

The Safety Net

National Church Growth Research Center

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"Garbage"

Dear ones,

When Edna Mae and I first moved to Oregon fifteen years ago, we stayed with some friends for a few weeks until we could find a house to rent for ourselves.

One day I had a bag of garbage that I needed to put in the roadside can. But when I went outside it was raining in sheets. I had to go to town anyhow, so I put the garbage sack in the back seat and intended to drop it in the can at the road when I came to it. It was several hundred feet to the road.

Well, you guessed it, I forgot to put the garbage in the can. I didn't realize it until I got to town and was beginning to notice the foul smell.

So now, what to do?

I had to go into Safeway so I decided to just put the bag in one of their dumpsters. They had several. That's what I did, and did it with clean conscience.

A couple of hours later I got home and Edna Mae said someone had called and threatened me. Yep, someone from Safeway. It seems that I had broken the law by dumping garbage into their dumpster, even though it was empty and they had several.

I got back in the car and drove through even worse wind and rain to get to Safeway. On the way there I wondered how they had known it was my garbage. Had they seen me put it there? Why hadn't they said something? Had they taken down my license number? I still had California plates. I had no idea how they had tracked me down.

When I got there, my garbage sack was sitting in front of the dumpster. A manager was standing there, dressed in rain hat and slicker like a commercial fisherman. I couldn't tell if he was tapping his foot, but I think he surely was.

With great irritation he said to me, "You're just lucky I didn't call the police!"

I apologized, told him I had intended no harm, and placed by soaked garbage bag in the trunk.

“By the way,” I asked him, “how did you know this garbage was mine?”

He proudly told me he had opened the bag and rummaged through it until he had found a piece of mail that had been forwarded to me in Oregon. It was sent to me, in care of my host. Sherlock Holmes could not have done a better job of detective work.

Well, I was glad he hadn't called the police. I learned later that there was a \$250 fine for dumping home garbage in a business' dumpster. I was in a tourist town on the Oregon coast and garbage service is expensive and well-regulated. I didn't know any of that. But I certainly never made the mistake again.

My rule is quite simple now, “Don't put garbage in someone else's can!” Any idea where I'm going with this?

I'm recalling this story as it relates to this newsletter. I don't want it to be put in your mailbox if you don't want it!

I add names to my mailing list by request only. And I certainly don't want to keep sending it to anyone who doesn't want it.

So if you don't want it, call me, write me, or email me. Just please don't call the police!

I'll stop it, believe me.

I guess I should tell you why I'm even writing about this. It actually came about, not because of junk mail in the P. O. Box, but TONS of junk mail in my email box!

I know you get it too. And I'm not talking about the letters from foreigners who are willing to give me millions of dollars from hidden trust funds if I will simply help them exchange their fortunes into dollars.

I'm not even talking about the lonely Russian women who are looking for friends or lovers.

I'm talking about good, honest, sensitive people who forward emails that are hoaxes. Of course they think they're true. But they're not. And they get passed around and passed around and passed around. That's one of the downsides of the Internet.

Friends, Madeline Murray O'Hair has been dead for many years! She is NOT partitioning the FCC to get all references to God banned from television!

You are NOT going to have to start paying for telemarketers calling your cell phones if you don't call my number within fourteen days!

You will NOT get a free laptop from Ericsson if you forward a message to your friends, and a little girl named Ashley Flores is NOT missing.

I personally don't think there is lead in lipstick, though I still refuse to use it.

And the Proctor and Gamble people are NOT Satanists.

I could go on.

About a month ago I got a very impressive email concerning the deadly effect that water boiled in microwaves would have on plants. There was technical data about how microwaved water actually had its DNA changed and several scientists' names were listed. It then described a 6th grade science project. It seems that a sixth-grader wanted to check out the quality of water boiled in a microwave. So the student took two identical plants in pots and put them in a location near a window. The plants were exactly alike. But one was watered with water boiled on the stove. The other was watered with water boiled in a microwave. There were very clear pictures of the plants, taken on the first day, 2nd day, etc. through two weeks. It was amazing. The plant watered by microwaved water began to look sickly. Within two weeks it was dead!

So then there was a long discussion on the harm of microwaves and how they hurt humans more than plants. The conclusion was that we shouldn't have one in our house.

I use my microwave daily, and I was concerned about the article. It seemed incontrovertible. But I decided to conduct the experiment myself. I went one further. I took three plants, not two. They were just alike. One watered with microwaved water, one watered with boiled water (after they had cooled down of course) and one watered with tap water that had not been heated by any means.

The result? Nothing. After three weeks, no difference. The plants didn't seem to give a hoot. They just grew and seemed quite oblivious to it all.

So then I went back to the report. It looked so scientific and genuine. I began to research it. I found that it was a hoax knowingly perpetrated by someone who started out with an agenda to frighten people away from microwaves. They had actually doctored up the pictures on Photoshop! It was a planned and manufactured hoax!

I don't know why. I don't know if the person was an underground agent for some toaster oven company, or what. It may have been some well-meaning person who

really thinks microwaves are bad, and decided to save the planet by getting us to throw them away, even if they had to doctor up the facts to convince us.

But I do wish people would check these things out before they send them to everyone in their address book. Look at the urban legends sites, like snopes.com. It's easy to do, and if something really is dangerous, they'll tell you. (Of course they're probably bribed by the microwave people.)

I frankly wish we Christians were looking for good things to tell people, rather than something to make them more afraid than they already are. No wonder we are stereotyped as "alarmists" by some unbelievers.

Please don't get me wrong. There are some things we SHOULD be afraid of, not only spiritually, but physically. Real threats, like overweight, and a sedentary lifestyle. They cause bad things to happen. But living in fear of MSG and genetically engineered tomatoes seems a little far-fetched to me.

I don't think it's healthy to live constantly in the fear mode. I know people who are that way. They're always warning about something, and frowning about something else. I fear them more than a lot of the stuff they're warning about.

I know I'm probably going to make some people mad by saying these things. I'm not trying to do that. I just learned a lesson one time: "Don't put your garbage in someone else's can." It's a lesson I don't want to forget.

Yours in Christ,

Silas Shotwell

P. S.

Oh yes. Don't pay any attention to the fact that today is April Fool's Day and Friday of next week is Friday the 13th! Just microwave some coffee, put in a sprinkle of MSG, and give a toast to Madeline Murray O'Hair. You'll have a laugh, and feel much better.