size of a side-by-side refrigerator? So many interesting facts were learned that it would take a month to sort them all out.

A real favorite was Tom Beets who had single-handedly repaired the inside of his computer, including a replacement of his power supply. Oh, yes; I forgot to mention that Tom has been totally blind since birth. He's been zapped a couple times during his work, but he says his dedication always wins out. He's terrific!

The Keyboard Olympics was a blast. So many odd things were done with a keyboard. Did you ever see a "Two Toes Typist"? "Stereo computing" was very impressive. Two computers were set up side by side, while Dave typed on both keyboards at the same time. Is that a split personality, or what?! Hostile keyboarding was demonstrated by Larry, who pressed the keys using a B-B gun. That keyboard won't last very long!

Dede Jacobs, a typing speed record holder with 122 words per minute, began the final gala keyboard demonstration in front of the whole camp... or at least that's what everyone thought was going to happen. Dede described all the preparations and exercises she did to set the record. She really had everyone eating out of the palm of her hand, as she set up for the final competition of this year's camp. It would be boys against girls, with the girls being favored to win the typing contest. A large poster was hung up with the paragraph that had to be typed by each contestant. The boys' team had to choose one boy to represent them, and the girls likewise. Both champions were brought forward and introduced.

But then things turned strange. Two overhead video cameras were wheeled on stage and put in position. Both contestants were given raincoats and rain hats to put on. You could just feel the electricity building in the audience

Dede explained all the rules, and warned the contestants that the overhead camcorders would record all the keystrokes pressed, for accuracy in judging. The audience roared with laughter and applause when they learned why the raingear was necessary. The keyboard on which each champion was to type, was made of PEANUT BUTTER!

Get ready! Set! Go! And away they went! Both could only type a couple of words, then had to stop and lick their fingers to keep them from sticking together. But the worst was yet to be learned – half way through the paragraph, the letters on top of the peanut butter keys blurred so badly that the letters could not be seen. Is the letter D over here, or over there? Hey, wait a minute! I don't think the rules allow the camp dog to do any finger licking during a peanut butter typing contest! No one thought Dede's record would be broken here, anyhow. It was an unforgettable event.

For different needs, man designs a whole variety of computers, keyboards and monitors, and then finds they still aren't perfectly fitted to the need. Only God designs and creates just exactly what is needed without any required improvements. God knows our needs better than we...always. (end of story)

Granny Sims – Email Riveter

She didn't know what she must have been thinking when one of her chums at her Silver Headers Seniors club talked her into buying one of those email machines. Granny understood just enough about this new fangled gadget that it really was not a real computer but just the email part of it. It was about the size of one of her small purses.

Talker Tillie had come over and helped her get the thing running. Whew! That woman could talk the paint off the side of a battleship. But Granny promised she'd give it a try. For fear she'd press the wrong button and it'd shock her, she would type messages with two wooden pencils. Well, at least you have to give her credit for trying.

Talker hadn't told her so, but Granny Sims decided she'd only use it on Thursdays. She figured no sense in wearing the thing out before the garden was up. All day Thursdays she'd sit in front of the fool thing and wait for it to do it's thing. But nothing. The creepy thing just sat there like an old shoe with no laces. ***"WELL THIS IS GONNA STOP!"***

Something you need to know about Granny. In her prime she was the leader of a team of women riveters on war ships. If Granny thought you were a slacker, she'd flip you a hot rivet – at least that's what all her team thought. Sunday night's missionary meeting shook the whole church building. When Granny Sims slammed her hand on the table, you thought there was a red-hot rivet in the air, the way everyone took notice.

"WELL I'M A WAITIN'! I bought this email thing and it's not getting used." With the same enthusiasm as in her prime, she took her Bible in hand and pointed at Velma, and demanded, "You got one of these email things! By next Thursday I want you to email me a message! If you aren't smart enough to think of something, type in a Bible verse!"

