

Laying Hold on Freedom

"Lift up a standard for the people" — Isa. 62: 10

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Laying Hold on Freedom

WE ARE TODAY witnessing a great cry for freedom. It seems that people everywhere are demanding freedom: freedom from oppression, freedom from tyranny, freedom from hardship, freedom to think, freedom to speak, freedom to create their own values.

The love of freedom is inherent in every being that the Lord created. It is inherent even in the animal world. Watch the lion or tiger in its cage — see how it pads back and forth — restless, eager for the opportunity to escape and be free.

It is probably safe to say that it has always been the Divine purpose for men to enjoy liberty and freedom, providing that they are subject to the dictates of truth, righteousness, and holiness. But mankind has not deserved the full freedom that God would allow it; mankind is not capable of using freedom for the greatest good. All individuals must respect and submit to the Divine law and cultivate a mutual love and respect for the rights and liberties of their fellow men.

DIFFERING VIEWS OF FREEDOM

Many today have very different ideas of freedom. They are anxious to cast off *all* the restraints that God and man have given them and to pursue a selfish course — a course that is uncaring and without regard for their obligations to God or to the rights of their fellow citizens. Such ideas of freedom have led to much of the trouble we see today. Laws of all descriptions are often viewed as unwarranted infringements on personal liberty. This sentiment is growing rapidly in a world undergoing the transforming influence of "globalization."

Many of the liberties sought after are not wrong in themselves. But there are other freedoms which violate common decency and commonsense, such as the freedom to engage in perverse sexual practices, the freedom to enjoy mind-altering drugs, the freedom (legalization) of prostitution and gambling, the freedom to procure quick and easy abortions, or the right to easy divorce.

These false freedoms are undermining the foundations of society, particularly of those societies once proud of their Protestantism. At this present rate of deterioration in social standards the outlook for mankind's future is dark and ominous. But the outlook is not altogether bleak — at least not to those who have faith in God's Word.

FREEDOM WITHOUT RESTRAINT ENSLAVES

According to the Scriptures, the reasons for the world's condition are plain. Mankind in general has neither a perfect heart nor a perfect mind. The natural man or woman is not readily inclined to love God supremely or their neighbors as themselves. They have not yet learned the two simple, comprehensive commandments that Jesus gave in Matthew 22: 37-39:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Instead, each is selfishly grabbing all the advantages and privileges he or she can obtain, without regard to the rights of others. Certainly there is none truly righteous (Rom. 3: 10). It is true, perhaps, to say that at the present time, in some respect or another, the human family is mentally unbalanced and morally deformed.

How very different will be the code of conduct when God establishes His Kingdom here on earth. We can expect very little improvement in the social condition without Divine aid and intervention. The world will never learn to live righteously and to deal honestly with their fellow men until the Kingdom of God arrives.

SHOUTS OF ALARM

Even so, there *are* men and women in the world who do understand where the present course is leading. Many voices warn of disaster ahead. These calls come, for example, from the environmental movement, the campaign for human rights, or students of the economy.

Then again, there are those who insist that things will continue much as they always have. There were such people in Noah's day. They are identified in 2 Pet. 3: 3-6:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this

they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

The modern variation of this type of scoffer is the atheistic evolutionist who insists that the Flood — and the Divine intervention implied by it — never happened. We do not address such individuals. Rather we point out to the "watchers" — students of prophecy — that the only outcome of the present downward trend is a dissolution of the social order, a necessary precursor to the setting up of God's Kingdom.

We do not predict the date when this Kingdom will be set up, for we do not know. It may be some years yet. It is important for the believer to live each day as carefully and faithfully as possible, walking in the light (1 John 1: 7).

So, where should this world look for help? There is only one answer. Only the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of the human race, the Molder of human emotions — only God Himself has the answer to the global dilemma we face. In His Word He has identified the problem and provided the solution. However, the world in general is not yet ready to accept this.

FREEDOM AND THE CHILD OF GOD

The answer to the general problem begins with the individual. We ourselves as Christians need a new mind. God has promised in His Word to give us a new mind, a mind free from fear and worry, and the confidence to front the future optimistically and with integrity. He will give to us the spirit and disposition of a sound mind, as long as we come to Him in the right way. We read in 2 Tim. 1: 7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." How much we long for a sound mind in the midst of a busy and often confusing world!

