

## 1000 WAYS

*No baby carriage in all of Indiana ever went through what one did.*

**Josephine Cunnington Edwards**

The year Bill was 10, baby Josephine was born, the last child in the Cunnington family of 10 children. Only two years before, in 1902, Mother, Father, and sisters Anne and Ethel had been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the clear, cool waters of Buck Creek.

Bill worked in the family store and Father gave him 50 cents a week. Bill willingly returned 5 cents to the Lord. He had a happy, outgoing personality and loved to share, so he would take another 25 cents of his hard earned money and spend it on little ragged town urchins who never got a treat unless he bought it for them.

Father bought something new when Josephine came along—a baby carriage with a big umbrella and a delicate fringe. Bill, curly-headed and lively, studied it with a deep interest.

“Mom, can I take baby sister for a ride?” he asked eagerly.

“Indeed you cannot!” she exclaimed.

“I know who tore up the last one. Poor little Chet. I’m sure you dumped him out a dozen times before the buggy was so torn up it could no longer hold him.”

“Oh Mother, I’ll be real careful,” Bill vowed with his life. “I’ll take good care of the baby, too.”

After much coaxing, he finally persuaded his kind-hearted mother. With one more “Now mind you, Bill, no rough handling of the baby or carriage,” he sauntered off at a slow, even pace—as long as he was in Mother’s sight.

Now Bill didn’t mean to disobey. He had no intention of destroying anything and felt certain that he could have fun without causing any harm. But out of Mother’s sight, no baby carriage in all of Indiana ever went through what that one did. It careened down a steep hill in McCullough’s Park, it leaned dangerously on two wheels as it sped around the corners. It was as if Bill was going to a fire, and all the while the baby Josephine bumped along, shrieking with joy. At last a rumpled but happy baby would return with Bill lumbering along behind. The carriage lasted at least six months.

The Cunnington children had faithfully attended the public school in tow. It was “those wonderful American schools” that had caused Grandfather and Grandmother to leave England and sail for America. But now Father had second thoughts. “We really ought to send the children to that church school,” he said to Mother one day.

“To that one-roomed school in the back of the church where only one teacher teaches all eight grades?” Mother asked incredulously. “It stands to reason,” she fumed, “that one teacher can’t do as good a job as eight teachers can do in the Jackson school!”

It did stand to human reason, but Mother had forgotten that God’s ways are not our ways. Father consented reluctantly. After all, Mother’s brothers were lawyers, teachers and ministers. She ought to know.

But things did not turnout, as Mother had been sure they would. Petite, pretty Anne learned to dance in school. Esther became close friends with a worldly young man. And curly-headed, amiable Bill? Under the steps of the fine Jackson school, Bill learned to smoke and swear. And he and his friends would wander into a nearby saloon where rough men who gambled and drank their lives away gave the boys sips of hard liquor. Bill soon got to feeling so careless and rebellious that he came to hate the Sabbath school and all that had to do with religion.

“This child is going to church school!” Father declared firmly when pudgy little Chester turned 6 years old. Father stamped his foot to add emphasis and finally. “The *Testimonies* tell us over and over to send our children to church school if we want them to stay in the truth!”

A tear glistened in Mother's eye. Anne had already run off to Ohio and was on the stage as an actress and dancer. Esther had married a raucous young man who loved theaters and billiard tables more than anything else. In fact, all eight of the older children had become dissatisfied with religion and drifted away from the church. It caused their parents unspeakable anguish.

So little Chester and Josephine went to the tiny old one-room school behind the church sanctuary. In that little room the first four grades got a preview of what they had learned before. The older students helped the younger ones.

When Chester and Josephine graduated from the eighth grade, they went to the academy at Cicero. Chester went on to nursing school and met a Christian nurse whom he married. Josephine went to Emmanuel Missionary College, where she met her minister husband, and the two later went as missionaries to the world-famous Malamulo Mission.