She swung around and looked Barney Paver straight in the eye. He held his breath like looking down a gun barrel. "Barney your grandson got you one of these email things. I remember you puttin' on airs, telling us about it. When I log in next Thursday, I want to see a message from you. I know you like numbers. I want a list of the different light bulb sizes and how many of each are used here in church! If I don't get it, I'll be over on your front yard yellin' you are a no-a-count goof-off so's all your neighbors can hear me! As for me, I'm gonna email our missionaries with some notes from our pastor's great sermon last Sunday. He works hard on those messages and I mean for him to be heard all the way to Venezuela!" "Let's quit commitein' and get doing!" She left with the same determination you'd have getting back to putting red-hot rivets in a gun turret.

Beulah didn't know anything that would top that, so she asked Ben to close in prayer. He did and they all quickly left hoping not to see Granny before they got home.

A short story made shorter, Granny Sims the Riveter whipped together a team of 14 silver haired emailers that were just about to start getting after the little missions-lovin' church about 30 miles down the road. Oh. You'll be happy to know that as of yet there has been no yellin' on Barney's front lawn.

Does your church need someone to rivet some emailers together?

(end of story)

Daisy Pedals

The dark gray skies made you feel a chill just looking at them. The whistling winds around my car tugged at it often. I felt just like one of the many pine trees on the other side of the lake. Only in just a small area of the lake did the sun's reflection make diamonds dance on the waves. My stare gave little notice to them but fixed on the dominant waves of cold steel-gray even more intimidating than the chilly skies above.

As I sat in my car I had no time to notice the last of the autumn leaves of apple reds and the lemon yellows. I kept my attention on the forest of active pine trees. They all wave in chorus that might have impressed other silver-haired folks. But me, I just felt so much like one of those pines – we're alive, lots of action, but not really going any place – not really achieving anything.

It was worse than being a pine, because I felt pain. This pain was awful. It would be more bearable if God would show me. If He would just show me what area of my life had offended Him. Then I'd know the reason why He won't use my 20 years of story writing that honors His and His Word.

As the cinnamon-brown leaves cart wheeled across the beach I thought of a fictional little Polly Sue. My stiff fingers wrote quickly.

With one hand on the log she leaned out just a bit using the lake water as a mirror. Her older brother, Tom, walked by with a fishing pole in his hand as the little girl held a dandelion up to her chin. She'd seen Tom do the dandelion test using a mirror. Her version of the test to see if her chin would turn yellow only proved the lake water was murky and too wavy.

Tom continued past Polly Sue and said in a laughing way, "Little girls, what do they know about anything?"

About 6 wiggly fishing worms later and no fish on his stringer, Tom walked back past Polly Sue, toward his tried-and-true fishing spot that seldom failed him. Little sister had a daisy in front of her face and while pulling each pedal off she'd say, "He loves me."

Big brother baited his hook and threw the hook and line out to just the right place where a hungry fish ought to be. The tall bobber swayed in the gentle breeze about like a pine tree would. But he probably would not have noticed if a fish moved his bobber. His mind's eye kept focusing on what his little sister kept saying.

He remembered that every single pedal she pulled off, she said the same thing, "He loves me." Tom thought to himself, I can't stand this any more. She's only a little girl. I don't think she's even old enough to care about the affections of the opposite gender. But he laid down his pole and went over and sat next to Polly Sue.

He began, "Polly, you're not doing it right. You're supposed to pull a pedal off and say, 'He loves me.'" But the very next pedal you pull off, you're supposed to say, 'He loves me not.' The next pedal you say, 'He loves me.' Do you see what I'm saying?" She pulled one more pedal off and said, "He loves me." She looked down at the pulled pedals on the ground and then up at her big brother. "Miss Maimee taught us a chorus last week in Sunday School. Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so." The little girl didn't remember any more of the words so repeated what she did know, "Jesus loves me, this I know. For the Bible tells me so."

Without any further explanation she picked up another daisy, and slowly picked off each pedal in succession. Each time she'd repeat with assurance, "He loves me. He loves me."

