

Colleagues from Long Ago, but NOT Forgotten

First Draft

It was about two weeks ago, for some reason I had a flashback to a colleague that I used to team teach with about 40 years ago in a teacher education class of some sort. I still can't think of the school that sponsored this class, and at the time, I couldn't even remember my colleague's name. The next day, my colleague's name came back to me! It was Dale Brushwood. When I looked up Dale's name, I found his obituary from 2017! Then I began to think about another colleague, a young man that used to live in Mt. Dora while we still lived at Lake Ola in the early 1970s. We both taught at then Seminole Junior College, and we used to carpool together. He only taught at Seminole for a year or two, then he moved on, probably to a better job. However, I could not remember his name—that is, not until the next day, when it seems the Lord brought Jan Lederman's name back to my memory. When I searched the internet, I found another obituary from 2020, but I wasn't sure if this was the same person that I knew 50 years ago! When I posted a comment on Jan's Obituary page, I immediately received 2 replies confirming that, sadly, this was indeed the correct Jan Lederman. I also seemed to remember that Jan was of the Jewish faith, a fact that was confirmed on the obituary page.

I replied to these two contacts I had received, mentioning that I had retired in 2007, and that I had left a lot of Math resources on my website. I also mentioned that in my retirement I had also posted my favorite Bible verses, some stories from my own life experiences, and some Dahlia pictures that I had taken.

The responses that I received about the website were so positive, they got me so excited that without thinking of my audience, I launched an all-out Email blitz to these people explaining that the most important pages on the website and my favorite pages of all were not even math, but rather the Apologetics (Defense of the Faith!) Bible pages. The crown jewel of the whole website is the page called "Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus!" I completely forgot that the recipients of these Email were most likely Jewish! I must admit that when it comes to the topic of "JESUS," I am not ashamed! My only concern was that if the messenger gets "shot," then an opportunity will be missed to minister, to share the most important word in my vocabulary with someone who needs to hear it!

Immediately I knew what I must do! I must write at least a paragraph or perhaps a whole page explaining my own strong beliefs and strong support of Israel and the

Jewish community. I should explain, but NOT apologize for, my own strong beliefs in and focus on Jesus. Surely, they would understand. I also thought I should contact someone with experience in the Messianic Jewish community and our cousin Irma Williams who served for a lifetime as a missionary around the world, lest I do any more damage through misunderstanding to people that I really cared about.

Meanwhile, did you notice the irony of my search for colleagues from 40 or 50 years ago resulting in two obituaries within the last 5 years? My colleagues from long ago are in a population that probably does not have a lot of time left on this Earth. At the age of 77, I am well into this population myself—my own years are limited. I had a great career blessed by my Heavenly Father enabling me to teach math “in living color” (instead of white chalk on a black board!). Sometimes I compare my “math in living color” to Joseph’s “coat of many colors” given to Joseph by his father Jacob to show how special he was (Genesis 37:3). I am blessed to have spent my life and career satisfied knowing that I was doing what the Lord called me to do. Some of my Russian associates seemed envious, calling it my “God Task!” Like Joseph’s brothers, many of my own colleagues did not have this satisfaction. As we face the end of our lives, a need for prayer and reconciliation with the issues of life and death becomes a priority for all of us. In my own life, the section on the website about Bible Verses and especially the Apologetics Pages are certainly more relevant and important to me than Mathematics Section that I posted years ago. Our priorities in life change as we age. Perhaps in our “old age” some of my colleagues might be interested in seeing Jesus in a new light. After all, He is THE Light! Did He really rise from the dead? There is logical and historical evidence of this! The Bible declares that Jesus is Lord of all (Philippians 2: 9-11), and He is Worthy (Revelation 5:12). This is a special message to my colleagues from long ago, to my “brothers” in our latter years of life: Please don’t leave the Earth without knowing the real Jesus and what He did for all of us on that cruel Roman cross!!

[Return to homepage](#)

Dr. Robert J. Rapalje, Retired
Seminole State College of Florida
Altamonte Springs Campus
Email: rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com