In Psa. 25: 9, we read, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." Indeed, He will be with the leadable and teachable who come to Him. This verse does not apply only to those who approach Him in this present life. For the time is coming when the whole human race will be made free from the condemnation of sin and death which now rests upon them — the consequence of Adam's original sin.

Even many of the Lord's people do not actually have freedom in its truest sense. The Lord will only free us from the chains that bind us, *if we will submit ourselves to His care.* Because of Adam's fall — which we have inherited — we were born slaves to sin and, to a greater or lesser extent, servants of Satan. Not until the restitution of all things has been completed (Acts 3: 21) will mankind in general enjoy the precious boon of liberty in its fullest sense. Indeed, the

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chief element of the Gospel message is that Christ is the one who will bring freedom for *all*. This is beautifully expressed in Isa. 61: 1:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

This verse beautifully describes the anointing that our Lord Jesus — the Meekest one — received at His baptism in the river Jordan.

WHAT PRICE FREEDOM?

Has anyone ever had real freedom under Christ? Indeed some have, for the Apostle Paul encouraged the early Church to hold on to their freedom (Gal. 5: 1):

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

At that time, the Jewish Church leaders were trying to pull these prospective Little Flock members back to the Jewish traditions and its bondage under the Law. They were reluctant to lose those who had been transferred from Moses to Christ (John 1: 17). (Also, from the political point of view, the Church's liberties under the Roman empire were in many ways curtailed by persecution.)

Freedom comes with a price. It cost our Lord His life. And if we would be His, He requires a commitment from us.

- Firstly, we must recognize that we are sinners and that we must repent of our sins.
- Secondly, we must acknowledge Christ alone as Savior and King and exercise faith in Him. This brings us justification before God.
- Thirdly, we need to progress beyond the point of simple acceptance to a wholehearted dedication of ourselves to God, through Christ, accepting God's will as our own, and laying aside our fleshly will.

Thus do we become the subjects of another kingdom (John 18: 36). And, in a way, we become the *slaves* of God. As His subjects we must seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. We must serve His cause in whatever capacity He requires (Matt. 6: 33).

"ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO . . . "

In his famous Inaugural Address (January 20, 1961), United States President, John F. Kennedy, said, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." The Christian's attitude must be, to ask not what *we* want to be, to do, to have — but, what does Jesus want us to be, to do, or to have?

If we are His servants, He requires loyalty from us. This is what Jesus refers to as "abiding" in Him (John 15: 5). Loyalty means rendering to Him prompt and loving obedience, rather than questioning His authority or His wisdom. We trust Him because He has proven Himself to be trustworthy; we trust that He is doing a work in us that eventually will deliver us from death. In this way we will be blessed, not only with our own deliverance but with the opportunity to assist in delivering the rest of mankind. As the Apostle Paul expresses it, we are "baptized for the dead" (1 Cor. 15: 29-31). That is to say, the sacrifice made by the Church of Christ in this life was intended to benefit, not themselves only, but those whom they would one day bless. This is a most unselfish thought — that one should prepare oneself well, in order to be of service to others, much as a missionary doctor might undergo long years of training in order to be useful in the field.

This is not an easy task. It is time-consuming, hard, and difficult. But by living for Him, we *will* win real freedom now. And we must be willing and joyful servants of the Most High God — pleasing Him and not ourselves. Satan will try to discourage us and make us think and feel

that our Christian course is more trouble than it is worth. We must resist him. If we do, he will flee (Jas. 4: 7).

FREEDOM FOR THE FUTURE WORLD

After the thousand-year reign of Christ, Satan and his followers, along with death and sin, will be destroyed. They will never again be allowed to mar the face of God's creation. Then men will again be fully entrusted with the precious gift of liberty. This perfect freedom of the entire race requires that each individual behaves toward his fellow men in a brotherly and loving way. This brotherly love when perfected — will develop each individual and serve as a sign that man will have regained the original likeness of God. When man has learned to love as God loves — with the love of unselfishness — it is God's purpose to give to him the fullest liberty to put into practice that loving nature. Since love works no ill to its neighbor, but delights in deeds of kindness and benevolence, the glorious liberty will fill the earth with peace and joy. Can we imagine such a world? Glory to God for such a vision!