As my pen finished the conversation between a brother, a sister, and a daisy, I looked up and saw a power blue sky all around me with lots of cotton candy clouds. The sun came out and poured warmth through my windshield. I suppose my chin was golden yellow because my whole body was reflecting the yellow gold from glory's gates.

Polly Sue was right, "He loves me. He loves me. The Bible tells me so."
(end of story)

Headhunters!

[Theme: Our God-designed brains and abilities are far superior to any computer or animal.]

Troubled statements on the marker board said: 1.African Qwabee Tribe Project #817, 2.Headhunters (very, very dangerous), 3.How do we get the gospel to them?, 4.No written language, 5.Dave Chase knows a bit of their language, 6.Forest too dense to airdrop radios and broadcast to them, and 7.Closest landing strip is 130 miles away.

Dr. Bob began the planning session with prayer as he always did, voicing the deep desire of all to reach the nationals with the good news that Jesus Christ is salvation in a Person and that trusting in Him means to be saved forever.

Mark had quietly entered the meeting room several times to deliver urgent messages. But he had heard enough of the problem to be able to respond when he heard one of the missionaries ask again, "What are we going to do?" He just blurted out, "Why not make a tree raft?" and left the room.

But Mark was immediately sent for and invited to have a seat in the meeting room. With all eyes on him, he described a contraption he'd seen on a science program. A "tree raft" best describes its function. Mark's audience quickly understood that the device works better in densely forested areas.

He was motioned to the board and handed a marker. With crude lines, Mark drew what looked like a oversize child's swimming pool; the kind that's pumped up with air.

The bottom of the raft had small areas in the center and around the edge covered with netting so rainwater could pass on through and not "sink the raft".

Dr. Bob hastily scribbled some notes on a piece of paper and dispatched a secretary to make some important phone calls about a tree raft.

Using furniture and fixtures often used by campers and climbers, the group soon realized that two missionaries could spend two days at a time in the raft on the tops of the trees.

Tony was the one who always saw only the practical, the real world obstacles. While some of the others were tossing phrases around like, "Pup tent in the heavens," and, "Tree-top rafting," Tony's question stopped them cold: "How are you going get it there? Every two days you'll have to transfer two people and a lot of supplies. A helicopter is out of the question because the helicopter prop wash would destroy the huge raft and all the equipment it holds."

Mark was ready for Tony's concern. "Well, the science program showed that all of the transportation needs were met with an ultra-light blimp," he said. Getting a lot of suprised looks, Mark continued with, "It's a very small version of the big ones, using the same airplane engines used by ultra-light airplanes."

"I think I remember seeing part of that program," said one of Mark's audience. The top of the pup tent shelter could hold some solar panels to power a distance microphone (like those used at football games), a laptop computer to record the nationals' dialect for language analysis and radio communication. Broadcasting to the natives would require a good quality speaker system.

With great excitement, ideas and solutions began filling in the gaps, becoming a safe, workable project plan.

Now the real lesson here is not in visualizing new uses for rafts, or things like that. Far greater and more important is the truth that surpasses the power of technology, rising above the treetops. Nowhere else in creation is this given—the ability to imagine, to dream of a solution, to desire to help others. Everyone freely receives this ability and each of us has a human computer located between our ears. We just have to use it. But the highest calling of all is the spiritual apprehension of a loving God, and the burden to introduce Him to others.

(end of story)

Heart Paint & Gramps

What does it mean? Is it a code? Has Gramps finally snapped?

Caysee had visited her grandfather in the nursing home often and this time brought her postcard-sized drawings to share with him. It was always quite a challenge; communication wise. The stroke had seen to that. His sight and hearing were representative of most any 83 yo crop farmer. His attention span was measured almost in seconds before he'd slip into a stare that at first you might think was a seizure, but actually was not.

The loving granddaughter had chosen 4 of her favorite paintings that she hoped would brighten his day. But what really happened was not at all what she suspected... a mystery.

