



NORTH
AMERICAN
BAPTIST
CONFERENCE

SERVANT LINK

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Familial Narratives



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In a 2013 article for *The New York Times*, Bruce Feiler writes, “Decades of research have shown that most happy families communicate effectively.”¹ This might be a self-evident statement, but it’s nonetheless still true. Feiler says that this is not simply about sharing what happened that day or talking things out where there is a disagreement. Within every type of group, communicating stories from the past helps to build camaraderie and the ability to bond more closely.

I think we all know this on some deeper level, which is why we so often return to the same stories time and again when we gather in community. It is also why some of the younger generations are eager to hear stories from those of the older generations, which is where I found myself the day I drove my grandfather on a two-hundred-mile round trip when I was a senior in high school.

My grandfather was not an easy man to get to know. He wasn’t prone to talking, except when it needed to

be done, which in his estimation was rare. One year, my older sister and I spent a summer vacation at my grandparents’ house in California; a few years later my entire family moved in with them for six months when we moved across the country. During neither of these extended times together in close quarters did he cease to become a mystery to me.

So when I was volunteered by my mother to drive him an hour and a half away to be present for my grandmother’s interment at a military cemetery, it afforded me the opportunity to spark a conversation that lasted longer than any other I had shared with him.

He shared about his service in the military during World War II, downplaying his role in the effort but suggesting movies he thought were accurate portrayals of the war. He talked about meeting his future wife, a nurse stationed overseas, when she asked someone about him. He told me they went dancing and he was smitten from that day forward.

This chance to hear bits of my grandfather’s story was

1 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/fashion/the-family-stories-that-bind-us-this-life.html>

HOME TO GLORY



June Haupt—March 2, 2018 (90), in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. June was born on June 19, 1927, in England. She came to America for education when she was twenty-three years old and met a naval officer, Norman Haupt, while vacationing in Florida. They enjoyed sixty-three years of marriage. They were missionaries to Cameroon in the 1950s, where Norman was a teacher. June was involved in many ministries. She never lost her British accent. She loved her three daughters and encouraged her eight grandchildren. You can reach Norman Haupt at nj.haupt@live.com or 4312 W. Creekside Cir. Apt 108, Sioux Falls, SD 57106.

Dr. Glen A. Kirsch—April 28 (92) in Sequim, Washington. Glen and his wife, Lois, were short-term missionaries in Japan 1994–95, teaching English and Bible at the Tsu Christian Education Center. He had the joy of ministering in different churches and care centers, as well as enjoying his hobby of carpentry work. He was the father of Nancy Weaver and Phil Kirsch (who was an NAB pastor for a number of years in Washington). Many grandchildren and great-grandchildren were his pride and joy. You can reach Nancy Weaver at springfieldfrog@gmail.com.



Violet Link—May 12 (93). Violet was born August 10, 1925, into a Baptist home in Canada. In 1949, she met and married Edward, who became a professor at NAB College and Seminary. He predeceased her in 2016. She was a teacher in the arts and, with her talents, opened a Canadian store called the Serendipity Shop. She is survived by her daughter, Cheryl; two sons, Danny and Alan; and fifteen grandchildren.



Esther Ardice (Ziolkowski) Powell—May 30 (91) at the Luther Manor in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Esther began her Christian education in Edmonton, Alberta, and her nursing education in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, in 1950. She served as nurse-

midwife in Cameroon from 1951 to 1973 and as Dean of Women at NAB Seminary in Edmonton from 1973 to 1978. She married Ralph Powell in Sioux Falls in 1978 and later got her counseling degree from NAB Seminary. She leaves a long and valued legacy in the medical world in Cameroon and in Sioux Falls where she served. She traveled much with Ralph to various mission fields until their full retirement, when they volunteered in the Trail Ridge community in Sioux Falls. She leaves a large family of two step-daughters; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; her brother, Erwin Ziolkowski of Regina, Saskatchewan; and three sisters, Verna Peter, Artrude Doell, and Gerry Smailes of Edmonton.



Mildred Neuman Dreger—June 22 (95) in Kelowna, British Columbia. Mildred was born in Camrose, Alberta, on August 27, 1923, to Emmanuel and Rosa Weisser. She married Reinhard “Reilly” Neuman in 1982, and together with their five children they served with the NAB in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nigeria, and British Columbia. They served as missionaries in the Bull Indian Reserve near Wetaskiwin, Alberta. After Reilly passed away in the early '80s, she met and married Rev. Norman Dreger in 1987. They lived and ministered in Alberta and British Columbia for many years. They moved to Sandalwood in Kelowna, British Columbia, in 2006. She leaves behind her sister, Phyllis of Camrose; twenty-two grandchildren; and thirty great-grandchildren. You can reach her family through Trinity Baptist Church in Kelowna.

LET'S CELEBRATE:

Audrey Littman, widow of Dr. Charles Littman, former pastor and regional minister, celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday on June 17. August 26 would have been her and Charles' sixty-fifth anniversary. A small group of people celebrated her birthday with a dinner. It was a joy as God has blessed her with vibrant health and a clear mind! She can be reached at 105 Inglewood Dr., Wetaskiwin, AB T9A 2Y3.

