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JOHN 8:32

Aug. 31, 2003

Religious beliefs stronger than girl's love of running

By John Warren
Bridgette Sexton of La Centre, Wash., is making a name for herself in the world of high-school athletics. The 17-year-old who was a junior this year at La Centre High School participated in volleyball and basketball but is a state standout in track and field.

Her fast times are not the only thing that has gotten her coaches' and school officials' attention.

Miss Sexton, the daughter of Rex and Patty Sexton, is a member of the United Church of God. The trackster has stuck to her religious convictions and will not run on the Sabbath even though her decision meant not competing in the state-finals meet last May.

Court ruling

Bridgette says she hopes things will change as she enters her senior year in September and a final opportunity to run in the Class 2A state meet.

A recent court ruling favoring Sabbath-keeping athletes in the neighboring state of Oregon gives the athlete some hope (see "Sabbatarian Athletes Win Landmark Oregon Ruling," *THE JOURNAL*, June 30).

Miss Sexton has developed into an outstanding sprinter and middle-distance runner. She has run 400 meters in 58.3 seconds and the 200-meter in 26.4 seconds. She also runs two relays in which she is the fastest runner on the team.

THE JOURNAL asked Miss Sexton how her teammates respond to her religious convictions.

"Sometimes it's disappointing to them, especially on the relays, because I am the fastest runner on my 4-by-4 [four-runner, 400-meter] team, so when I'm not there they don't do as well," she

said. "My other team members often tell me they wished I could participate, and there is some pressure to do so."

"Overall I get a lot of respect for sticking to my beliefs, not only from my teammates but from the community."

Bridgette's times qualified her to participate in this year's 2A state meet, where she turned in a 58.56-second winning time in the 400-meter preliminaries. She also qualified for the finals in her three other events.

Because the state finals run on Saturday, Bridgette did not compete in them, but she hoped her time would hold up as the fastest.

When asked later by this writer if her prelim time did hold up during the finals, Miss Sexton stated, "Yes, and that is exactly what I had prayed for."

Before next year the Sexton family would like to see some changes in the state-meet schedule so Bridgette can run in the finals.

Parents' support

Mr. Sexton, a UCG pastor, said, "We have gone to one of the most respected legal firms in the state, and they will represent us in our case" to force schools to accommodate Sabbath observers in their sports schedules.

When asked if the Oregon ruling would help in the battle, Miss Sexton told *THE JOURNAL*: "It has to be passed by the 12th District Court in California before it will really change anything for the state of Washington. But I do think its presence has helped."

The track star also told this writer: "My religious beliefs and my parents' support have been the foundation of all the blessings that have sprung from my short life. God has truly blessed me and given me some amazing opportunities."



RIGHT ON TRACK—Bridgette Sexton of La Centre, Wash., sprints to the finish line to win the 400-meter race last May at the Class 2A district track-and-field meet at a school in Woodland, Wash. Miss Sexton ran again the next week in a state meet but declined to run in the finals because they took place on the Sabbath. See "Religious Beliefs Stronger Than Girl's Love of Running," beginning on this page. [Photo by Steven Lane, *The Columbian*]

In their spare time, two COG ladies produce Internet-based magazine for Christian women

By Bill Stough
LONEDELL, Mo.—A year and a half ago two Church of God ladies launched a free monthly E-zine (electronic magazine) called *Women in Christ* and trusted God to make it succeed.

The readership of *Women in Christ* (accessible at www.womeninchrist.org) has grown steadily, starting with about 300 page views per month and now up to 3,000 to 4,000 per month. (Each page view is evidence that someone has read an article.)

The two staff members—who began their project in January 2002—are publisher and Webmaster Nancy Vandemark of Labadie, Mo., and

primary writer Scarlett Stough of Lonedell.

Ms. Vandemark and Mrs. Stough alternate their housework and outside-the-home jobs with writing and producing an Internet-based publication designed to help women become more Christlike.

They use current technology to reach people from all backgrounds with an outlay of hardly any money.

THE JOURNAL interviewed Ms. Vandemark and Mrs. Stough (the latter is the wife of this writer).

What to tackle

THE JOURNAL: Why did you decide to tackle this project?

NANCY VANDEMARK: I had been praying about using my talents to serve God. I know where my talents are, and it was difficult for me to see how they could be used.

I think the way things solidified for the E-zine was when I read two articles in *THE JOURNAL*. One was on the work Alan Ruth was doing with biblestudy.org. That article concluded by encouragement from him to get out and do something, anything. [See "King of the COG Web Publishers Says COGs Accomplishing More Than Ever," *THE JOURNAL*, March 30, 2001.]