Racing against Gramps' attention span stopwatch, Caysee showed him each picture in turn. He gently moved his fingers over the soft colors and deliberate outlines. It was as though he was listening to each painting's story... you know... something like a narrative painting. It's not an image that you just look at once and gobble up, but a story; a lesson for the eyes and heart.

Others had told Caysee must be using Heart Paint, because of the feeling each of her creations seem to show. But then there was this mysterious code that no one could figure out.

The old gentleman laid down the last painting and slowly picked up a nearby pen as though he was on his last thread of strength. Caysee and the nearby nursing home resident were intent on what must be so important. He wrote some kind of code that started with the word IMPERITIVE followed by three more letter l's each written under the other. But what did it mean who was it for? Was he having some serious health issue and needed a nurse right away? Were there more words or letters or code that he didn't add before he entered his frozen stare?

What a mystery. Caysee went home with the coded message firmly in hand as though it was a life saving prescription. But who was the prescription for? Was it for Gramps or Caysee? In all her born days, she had never had a visit like this one. No sooner than she stepped in the door and hung up her coat and scarf, than she showed the mystery code to her mom and then her dad. Her parents were not able to add any clarity to the code nor what the twenty-ish painter should do with it.

A cell phone call to her favorite church friend that evening listed to Caysee detail all that had happened that day and reminded her that God knows every mystery, every code, and every heart cry. The young painter slowly moved her fingers across the paintings like Gramps did, hoping the painting would speak to her as they must have to her beloved grandfather.

The following Thursday Caysee almost ran to the nursing home with the coded mystery message firmly in hand. She could hardly hold back her enthusiasm in showing Gramps that she still had the code and thirsted for its meaning.

Now in more time and visits than this story has, Gramps kept filling in the code with a word for each "l" in the message.

The first stood for IMPERITIVE. Gramps was setting the tone for what was to follow for the young painter.

IMPRESS was the second word and told Caysee her water-color work really grabbed everyone's attention... even if it was only for precious seconds.

The third word was INSPIRE. It took several more visits for Gramps to scribble down a Bible reference for each painting. The words were to be added in the margin of each graphic. Any of our projects whether visual or audible should be attributed to God and all His provisions in the field or in the forest.

The last word was the frosting on the cake. The word was INITIATE. Caysee learned that God had given her talent that was meant to strengthen and inspire, far more than impress. God wants us to produce more than WOW's with His provisions. He wants us to use those talents to become TOOLS in the hands of all those that love Him, serve Him, or need to know about Him.

(end of story)

Heaven's Pillow

WHAT A WALLY WHEEL DAY! See Wally there, in his cage? That's just what my day has been like. I feel just like I've spent the last 12 hours in that hamster wheel right behind Wally.

If I had an owner's manual, I think it would help. I can run hard and I'm still on the bottom. To carry a load and move slow, I'm still looking at the bottom rung. Who can tell me if I'm even going in the right direction? Someone trying to climb the 'corporate ladder' ought to try one of these things. Wally and I can sure teach you a thing or two. The other day Wally got up a good speed and then missed a step. He started tumbling like my wife's clothes dryer.

In all of this, you have to be brutally honest with yourself. Step back and see if you travel a Wally Wheel. Remember the faster you travel the more you may tumble with just one stumble.

Well, I often think of my pillow as my home plate. How I love it's soft cool feel that conforms to me with no complaints. And if I press my good ear into its folds, I hear no noise or reminders of the day's stress. Many a time I've pressed on through my day, rounding third base and heading for that fleecy home plate.

But lately, I've laid my head on my pillow and still feel much of the pain and stress of the day. As I read my Bible each evening I've grown to love the feel of the printed pages that have been green pastures to many of God's lambs through the ages.

Just the other night I had left my open Bible on the pillow and moved my head next to my Bible on the pillow. My thoughts moved from my Wally Wheel day to thinking of those people young and old that have no Bible to make their Heaven's Pillow. How terrible that must be. Maybe they have no Bible because no one has translated God's Word into their language. And could it be they might not even have a written language? They wouldn't be much better off than Wally... running like crazy for no good reason.

