

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

May 1999

I experienced a transforming moment at our recent inaugural *Genesis Run*. I was inwardly moved in the deep places of my soul. I know you know what I am talking about. I cannot express what I felt. I am simply not that adept at words. I can only use a tired colloquialism when I say, "Something got to me!" It got to the *me* in me. I know you know what I mean.

The race was over. We had run the 3.1 miles wrapped in the 5K euro-package and we were waiting for the awards to be given out. We had all gathered around the stage, all two hundred of us at this exquisitely planned and smoothly run event by The Women of SCR. The winners of a million categories were receiving their one of a kind trophies, each made by a elementary school genius of paper-mache. All of the trophies had been given. All of the fun was over and we were ready to go back home. Then that moment came which reached down inside of me and lifted me to a new level.

Dr. Mike Leonard, who was in his glory handling the M.C. duties like a pro, said, "Wait everybody! We have a request. The girls from our clubs in Cedar Grove want to sing for you." That wasn't on the program. I felt a quick burst of annoyance that *my* time was now being stepped on, but thank goodness it passed like a vapor.

The gaggle of girls, all sizes, all giggles, and all in impromptu disarray, bunched up together around one hand held microphone. Music came from someplace and those twenty plus children began to sing. They sang a song that according to all the reality of our world they had no business singing. And as they sang all of us who heard them were utterly transfixed. I know that their song was more than tune and words. It was true melody. It left their lips and it wound its way inerrantly into my heart and I fully suspect into the hearts of every one who heard them sing.

As the girls sang, the boys of our Cedar Grove clubs had moved to the very front of the stage and they stood beneath the girls as if to say, "Keep singing. Keep singing forever!" A silent strength of encouragement was passed from the girls to the boys and back again from the boys to the girls. *I felt it!!* They were joined in a mutuality that was a *visible oneness* I've only rarely seen on this side of the eternal divide.

Then they were through singing the song they wanted to sing. The song they wanted the world to here. And we heard it. I was so deeply moved that I couldn't move. Neither could anyone else. But the boys from Cedar Grove could move. And they did. Almost by silent cue, prearranged by the angels I'm sure, the girls stepped aside and the boys came on stage.

Here they were. Most of them were on the streets six months ago. Little boys and teenagers together crowded around and stood close, almost huddled against an invisible chill in a world's wind that has blown upon them with nothing but seemingly ill will. And the same music played. Then they started to sing the same song. Now the boys -- So many too young to have the tatoos they sported, so many to have seen the stuff they had seen, and so many who had stopped shedding tears so early that they were dying of old age at fourteen -- the boys sang. If there were any dry eyes around me, I didn't notice. I couldn't notice, because I was remembering why I had been born.

I remembered when Bishop William Friend said to me, "Why don't we take this plan to Cedar Grove and start there?" I remembered when he then made the extraordinary gift to actually launch Shreveport Community Renewal. The Catholic Diocese under his direction gave \$10,000 to fund this protestant pastor. What a symbol of love and trust for our divided world!

As they sang, I remembered that just three years ago Yul Taylor quit his fine job at Arkla Gas and stepped out into Cedar Grove not knowing anyone but supported by Hibernia, Deposit Guarantee, and Bank One, for the following three years at \$10,000 a piece.

Then Carolyn Abner came to Cedar Grove to join Yul. While he touched the youth, she reached the children. Then we built homes for Yul and Gwen his wife and their family, and for Carolyn and William her husband and her family. Broadmoor Baptist Church and The Community Foundation of Shreveport and Bossier gave bricks and mortar to the vision by helping us fund those homes. Those Friendship houses where the children and youth now gather haven't even been there for a year. Houses? I should say "lifeboats." I was remembering and I was seeing an absolute miracle from beginning to end. My soul took wings.

If you would have been there with us and seen those kids and heard their song, you would be writing these words or at least telling someone what you had seen and heard.

*I believe I can fly
I believe I can touch the sky.
I think about it every night and day
Spread my wings and fly away.
I believe I can soar
See me running through that open door
I believe I can fly
I can fly – I can fly
If I just spread my wings
I can fly – I can fly
I believe I can fly!!!!!!!!!!!!*

My dear friends, when some of those kids finished singing they boarded our vans and went back to lives almost surrounded by hell. *Almost?* God's love is there with them, your love and my love is there with them, because His love and our love lives in the touch of Yul and Carolyn. And now those whose lives have known hell are starting to sing!!!! I heard a song and I heard a plea and I remembered why I was born. Amen and amen. Thank you one and all.