And what love will be poured out toward our Lord Jesus! The earth will be full of loving accord — heaven and earth in perfect harmony, love reigning supreme in each human heart. Love is the greatest of all the graces, and it will abide forever (1 Cor. 13: 13).

Each of us falls short of perfection by a long margin. But we may be assured that God loves those who endeavor to please Him and who make themselves available as emptied vessels for His service. He will allow all kinds of experiences to come into our lives so that we may achieve a character like that of our Lord Jesus. He loves those who try to partake of the spirit and mind of Christ as we read in 2 Cor. 3: 17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

* * *

The Trumpet of Jubilee Freedom

In the type, the Trumpet of Jubilee was to be sounded when the Jubilee Year began, to proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto *all* the inhabitants thereof (Lev. 25: 10). The antitype is ushered in with the sounding of the (symbolic) "Seventh Trumpet," the "Trump of God," the "Last Trump." It is indeed the great trumpet: it announces liberty to every captive; and while at first it means the surrender of many expired claims and privileges, and a general time of disturbance and unsettling of usages, habits, etc., its full import, when rightly appreciated, is "good tidings of great joy which shall be unto all people" — The Time is at Hand, Edition of 1914, p. 197, para. 2.

* * *

The spirit of "liberty throughout all the land" is indeed sometimes carried to an unreasonable extent by the ignorant and the hotheaded; and yet it is all part of the great unavoidable Jubilee excitement, occasioned by the ignorance and oppression of the past. None but the Lord's "little flock" is fully and correctly informed as to the grand scope of the Restitution. These see the minor changes, the straightening out of the lesser affairs of men, but they see also what can be seen from no other standpoint than God's Word — that the great enslaver, Sin, is to be shorn of his power, that the great prisonhouse of Death is to be opened and a release presented to each prisoner, signed in the precious blood of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, the great Redeemer and Restorer. Glad tidings indeed it shall be to all people, not only to the living, but also to all that are in their graves. Before the end of this great Jubilee every human being may go entirely free — may get back to man's first estate, "very good," receiving back through Christ all that was lost in Adam — The Time is at Hand, Edition of 1914, p. 199, para. 1.

JESUS

PROPHET, PRIEST, KING — AND SLAVE

For the Christian, the highest and best example of faithfulness and humility is always the Lord Jesus. In a beautiful passage from the second chapter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul invokes this supreme example to encourage the church brethren to conduct their lives in the right spirit. We quote from the New International Version (*Zondervan*):

- 1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,
- 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.
- ${\bf 3}$ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.
- **4** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
- $\ensuremath{\mathbf{5}}$ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
- **6** Who, being in the form of God,¹ did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
- 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.
- **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross!
- **9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
- 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Greek word rendered "servant" in verse 7 is *doulos*, which conveys the thought of a slave or bondman, which servants often were in Biblical times. We see from this passage that He who was rich, for our sakes became poor (2 Cor. 8: 9). Jesus was not a grasper after power and position, reaching above His station, but rather was willing to subordinate Himself in the interests of the Heavenly Father's Plan. As a result of His faithfulness in becoming man's Ransomer, He was exalted to a place higher than He had previously enjoyed, sitting at the right hand of God, the Father.

The time will come when Jesus will be recognized, loved, and honored by mankind in general, and they will bow the collective knee, submitting themselves to His Lordship and proclaiming Him as their own. As Jesus said in John 12: 32, speaking of His crucifixion: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Thank God for our faithful and exalted Savior!

The Captive's Song Psa. 137: 1-9

- 1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
- 2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
- 3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- 4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
- **5.** If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
- **6.** If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
- 7. Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.
- **8.** O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.
- **9.** Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.



As a result of unfaithfulness in keeping God's Law, particularly in not providing the sabbath years of rest for the land. God allowed Israel to be defeated and plundered by their enemies. The 70 years of the Babylonian captivity and exile under Nebuchadnezzar were a great time of distress to the Israelites as they witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. They were neither able to govern themselves nor worship freely; and longed to be returned to their home. Fortunately, God had promised not to forsake them (Lev. 26: 44, 45). With an edict from the Persian king, Cyrus, they were again returned to Israel to rebuild it.