The second was about a 16-year-old girl who had written a book. See **ARTICLES IN 2001**, page 6

Ex-WCG members affect the Messianic movement

By Dixon Cartwright
BIG SANDY, Texas—The 48-year-old founder of a Hebrew-roots ministry within the Churches of God says former members of the Worldwide Church of God are having a profound effect on the fastest-growing movement in mainstream Christianity.

Rick Richardson, founder of Christian Renewal Ministries International (CRMI) of Auburn, Wash., said that Sabbath- and feast-keeping former WCG members, after the breakup of the WCG beginning in the 1990s, have had a pronounced effect on the Messianic Christian movement.

Messianics are people—some former Jews, mostly former evangelical Christians—who attend "synagogue" each week who have retained or have adopted many trappings of Jewishness, including Torah scrolls, apparel and vocabulary.

"When the Messianic movement began," said Mr. Richardson, who was visiting East Texas as a presenter during the Association for Christian Development's One God Seminars in July, "it was more of a Sunday-keeping, non-holy-day-keeping movement."

But, in the years after the breakup of the Worldwide Church

of God and the influence its members have had upon the Messianic movement, "it is now rare to find a Messianic congregation that isn't Sabbath-keeping and isn't holy-day-keeping."

Ex-WCG members, Mr. Richardson said, "have greatly impacted that particular part of modern-day Christianity."

Festival approach

Mr. Richardson's wife, Susan, cofounder of the CRMI, said even the way Messianics approach the annual feast days is influenced by participants who once worshiped with the WCG.

"We operated a Feast of Tabernacles site at Ocean Shores, Wash., for about five years," she said. "We noticed that those who came from a Church of God background understood more about the reverence that is appropriate on a holy day or a Sabbath than do Messianics who don't have that background."

The Richardsons sense a widespread trend in Christendom of fascination with the Sabbath, feast days, Israel and the Torah.

"There are people in every nation, out of every denomination, all

See **CHRISTIANS**, page 7

Indiana man travels to sing Southern gospel

By Dave Havir
BIG SANDY, TEXAS—The Church of God Big Sandy sponsored Mike Mayfield of Jasonville, Ind., on a trip to Texas and Oklahoma Aug. 23-27. Mr. Mayfield, who attends the United Church of God Terre Haute (not affiliated with the United Church of God headquartered in Milford, Ohio), sang Southern-gospel songs.

On Saturday, Aug. 23, Mr. Mayfield sang six selections of "special music" at the Sabbath service of the host congregation, and the next day he sang 14 songs at the congregation's monthly Sunday brunch.

On Sunday evening Mr. Mayfield visited Crossroads Baptist Church, near Big Sandy, and sang eight songs.

"Although I attend a Church of God congregation, I accept invitations to sing to other congregations as well," Mr. Mayfield said.

On his way home on Wednesday, Aug. 27, Mr. Mayfield sang at a concert in Tulsa, Okla., in the building owned by the Tulsa Church of God, pastored by Lawrence Gregory.

Although that concert spotlighted the sponsoring Fellowship Choir Ministries, choir director Ray Kurr of Mounds, Okla., had invited Mr. Mayfield to sing some songs in the middle of the program. See also "COG Member Sings the Praises of God and Southern Gospel," page 8.

3 Farewell to Gilbert Woody, one of *the* unforgettable characters

5 R.C. Dick writes a follow-up essay on the end time and the place of safety

10 *THE JOURNAL* lists information on hundreds of Feast sites for 2003

24 Garner Ted Armstrong is on the mend while hospitalized with pneumonia

UCG keeps policy of no applause

By Dixon Cartwright
Members of the council of elders of the largest Church of God denomination derived from the Worldwide Church of God decided in August to retain a policy that prohibits applause after special music at Feast of Tabernacles services.

In a meeting Aug. 14, members of the 12-man governing body of the United Church of God an International Association, based near Cincinnati, Ohio, discussed the policy, which dates from 1996, shortly after the church's founding.

Except for music made by children, church policy forbids applause for special music at Feast sites.

To clap or not to clap

In discussing the decision not to clap after special music at the See **UCG GOVERNING**, page 23

Tulsa choir performs its first public concert

By Dave Havir
TULSA, Okla.—Fellowship Choir Ministries of Mounds, Okla., performed a public concert Wednesday, Aug. 27. More than 60 people attended the concert, which took place in the building owned by the Tulsa Church of God.

Fellowship Choir Ministries, comprised of people from various Church of God congregations in the Tulsa area, sings at church services of Sabbath-keeping congregations in Oklahoma and nearby states.

This was the first time for the choir to play host to a concert that was advertised in the secular news media.

