

Mainstream



John William Johnson

TV preachers lack examples of virtue

Da Vinci's wood working shop would not sit well with Felix Unger. It's dusty, neatly cluttered and housed in a large, unpainted, inside or out, building more than 100 years old.

"I can almost see the trains which used to be repaired here," he says and if this building could talk."

"Speaking of talking," his assistant Splinters adds, "I saw the movie 'Elmer Gantry' last night see it?"

"No," I replied, "but I did see it about a year ago."

Remembering that now, I would never have thought that real life Gantrys would ever be seen on the scale they are today, much less be memorialized in the tearful faces of electronic ministers such as Jimmy Swaggart and Jim and Tammy Baaker.

"Do you guys watch any of those television preachers?" I wondered.

Da Vinci shows his version of contempt by waving away the question. "I don't watch them, but any faithful person wants to forget that many of these guys have failed the test of their own moralizing even while, and according to every survey on the subject, we continue to hold ourselves out as

a moral people, even while church attendance drops, and situational, even cynical ethics, are taught daily by example to our children, both at home and at large."

"You guys just don't know great entertainment when you see it," says secretary Dusty. "No one can cry with more flair than Jimmy Swaggart."

"He still on?"
She nods, red hair falling into her eyes.

Still, and with all those who continue to watch the various electronic church offerings, never before in the relatively brief history of the electronic church have so many who believed had so many doubts.

"That's because it has now become clear that exploitation of gullible Christians has become the rule in the electronic church," says Da Vinci. "And that's nothing new," he adds. "Throughout history, charismatic cult and/or religious leaders have been exploiting gullible followers. What's new is that never in history have no many been able to be exploited by so few. And that's because television touches millions of lives with the flick of a switch. Imagine what would have happened had Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin had access to the electronic media available today."

"Or what would Father Coughlin in the 1930's have been able to do in this country?" Dusty wonders.

Do electronic ministries really fulfill a personal need on a long-time basis? Can they, when there is no local visitation, no church nearby, no minister nearby, no group organization in the community to help in times of illness, or hunger, or family crisis of any kind? If followers don't know the "star" personally, as they know their local minister and his family or priest, can they really know whether or not he is a swinger conning them for cash rather than a moral example to be followed?

Those are questions many of the faithful gullible are now asking. It's a question millions have also asked about charities boosted on television. Every hour or so on the tube, especially at night, a film or other personality suddenly appears with a fine-sounding charity appeal, perhaps for hungry children.

Send money is always the appeal.

"Before anyone sends money, they should think about it," Da Vinci says. "And then don't send it. Spend it at home helping those whom you can see it helps."

With both charity and ministry, money should be donated to a cause or organization whose objectives are clearly stated, whose books are open to all, and which is located where the donor can observe what, in fact, is happening.

"But they can send me a few bucks," Da Vinci smiles.



POST PHOTO/CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK

Bookmark winners

Winners of the Back Mountain Memorial Library bookmark contest were announced last week. Justin Baloh, right, a seventh grader at Lake-Lehman, won first place overall in the county. His bookmark design will be printed and will be available in all Luzerne County libraries. Shown with him is another local winner, Eileen Reinert, a third grader at Lehman-Jackson Elementary. A third local winner, Sara Trosky, who is home schooled in the third grade, was absent from the photo. The contest was held for National Library Week.

LIBRARY NEWS



Antiques chance tickets now available

The antique committee of the Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction is selling chances for three antique items. First prize is a cherry-one-drawer stand; second, an art deco-style lamp (bronze finish); and third prize is an English Brass Watering can. These chances sell for \$1.00 each and they can be purchased at the information desk in the library. The items are on display in the lobby of the library.

The 50th auction will be held July 11-14 and will feature the children's auction again on Saturday, the 13th from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday evening at 9:00 a very special 50th library auction ceremony will be held on the auction grounds.

The Book Club met on May 20 in the community room. A special guest was Kathy Wert, daughter of member Gene Wert, from Florida. A discussion on new books was held. The next meeting will be Monday, June 17 at 1:30 in the community room. Members and guests are invited.

The summer story hours will be taking registrations from June 3-7, at the library. Toddler, 2 year olds, will be Tuesday evenings, June 25 till August 6 from 7 to 7:30 p.m. Three to five year olds will be held Wednesdays June 26 through August 7, 9:30 to 10:30; 10:45 to 11:45; and 1 to 2 p.m. The story hours are held in the children's room.

New books at the library: "The Magnificent Savages" by Fred Mustard Stewart is a thrilling saga of passion, adventure, treachery,

and heroism. It is the story of the handsome, illegitimate son of a leading shipping magnate.

"Fear" by Anatoli Rybakov is a stunning account of Stalin's purges. It brings alive a generation and a nation on the brink of self-destruction. A young man is sent into Siberian exile after an impolitic remark.

"Timepiece" by Richard Paul Evans traces the lives of David and MaryAnne Parkin as they discover love, loyalty, and the power of forgiveness. In the darkest skies, stars are best seen. This is the story of "Timepiece"

"Anything Considered" by Peter Mayle is a joyous rollicking caper set on the Cote d'Azur in the luscious landscape of Provence. An English expatriate has abandoned a successful career and found an ideal village to idle in.

Library Auction Corner

For 50 summers, the people of the Back Mountain have come together to donate their goods, services and time to the auction block of the Back Mountain Memorial Library.

The life of the library is a year-to-year proposition, and the auction is crucial to its operation. Twenty-five percent of the annual budget comes from the

auction. This year's 50th annual auction will be held July 10-13 at the library grounds on Huntsville Road in Dallas.

Any and all donations of cash or saleable items can help assure the continued fine service of the library to our communities. For more information, call the library at 675-1182.



July 10-11-12-13

A sampler of items already donated:

- Tuxedo Rental, value \$95,
- Tuxedo Junction
- 2 AAA memberships, value \$68 each, AAA, Dallas
- Floral arrangement, \$40 value, The Craft Room
- Handmade motorcycle helmet, value \$210, Russ Majors

- 3 Gift certificates, value \$100 each, Shavertown Chiropractic
- Golf bag, value \$70, Four Seasons Golf Club
- AM/FM radio, value \$80, Gallery of Sound
- Deck cleaning, value \$225, Aqua Spray
- \$100 cash, Ruth K. Smith Real Estate
- Savings bond, value \$200, Franklin First Bank

Support the Back Mountain Library

One-fourth of the library's annual budget comes from the auction.

You can help. Your donation of an item or money will help your library survive and prosper.

Here's my donation to the Back Mountain Memorial Library

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ City/State _____ Zip _____

I have an item to donate. Call me for details.

Here's a cash donation of \$ _____ to help the library.

Mail or bring to: Back Mountain Memorial Library
96 Huntsville Road, Dallas PA 18612

Call 675-1182 if you have any questions. Donations are tax-deductible.

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