Through the years, Mother and Father prayed for their wayward children, pleading with God to bring them back to Him somehow. But the years passed and the two went to their rest with their prayers seemingly unanswered.

Bill became a money clerk for the American Railway Express. Though a beloved and trusted worker for many years, he did not love the Lord. It just didn't seem possible that Bill would ever change. There was no room in his busy, prosperous life for God.

But God has "a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing."

Josephine loved her brother Bill. He'd always treated her so special. Now she clung to the "thousand ways" promise, though it seemed to be a hopeless situation.

All during those years in Africa, Josephine prayed for her brothers and sisters. Often she would write in her diary, *Prayed and fasted for Bill today*. But how could the Lord possibly change someone who was so deeply taken over by the world? Oh yes, God has a thousand ways—a thousand ways when we can't even think of one. Again she found comfort and encouragement to keep praying.

While in Africa, Josephine's husband contracted the dreaded Blackwater Fever. He was gravely ill and almost lost his life, but God spared him. However, they finally returned home because of his health. Not many years after that, he died.

Josephine received a phone call from Bill before her husband's Funeral. "I won't be coming to the service," Bill told her. "I just can't stand it. I loved Lowell too much. He's one of the two men I know will be in heaven."

"Why, Bill," his sister exclaimed, "who is the other one?"

"Our father, of course."

Right then Josephine received a ray of hope that carried her through the next hours of the deepest gloom. She had no idea that such things ever entered Bill's mind. She would definitely keep praying for him.

Josephine had helped her husband with his churches the few years of his life. Now her entire way of life would be changed. Numbly she finished her year of teaching, not knowing what she'd do next. Before she had a lot of time to think about it, the telephone rang. "I have a church with no pastor. Will you help me out?" asked her kind conference president who knew the anguish she still felt.

"No, no, I cannot do such a thing," she said flatly. "I can never speak or write again. The way is so dark ahead. It seems that I just can't do what I used to do."

"Oh, yes you can," he returned with finality. "Why, you preached in one of Pastor Lowell's churches every Sabbath. The best thing for you to do is get to work. Remember," he assured her cheerfully, "you must carry a double load now that Lowell has laid down his burden. You can begin at the Athens church next Sabbath. It's the beginning of the Week of Prayer."

The receiver clicked. He wouldn't take no for an answer.

*Oh, dear. What did he just say? The Week of Prayer? Why, how Lowell and I used to enjoy getting ready for that,* Josephine pondered. *We visited all the members so they'd come and bring their problems to*

the Lord. *Let's see, what would the theme be? This is too short of a notice! I could never be ready,* she thought.

On the drive to Athens the next Sabbath morning, Josephine again thought of the many Weeks of Prayer she and her husband had conducted together, and of the many answers to prayers that had come as a result. *Why, it was once for poor sick Mrs. Rickard. Then it was for the Halsey boys. Oh, who can I suggest this time?* She thought

Then a happy thought struck her. *Why not Bill?!* She would put Bill's two most terrible habits—tobacco and liquor—before the church. If these were overcome, then she'd have more courage to pray that he would actually come to the Lord.

The little church was crowded, for it was a novelty to have a woman pastor, and many came just out of curiosity. "Before we start our Week of Prayer," Josephine began, "I want to tell you a story." Then she told the story of kind, impulsive, bighearted Bill. "He'd give you his last penny or his best coat," she told the congregation. "He'd do anything to help anyone who needed help, yet he does not love the Lord. Today I want us to pray for his release from tobacco and alcohol. That will be a mighty miracle, for every one of the trillion of cells his body is saturated with those compelling poisons. Only God's grace can break the terrible hold Satan has on him. Yet it is possible, for he was bought by the blood of Jesus. He can be free!"

She paused. Every eye was upon her. "I do not know this church," she continued. "There may be feuds, injustices, and misunderstandings. The Holy Spirit cannot come where these things exist. Our prayers would go no higher than the ceiling. So let's first pray for cleansing of ourselves so that God's Spirit may come in. If you need to, go and ask someone's pardon. If you hear the floor squeaking, don't look up unless you must go squeak it yourself."