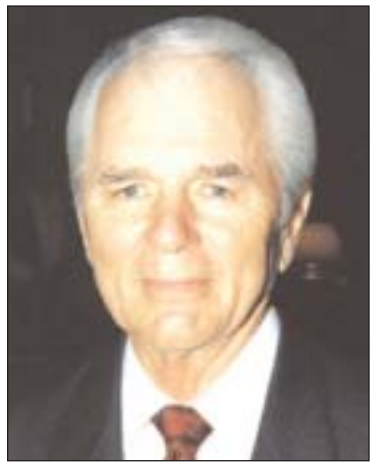
"We have served the community by singing at hospitals, nursing homes and private homes of those who are bedridden," said choir director Ray Kurr of Mounds. "But this is the first time we hosted a concert open to the public. We plan to schedule a concert every six months."

To add variety to this particular concert, Mr. Kurr invited Mike Mayfield of Jasonville, Ind., to perform as a guest soloist.

Members of the choir are David Andrews, Eve Andrews, James Andrews, Ken Barton, Glenda Barton, David Daniels, Diana Davis, Charrie Dugger, Luann Harris, Fran Hope, Maxine Kappel, Brittny Kurr, Natalie Mackey, Derinda Smith and Lucille Smith. The sound technician was Mike Smith.

Garner Ted Armstrong in hospital with pneumonia

TYLER, Texas—Garner Ted Armstrong, 73, founder of the Intercontinental Church of God and the Garner Ted Evangelistic Association, entered a Tyler hospital in late



Garner Ted Armstrong

August for treatment of a severe case of pneumonia.

As of Aug. 31 Mr. Armstrong was showing "improvement," according to a statement from church spokesman Chris Cumming of Redmond, Wash.

"The worst of the situation is

behind him and he is in recovery stage now," Mr. Cumming said. "The next event we are looking to now is him checking out of the hospital for a recuperation at home."

In an official announcement from ICG headquarters dated Aug. 29, Mr. Armstrong's oldest son, Mark, thanked well-wishers for "the outpouring of love, support and concern so many of you have expressed for my Dad and our family."

The younger Mr. Armstrong said his father had made "substantial improvement" since his hospitalization.

Mark Armstrong said he had asked the ICG's pastor at New Orleans, La., Tom Kerry, to travel to Tyler to speak at Sabbath services in the elder Mr. Armstrong's absence.

In a later communique from headquarters, just before the deadline for this issue of *THE JOURNAL*, the younger Mr. Armstrong said his father was "lucid," and his "lung ailment" had "cleared up entirely," although he was still in the hospital. His appetite was returning, and he was gaining strength.

Write Mr. Armstrong and his wife, Shirley, at P.O. Box 747, Flint, Texas 75762, U.S.A., or in care of Mr. Cumming at sunshiner@worldnet.att.net. When E-mailing, include "Greetings to Mr. Armstrong" or equivalent wording in the subject line.



WEDDING—Tom Kerry, pastor of the New Orleans, La., congregation of the Intercontinental Church of God (left), poses with newlyweds Mark Stellpflug and Jordana Estelle Hall Stellpflug. Mr. Kerry performed the ceremony at ICG headquarters near Tyler, Texas, Aug. 30. Mrs. Stellpflug is the daughter of Cecilia Reece Hall of Flint, Texas, and David Hall and granddaughter of Cecil and Opal Reece of Flint. Mr. Stellpflug is the son of Leon and Jolene Stellpflug of Paris, Texas. [Photo by Cindy Burson]



ENGAGING—Texans David Havar of Big Sandy and Diana Ragland of Lindale announce their plans to marry in May 2004. Miss Ragland is the daughter of Charles and Janet Ragland. Mr. Havar is the son of Dave and Pam Havar. [Courtesy photo]

Notes and quotes

Journal staffer under the weather

LONEDELL, Mo.—A frequent writer for *THE JOURNAL* learned Aug. 22 he has a massive blood



Bill Stough

clot in a leg. Bill Stough, whose latest article for this newspaper begins on page 1 of this issue, spent three days in St. Joseph Medical Center in Kirkwood, Mo., but is back home and back at work as a self-employed electronics technician, even though his doctor said his situation is still serious.

The Stough family and *THE JOURNAL* request your prayers for Mr. Stough's recovery.

Free calendar calculator

FARMINGTON HILLS, Mich.—Alan Ruth of Barnabas Ministries and the Biblestudy.org Web site has located a free program designed to print a "detailed Holy Day calendar, with dates, for any year you want!"

Access the program at <http://BibleStudy.org/hdcal/hdcal.html> or <http://www.cbccg.org/Calendar/index.html>.

287 more lessons

IRVINE, Calif.—Mordakhai Joseph and Dale Stogner, both of Irvine, announce the completion of 287 new lessons about the New Testament, each 45 minutes long, as part of a continuing "Teaching the Law" instruction series.