Laying on my Heaven's Pillow I think of the notes of blessing I've penned in the margins over the years. Near the printed spot where David slew Goliath, I wrote, "Giant – you messed with the wrong shepherd this time!" Close to John 14:27 speaking of God's Peace, appears my testimony, "I'm gittin' a shovel full of this peace EVERY morning!"

As I read through the many chapters of God pronouncing chastisement on His nation of Israel, I wrote more than once, "Don't just see God's wrath on disobedience, but everlasting control and love."

You might be one of those downhearted people that think the proverbial 'light at the end of the tunnel' is an oncoming freight train. You've raced like Wally and know for sure the inside of the wheel goes nowhere. Can you see yourself trying to get to the top on the outside of the wheel?

To get off the wheel and find your home plate, do the following. Get a pen and your Bible. Turn to the last book of the Bible, called Revelations. Turn to chapter 21 starting with verse 3. In the margin next to verse 4, write "Heaven's Pillow". Then read the words each day before you lay down your head:

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

I can tell you for sure, you'll sleep your best, when you've taught others how they can make their Heaven's Pillow.

(end of story)

The Hymn Cake

Little Judy could hardly keep up with the small group of other children from the church nearby. The determination in their step reminded you of a group of soldiers on a mission. The children had come on their mercy mission to the nursing home several times before and the residents loved each and every visit. Most of the children brought small trinkets that could easily be held by some of the residents. But today was just a bit different in the gifts they had brought.

Judy's older brother Ben had printed the words to several very old hymns he knew the nursing home residents loved and loved to sing. Ben had used his computer program to print the words extra large so those with poor vision could even read the words.

Tina came up with a wonderful idea when she had Ben print an extra copy of each of the hymns. She immediately took her copies of the hymns to the kitchen, and got a mixing bowl out of the cupboard.

Little Judy was always interested in learning new things that are done in the kitchen. But in all her seven years she'd never seen a recipe that used hymns. This she had to witness for herself. Since Tina has a wonderful talent for recruiting anyone anywhere, Judy was given an apron a big wooden spoon to go with the mixing bowl. Tina carefully got a cup of flour from flour bin and poured it in the bowl. Judy became more confused than ever.

Some water was added to the flour and directions were given to mix water and flour until all the lumps were gone. While the seven year old stirred dutifully, she would glance at the sheets of hymn sheets and ask herself, "Am I making a hymn cake?"

All questions were answered when Judy's mixture became the paste that glued the hymn sheets to thin cardboard like that found in store bought shirts, and on the back of paper tablets. Tina recruited her brother Ben to cut the "hymn boards" into varied shape pieces and the result being hymn puzzles for the nursing home residents.

So now you understand the reason for the great pride in little Judy's step and she followed the other kids into the nursing home.

After all the gifts and puzzles were distributed Judy walked over to old Mrs. Beemer. Without saying anything Judy pulled out one of the computer hymn sheets Ben had discarded at home. Mrs. Beemer saw the misspelled words and the reasons Ben had trashed the page, but then she noticed at the bottom of the page a row of X's and O's ending with a heart surely drawn by a little girl.

Old Mrs. Beemer pointed at the X's and O's and then pointed at little Judy. Judy countered with pointing at her own chest and shaking her head yes. Across the room the rest of the kids couldn't figure out why an old sheet of computer paper would cause a 83 year old lady and a seven year old lady to hug real big.

(end of story)

Itching to be Beautiful

WITH RUMBLING NOISES THAT MADE US KEEP SILENT, THE BIG HEAVY DOOR SLID OPEN as we held our breath. We'd been in this world, all its own, only once before. Our memories of then would last more than a lifetime. Two of my 8-year-old classmates and I, almost reverently walked into the woodshop toward our seats for this spectacle. Mr. Grayson wore enough silver hair for two grandfathers and a contagious smile that quickly smoothed life's roughness, whatever the age.

