Reflections from the First Editor of Chaplaincy Today

William G. Justice

When I was a boy, each time my family visited my father's sister, at first sight, my aunt would place her hands on her hips, look down, smile and say, "My, how you have grown!" When a chaplain in the hospital from which I retired showed me a recent copy of Chaplaincy Today, I did not say, "My how it has grown," but I did smile and think, "Wow! This looks great! What wonderful growth!" Then I read some articles and marveled at the quality of the whole issue.

Chaplaincy Today began as a newsletter for the old College of Chaplains of the American Protestant Hospital Association—or had the parent organization already changed its name to the American Protestant Health Association? (The passing of a lot of years and my age have dimmed my memory. I am seventy-four now.)

When no one else volunteered to edit the newsletter, I accepted the task. I had written a little book that many chaplains were using at the introductory training level of CPE titled Don't Sit on the Bed: A Handbook for Visiting the Sick. I had also written a couple of other books and several articles for periodicals.

I assumed chaplains would write articles related to various facets of their ministry and submit them to me. Then I would do some minor editing and publish them in our newsletter. (Editors are expected to edit.) When only a few brief pieces came in, I began scanning various sources for fresh, up-to-date materials in which I thought my peers would be interested. Scrounging for materials was time-consuming, which always added pressure to meet deadlines.

Chaplains across the country seemed reasonably happy with the newsletter, but a good publication needs more than one writer-editor. You now have a good editor, but she cannot produce Chaplaincy Today alone; so "keep them cards and letters comin' in." Your ministry at the bedside keeps you on the cutting edge of pastoral care. Attendance at any national convention proves that chaplains are eager to learn from one another. What you learn in your ministry, pass on so that your peers can take advantage of your experience. We never find time to write. We have to steal it from something else that is important. (Sermon complete. Amen!)

For the sake of a few "old timers" who remember me, I'll tell you that I am well. As you might suspect, I preach occasionally. At my church, I conduct a weekly Bible study for senior citizens and work in the homebound ministry. I also try to find time to build furniture in my woodworking shop. I'm still writing, Jesus' Silent Years: Exploring Facts the Gospels Do Not Tell Us and God in the Hands of Angry Sinners were published this year. A Guidebook for Visiting the Sick: More Than a Social Call is scheduled for September of 2005. I would like to hear from you.

William G. (Bill) Justice, DMin, DPhil, D.Litt, BCC retired, may be contacted at wg_justice@comcast.net