ALONG THE TRAIL:



Rev. Larry and Sally Neufeld moved from Tacoma, Washington, to Sacramento, California, in June. They can be reached at 7436 Golden Stars Way, Sacramento, CA 95829.

Their other contact information remains the same: revneuf@comcast.net and (253) 318-3158.

Myrl and Virginia Thiesies moved from Hood River to Dallas, Oregon, in July. They pastored NAB churches in the Washington and Oregon area for many years before retiring near family on the Columbia River at Hood River. They have now returned to Virginia's hometown, which is where they pastored many years ago. You can reach them now at 310 W. Ellendale Ave, Apt. 119, Dallas, OR 97338, (509) 768-4951, or mvthiesies@gmail.com.

Dr. David T. Priestley has moved to an apartment to be near to his wife, Janet, who is in an assisted living care facility. He had been in the pastorate for twelve years, as well as serving on association and conference committees. He was professor of Theology and Church History at Taylor University in Edmonton, Alberta, from September 1982 until December 2004. He has written academic articles for theological and historical journals, as well as for *The Baptist Herald*. Janet managed the NAB college bookstore during David's early years on the seminary faculty. His new address is #407, 2755 – 109 St. NW, Edmonton, AB T6J 5S4. His email address remains the same: priest44@telus.net.

Wilfred Weick, his two daughters, and other family members traveled to Japan in May to attend the fifty-year celebration of the start of Nagoya Inokoishi Christian Church. They were instrumental in starting this church. They spent a great weekend in Nagoya seeing many friends and others, as well as seeing various parts of Japan. You can reach Wilfred Weick at jtweick@gmail.com.



Ron and Joan Stoller, your *Servant Link* information gatherers, have been on the road this summer collecting information for this *Servant Link*.

While driving a carload of seniors to the NAB Retired Workers' Retreat in Sumas, Washington, in early May, Ron had a gall bladder attack that resulted in surgery on May 24. The doctor stopped Ron from driving to Minnesota in June, but by July he was recovered enough to drive over 8,000 miles the rest of the summer for two trips to Minnesota. Many NAB retired people were seen during these trips. In December 2019, Ron and Joan plan to return to Japan for six weeks to fill in for a missionary in Tokyo for the holiday season and then attend a big celebration in January at their last church plant in Japan. Keep the information coming to our computer, and we will let you know more NAB family news in the next edition of *Servant Link*: Stoller@Japan.email.ne.jp.

IT'S GOOD TO GET TOGETHER:

Various cities in North America with many retired NAB workers have quarterly or monthly luncheons or coffee times. This is a time of great encouragement, prayer, information sharing, and discussions of what is new with our conference. We encourage you to call another retired NAB person in your town and have coffee or a meal with them. This gathering could grow from two people to a large group that would encourage many. Reach out to the shut-ins in your area who can't drive. Let us know how your local group is growing. Have your mini gatherings now as you anticipate the 2021 Triennial conference in St. Paul, Minnesota. Keep the Stollers informed of these gatherings at Stoller@Japan.email.ne.jp.

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beautiful and all too short. I soon ran out of questions, and lacking any prompting from the outside, he was uninclined to spend the drive in conversation. Even so, in the years since he passed, this small segment of a long drive has become my most cherished memory of my grandfather.

Stories play an important role in solidifying relational ties. This telling and retelling of group stories not only act as the glue that holds the group together but it also anchors each person within the narrative of the larger family or group. As Bruce Feiler notes in his 2013 article, “Many groups use what sociologists call sense-making, the building of a narrative that explains what the group is about,” whether that’s a high school senior telling a freshman which teachers are the best, a corporal giving a new recruit a tour of the local Army museum, or a new believer taking a church membership class.

Like any group, the North American Baptist Conference has a narrative that we tell and retell ourselves. We are a family of churches that began in Philadelphia in the mid-1800s, with roots in the German Baptist tradition. Since our beginning, we

have had a heart for international missions. We are proudly bi-national, with churches in the United States and Canada. We understand that God has called us as His people to live as a sign, servant, and foretaste of the Kingdom of God in our neighborhoods and cities.

This is who we are as the NAB; we are also so much more. The stories we share in publications like *Onward* and *Servant Link*, as well as during gatherings like Triennial, association meetings, and the yearly Sumas retreat, bind us together and cement these familial ties.

For those who regularly attend these gatherings and contribute to *Servant Link*, continue these good works of deepening the relational bonds around the NAB. For those who are not gathering or contributing, consider attending or establishing a local luncheon of retired – or non-retired – NAB workers, or think up a new way to build up and maintain connections around the NAB. After all, there’s no one better at telling our story than those of us who continue to live it every day.

This publication connects retired NAB workers with one another, with the NAB, and with God.

Please let us know about your changes, celebrations, prayer concerns, particular interest in any area of conference ministry, and resources you have discovered to make senior life better.

Send updates to Ron & Joan Stoller.

Ron & Joan Stoller 17266 NW Stoller Dr., Portland, OR 97229

Phone: (503) 629-5053 | **Email:** stoller@japan.email.ne.jp



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