Sometimes he didn't speak to us for several minutes. It was like he was letting the woodshop do it for him. Our young impressionable eyes would feast on all that was around us. We loved each precious visit. In this workshop world there was no horror, hatred, or hurt, especially for little boys.

In the center of the room was a powerful table saw. So well cared for, you couldn't guess how old it really was. In a far corner was a band saw. There were no cobwebs or grime around it either. We saw tools for making wood circular, square, smooth, or strong. But during these memorable visits we would learn the most powerful tools are sometimes the broom, cleaning rag, or well-ordered shelves.

We three sat still and quiet on our box seats. This was the last place on earth for horseplay. "Gramps" was the name Mr. Grayson loved for us to call him. With no children of his own, he saw in each of us something that stirred his friendship.

Gramps would occasionally turn from his work and press his smile into each of our eyes. Still without lip-words, he would pick up a small insignificant piece of wood off the floor and bring it over to us. Right in front of us he would slowly move his fingers over the wood. You could imagine the wood was telling Gramps its story. His first words, "Look carefully at this piece of wood. Really think about what you see."

Each of us, in turn, inspected the wood with the intensity of a clever detective. When later questioned, my buddies told Gramps how little, dirty, rough, and worthless it was. As I waited my turn to answer, my eyes investigated the ceiling braces of the shop and the countless little crevices holding pieces of wood not much larger than the one we held. Before we left that incredible workshop world that day, we were asked to examine a few more pieces of wood, different from the others.

Gramps taught us some of the diversity of woods. Some were hard, wear long, but are brittle. Others were soft enough to carve your initials with a fingernail. Some pieces had an aroma that would brighten a day just carried in a pocket like a pencil. Other woods with wavy patterns of light and dark grain set your mind to seeing a sunset in wood. He showed us how to measure long ago time and weather, with wood. We learned from him that boards that are straight and true make the strongest of projects.

How many times, in the half century since those woodshop days, I've longed to open that door to wood, wishes, and wonder? Like a breath of fresh air I'd step out of today's rough unwanted circumstances.

Today my wooden pieces of promise are in the form of paper - clean and white, with four well-ordered corners. For me, a blank piece of paper is much like one of those scraps of wood. It is waiting its turn in the woodshop to become something beautiful for the hands and life of hope.

Some farmers plant seeds to grow food. Other farmers plant trees for wood to become homes and heat. Gramps was a farmer with wood. He planted seeds of wood in my soul just itching to become something beautiful. He grew deep roots of my life.

What kind of workshop has God given you? They come in all sizes and flavors you know. Some workshops to fashion dreams of hope contain a washing machine, or sink, typewriter, telephone, back yard fence, or even a baby crib. It really doesn't take silver hair to make a farmer's seed planter or a carpenter's plane. All that is really needed is to open your workshop door to your neighbor. God will produce the growth.

(end of story)

Joysticks

“Quick - Bank Right! Ben! Bank Right, before you slam into that mountain!” Dean moved the joystick control in front of him desperately to the right. Then a slight pause. The two boys stared at each other for a couple seconds and then burst out laughing.

Their flight simulator consisted of a couple stacked cardboard boxes with a rather large picture of an airplane on the side of the top box. Just below the picture were torn out pictures of gauges from an old welding catalog. This represented their instrument panel. They found their broken joystick in someone’s trashcan, but you know, “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

The two boys lived in the part of town where folks didn’t have very much. They were feeling richer every day since the computer club began. The Tech Trash Tutors Club met in the basement of an old “kid-lovin” church that really was a Godsend to these two boys and several others like them. The club taught the boys that broken computer parts have great value just like young people that don’t have the finest clothes or rich parents.

The next Thursday’s meeting of the Tech Trash Tutors Club showed all the boys how to carefully take that joystick apart and learn from the insides. The silver haired man everyone lovingly called, “Gramps”, explained just a little bit about the things they discovered inside. The keen interest of the boys led you to believe they were training for some space shuttle mission.