As the congregation knelt that day, many people began tiptoeing here and there. When the prayers were over, it seemed as if everyone in church had changed places. The sweet influence of God's Spirit rested in that room as never before.

All that week the Athens church family prayed for Bill. The next Tuesday a letter came from Tampa, Florida, from Bill's wife, who had become a Christian through the Voice of Prophecy.

*Josephine are you praying specially for Bill?* The letter read. *He just burned all his tobacco and poured out all his liquor today. I just couldn't believe my eyes "Can you stand it?" I asked him timidly, hardly able to speak.*

*"I will stand it!"* he exclaimed stoutly. *"I will if it kills me!"*

The desire left Bill completely, and he never touched either one again. This direct answer to prayer gave Josephine all the more courage to pray that her brother would give himself completely to the Lord. A few weeks later she moved to Idaho, where she would teach in the academy. Very early on Sunday morning her phone rang. It was Bill's wife, and she was weeping softly.

"I could not write this to you," she managed, her voice breaking. "It's too wonderful. You're still praying, aren't you?"

"Oh yes, without ceasing," Josephine assured her. "Heaven will be too beautiful for Bill to miss. I love him so much, and I just can't stand the thought of having him miss out."

"Our prayers are answered," Mary wept. Then she related this story. She'd been cleaning in the kitchen earlier that morning when she heard a strange noise in the living room. Looking around the corner, she saw to her alarm that Bill was weeping.

"What is the matter?" she gasped running to his side. "Bill, what in the world is the matter?"

At first he could not answer. He just sat there and continued to weep. Then he looked at Mary with streaming eyes.

"I know it wasn't a hallucination! I *know* it was real! It had to be," he said in a voice strangled with tears.

"What was it?" Mary asked.

Bill took a long, deep breath and with great effort tried to speak again.

"Mary, call your Adventist pastor, and while he is on the way over, I will try to tell you what has happened to me."

When Mary returned, Bill said weakly and reverently, "I was sitting here reading. Suddenly I heard the door open behind me. 'Who in the world is coming into my house without even knocking?' I thought, and turned to look."

"Oh Mary!" He covered his face with his hands. "I saw Him. I saw Him. He spoke to me. I can hardly believe it. Oh, Mary it was the Lord. I knew Him by His scarred hands. He was lovelier than any picture I have ever seen. I couldn't take my eyes from His wonderful face, Mary. He put His hands on my knee and in the sweetest voice that I have ever heard, He said, 'Bill, I have a favor to ask of you.'"

"Anything! Anything, Lord," I told Him. "Oh, Mary, if you see the Lord, you won't refuse him Him. You just can't."

"Then the Lord said to me, 'Bill I have a great deal of work to do before I come again. Take you, for instance. I have more than fifty years of prayers to answer for you alone! Your father and mother lay down in their dusty beds never expecting to see you in the kingdom. I want them to see Me put a crown on your head. I want to see how happy they will be.'"

By then Bill was again trembling and weeping like a child. The very fact that Jesus loved him enough to come to him as He had done Paul to conquered the spirit of carelessness, rebellion, and misunderstanding that had filled his life for so many years.

Bill has gone to sleep in Jesus now. It won't be long until Jesus calls, "Gabriel! Gabriel! Gather the angles! All the thousands and thousands of them. Today I will go claim my own!"

The whole atmosphere will then fill with angels, and such music that no mortal has ever heard will ring through the heavens as they travel to earth for the precious souls who learned to know Him.

At that time Josephine plans to meet her dear mother and father and all her brothers and sisters. She is eager to see Jesus put that glorious crown on brother Bill's head in the presence of her parents, whom Jesus wished to give a grand surprise.

What amazing miracles. While Josephine could not think of even *one* way, the Lord and Master had a thousand ways! He still does, and wants to use them to save all of us.