Mr. Stogner said the series includes 434 lessons so far, which are available as downloads in MP3 format and as cassette tapes or CDs for "a nominal charge" to cover expenses.

For the MP3 files visit www.biblesabbath.org. For the tapes or CDs write the Bible Sabbath Association, 3316 Alberta Dr., Gillette, Wyo. 82217, U.S.A.

Big Sandy invitation

BIG SANDY, Texas—The board of trustees of the Church of God Big Sandy offered the use of the church's building to New Zion Baptist Church of Winona, Texas, after the collapse of New Zion's roof last month.

The seven board members voted unanimously to invite New Zion to use the Sabbath-observing church's facilities every Sunday morning until the Winona congregation could repair its building or find new facilities.

However, after church member Wayne Weese of Big Sandy contacted the New Zion group, he reported back that the church had already made arrangements to meet elsewhere.

Corner on creation

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind.—A new book called *Creation Corner* is available for the asking from C. Frazier Spencer at (317) 859-

0391, frazier@corecomm.net or 7534 Inverness Dr., Indianapolis, Ind. 46237, U.S.A.

Mr. Spencer compiled the volume from eight articles he wrote for two Sabbatarian Christian publications, *Servants' News* and *Sabbath Sentinel*.

Mr. Spencer, a Sabbath-keeper since 1964 and a retired mortgage banker, is a voracious reader with a special interest in science and nature.

His series of articles began as a legacy project for his grandchildren.

ABC nears year's end

MILFORD, Ohio—The United Church of God reports its Ambassador Bible Center completed its fourth school year Aug. 10 with the graduation of 41 students.

According to the August issue of *United News*, faculty member Gary Antion said the class of 2003 was one that "distinguished itself by being attentive in class and by being service oriented."

The next ABC term begins in January.

New phone church?

CARSON CITY, Nev.—Dean Neal, known for his fiery preaching in *CONNECTIONS*, the advertising section of *THE JOURNAL*, announces he is thinking about starting up his telephone-based Sabbath services again.

Here is part of Mr. Neal's forthright statement to *THE JOURNAL*:

"If enough true saints who are tired of putting up with greedy, thieving, tithe-demanding false ministers would like a Sabbath conference phone hookup, they can write or phone me."

To cast your vote for Mr. Neal's wired church, write him at P.O. Box 20496, Carson City, Nev. 89721, U.S.A., or phone him at (775) 882-3510.

The date of the Passover

LOVELAND, Colo.—For a free booklet by David R. Kenders of Word of Truth Ministry on the timing of the Passover, write him at 7411 WCR 24H, Loveland, Colo. 80538, U.S.A., or drkenders@myexcel.com. Or phone (970) 667-6616.

In *Passover: A Set Time and Date*, Mr. Kenders cites five passages in the New Testament to argue for his view that the Passover comes early on Nisan 14.

The subject of the dating of the Passover is too important "to risk hearing Yahshua say depart from me, I don't know you," said Mr. Kenders.

Mr. Kenders distributes several other booklets and tapes, by himself and by John Trescott of Anadarko, Okla.

TV negotiations

TYLER, Texas—The Church of God International reports it is negotiating for broadcast time on a national television network. A news release said the church "hope[s] to have exciting news within the next few weeks." Visit the CGI on the Web at www.cgi.org.

WCG-roots reunion meets again in N.C.

PINE LEVEL, N.C.—For the fifth year, present and former Worldwide Church of God members got together for a reunion, this year thanks to sponsors Neal Brantley of Clayton, N.C., and Fred Toole of Smithville, N.C.

This year's event took place Aug. 17 at an American Legion building with an estimated 300 participants.

"This was a day of fun, food and fellowship with people who became a part of each other's lives over many years of attending Worldwide and other COG organizations," said Mr. Brantley.

"This is an opportunity of visiting and sharing time together without the pressure of church. This is an inclusive party. The invitation is written to include everyone."

Mr. Brantley said many people, perhaps 20 percent of those who came, were attending the reunion for the first time.

The reunion targets WCG members and former members who attended congregations in North and South Carolina and Virginia beginning in the 1960s.

"We are already planning for next year," Mr. Brantley said.

Mr. Toole and his wife, Betty, provided beef that was cooked the night and morning before and "chopped and seasoned on site," said Mr. Brantley.



REUNION—Attending the Aug. 17 reunion of present and former WCG members in Pine Level, N.C., are (from left) Nathan McMorris, Susan Shigehara McMorris, Mike McMorris and Jason McMorris. This was the fifth such reunion in the area. [Photo courtesy Don and Margaret Blevins]

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