In very simple ways, Gramps used the joystick parts to remind the boys that all sizes and colors of parts are needed, and that each is important. Then Gramps turned the joystick upright and said, “Now I’m going to show you the most important part of any joystick.” He said, “The most important part is not the hand control, or the firing button, or the power cord. It’s these calibration knobs. If the joystick is not calibrated to make the airplane or vehicle move straight, you’ve got nothing.”

“If our club were able to have a working computer I could show you several ways that it calibrates itself every time it’s turned on. You’ve seen the computers at school do this when they are warming up and show a bunch of goofy sentences on the screen. They are calibrating themselves at the speed of light.”

The eight boys saw Gramps walk over to a well-worn blackboard and write the words, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Ps 119:105.” He read the words carefully to the boys, more than once and explained that the Bible teaches us many principles about computers. But it especially tells us how much God loves boys and girls and has blessed them with great imagination and inspiration.

The club meeting ended with a simple game Gramps showed the members how to make and play with others in their neighborhood. It used each of the letters of the word GOSPEL.

(end of story)

Jungle Hospital Computing

With heart-pounding excitement Neenah walked past the workers.

A missionary field hospital was being built right where she stood.

This modest African hospital near the jungle's edge was bustling with all sorts of activity in every direction she looked. It was contagious, the excitement, I mean. One group of workers, putting the final touches on a thatched roof, were singing as they worked. Neenah saw hospital staff already stacking medical supplies in neat rows with great care – and the walls hadn't even been put up yet.

Like each of the Thursdays before, she quietly seated herself under the tree at the back of the group learning how some magical thing called a computer was going to be used to keep track of all sorts of medicines, native patients, and all sorts of things.

Learning how computers help organize things reminded Neenah of the happy staffers organizing the bandages she had just passed not long before. She listened intently and made the best notes she could on the scraps of paper she had found on her every-Thursday walk from her home a day and a half away.

Miss Thompson, the computer teacher from America began noticing a strange habit of Neenah's every time the group broke for lunch. While the others were eating their lunch, talking, and laughing, Neenah stayed by herself and occasionally put one hand in front of her mouth and took a nibble of something in her other hand.

After some casual questions here and there, Miss Thompson learned what was being nibbled were the total of what Neenah had to eat from the time she left home on Tuesdays till she got back home. Oh yes, her mother dutifully always packed three oranges and a few assorted nuts; these provisions were always consumed in the same way.

On the one and a half day's journey each way, Neenah had to cross a deep raging river. The boatman always took as his fare, all her nuts and the three oranges. That covered the return trip too. As the boatman peeled the oranges and crudely ate them in front of Neenah, she would carefully pick up the orange peels, dust them off and deposit them in her pocket; her only food till she got back home.

That night, in her personal devotions, Miss Thompson reflected upon her own dedication to missions and using her teaching skills in the far away land, but freely admitted to the God that she loved, her dedication and heart for the work, was very small compared to that of Neenah. In all of the teaching she did, in this mission hospital or back home in America, she would never learn how precious a thing it is to some people that they dedicate their computing efforts to God's great commission.

And how did she learn this monumental lesson?

From orange peels.

(end of story)

Jungle Flying

Not knowing the dangerous obstacle about to present itself, the little airplane was lined up with the runway, about to land with steady hands at the controls.

Chris went through the landing sequence as he had practiced countless times before. Nose wheel centered, flaps down 10 degrees, and many other settings and procedures. Because fuel was low, Chris decided not to do his customary flyover to check this jungle runway as he usually did all the others.

Missionary flying demands intense concentration, dedication, and the constant expectation of the unexpected.

The families of this small jungle village had worked two weeks of long hours, building this runway. The runway was about to test Chris' flying skills as never before.

The whole village stood by, hoping for a safe landing of the medical supplies that were on board the little airplane. "Easy... down a little... easy, baby." Chris talked to his airplane just as if it were another person. After all, they had practiced all the techniques so often.

The left wheel had barely touched the runway – I mean wet grass, when Chris spied a forgotten boulder right in line with the right wheel. With instant reflex, Chris slammed the joystick to the left enough to raise the right side of the airplane and that landing gear high enough to clear the boulder and certain disaster.

Reaching the end of the runway, the plane was taxied around into the takeoff position and the engine was shut off, with other needed settings.

As Chris placed his joystick to the left of his computer keyboard, he smiled at his neighbor Tim sitting next to him, watching this computer flight simulation. Both boys had a passion to become pilots and had shared the excitement of Chris' computer flight simulator program. More than that, Chris enjoyed visualizing takeoffs and landings as a missionary pilot.

Tim asked Chris, "If this were a real flight, why couldn't you have dropped the medicine and not landed at all? With all its packaging, it certainly would have withstood the drop into the tall grass."

Chris began doing something he loved more than flying or using his computer. He began explaining to Tim that missionary pilots carry something far more precious than the life saving medicine they often deliver. Looking at Tim directly, Chris explained the message of hope and purpose that missionaries teach from the Bible. He told of God's love and salvation that drives missionaries to enter dangerous circumstances and moves them to perfect their flying skills, so they can "go and tell" just as on-the-ground missionaries can.

Tim learned that day, that missionary pilots carry a medicine for the heart and soul that would never fit in a medicine bottle. And Chris had experienced joy – a lasting happiness, because he had found a use for his computer and joystick to deliver God's message to the heart of his friend.

(end of story)

The Key Pout Gold Mine

[Theme: It is what's inside that counts.]

The problem started when Joel found the old computer in Anderson's trash. Tear it apart and see what makes it tick ... or ...what made it tick. I guess there's not much you can do with old junk computers – or so Joel thought.

As he got permission from Mrs. Anderson to get the old computer he learned it had been just put out there yesterday and from what she remembered, it still probably worked. Before her husband passed away, he wrote little stories and such, to pass the time.

Joel gave the old machine, monitor and keyboard his “class A inspection”, looking for burned or broken wires and parts. Joel's dad said he'd be glad to look over his son's shoulder as Joel gave the trash computer its smoke test. To the delight of father and son, the “worthless” system worked. As Joel's dad returned to his lawnmower repair project, Joel continued investigation.

In digging through a lot of file names on the hard drive one filename “GOLDMINE.TXT” caught Joel's eye and aroused his curiosity. He printed out the unfinished story and didn't think much more about the story itself, but continued to dig for treasures the old computer might be hiding deep inside.

Joel's mom and dad invited the widowed Mrs. Anderson over for supper the following week. After the evening's meal all three of Joel's family gratefully thanked Mrs. Anderson for the “treasure in her trash.” An idea hit Joel and he bounded off to his room in a flash. Back in a minute later with the Goldmine story printout.

He explained where the story came from. With all the mysterious tones of a famous detective, Joel read the story as follows:

“Patricia and Janice discovered an old mine shaft with a barely readable sign saying “Key Pout Gold Mine – 1877” on some open range. They returned the next day with flashlights and a ball of heavy kite string.

Janice stood guard at the mouth of the mine while Patty cautiously crept inward playing out the string for her return trip.

Janice had just wiped the perspiration off her forehead for the umpteenth time when she hear a blood curdling scream from Patty and a second later she shot out of the mine like a ball out of a cannon. Her trajectory stopped some distance from the mine only after she'd fallen and gashed her left ankle with a resulting flow of blood.

Janice's sock became the makeshift bandage till the two girls got home. The flashlights would be picked up later.”

As Joel read a last note that the story was to be finished later, he looked up and saw the sad face of Mrs. Anderson. Joel's mom asked if they'd done anything to offend her. “Not at all. Joel, may I have that unfinished story?” “Sure, but I didn't think it was worth anything.” The widow Anderson said, “Oh yes, more than you know.”

She lifted her long dress just enough to show a noticeable scar on her left ankle. “You see,” she said, “my first name is Patricia.”

(end of story)

End of Bundle #05