¹ Marginal reading



"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5: 1). To what sort of liberty does this verse refer?

We need to keep in mind that the Apostle Paul is not here addressing Jews as such, nor the world in general. It is true that especially in the past hundred years or so, there has been a great longing on the part of the world for liberty in many different areas of life, and there has been a lot of movement in this direction.

However, no matter how much progress is made in present-day liberty, without God there can be no true freedom. The world still rests under condemnation to death under God's original Law, given to Adam. The Jewish people, in addition to resting under the same original condemnation, also lie under the condemnation of the Law Covenant. Though God is preparing the world and His people Israel for real freedom, the realization of it will have to wait His due time.

In our text the Apostle Paul addresses the Christian, for only such have taken the steps of repentance for sins and belief in Jesus as their Savior, and consecration of their lives to God. The theme of the text is the liberty enjoyed by the Christian. There are various aspects of this:

- First, there is the freedom from Adamic condemnation that comes when one attains justification through repentance and faith in Christ. Justification does away with the natural estrangement between God and the individual, and replaces it with mutual friendship.
- Second, there is the freedom that comes from taking the step of consecration. Consecration, made and carried out, gradually gives the Christian freedom from the power, or rulership of his peculiar enemies: sin, error, selfishness, and worldliness. This is not to say that the Christian, however devout, will attain total freedom from these enemies in the here and now, but these opponents of Godliness will not be allowed to enslave the faithful, practicing, believer. This emancipation is brought about through the Word of God (its study) and God's holy spirit, supplemented by the providences of God.

In effect, the Christian becomes the servant, or slave, of Christ. The Christian, by his or her vow of consecration and commitment to do the will of God, enters voluntarily into servitude. We read in 1 Cor. 7: 22: "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." In an ironic way, being a servant of Christ brings true freedom. As Jesus says, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8: 36).

The Law of Love

The "law of liberty," as stated in James 1: 25, can be summed up in one word — Love. This "law of liberty" is sometimes spoken of as the Law of Love. The Christian is to be guided by the principles of justice and love. For the Christian, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5: 17). The follower of Christ learns to hate sin and love righteousness and to use the new-found liberty, not as an opportunity to gratify the flesh but to eschew earthly interests, and to co-operate with the Lord Jesus — the Master — in putting down sinful tendencies.

As in most endeavors training is first necessary, so it is in Christian living. The Christian is enrolled in the school of Christ. Jesus said in John 8: 31, 32, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth is only received through the divinely appointed channels, that is, our Lord, the apostles, and the prophets, as recorded in God's Word. We read in 2 Tim. 3: 16, 17 (American Revised Version):

Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

It is the duty (and privilege!) of the Christian to "search the scriptures" and to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" — John 5: 39, 1 Thess. 5: 21.

In the days of the Apostles, there were certain Jewish Christians who attempted to bind both Jewish and Gentile Christians to the Law Covenant, thereby taking away their liberty in Christ. So today, the Christian needs to reject manmade doctrines, creeds, confessions, traditions, or superstitions. To be bound in error, ignorance, or fear, is to lose one's liberty.

The Christian must use his or her liberty in such a way as not to stumble others, especially those weak or young in the faith. The Apostle Paul cautions in Rom. 14: 21: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."

In conclusion, the balance to be maintained is to enjoy one's Christian liberty and to make sure it is always controlled by the Law of Love.

* * *



Dear Friends: I enjoy your *Bible Standard* very much and am sending a small donation to help where needed. Please continue my magazine as I'd be lost without it. I noticed a wonderful change in *The Bible Standard* also.

God bless all and much love always, V.B., New York, United States

To Whom It May Concern: This letter is in reference to receiving the book titled *The At-one-ment Between God and Man* (Vol. 5 of *Studies in the Scriptures*). I have enjoyed learning and

growing with your wonderful material. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Respectfully yours, L. B., Maryland, United States

We welcome your letters. We reserve the right to edit all letters received. Our practice is to indicate only the writer's initials, except where the writer is an appointee of the Movement. You may submit your letters marked "Editorial" to our postal address on the back page, or by e-mail to editorial@biblestandard.com (enter "Letters" in the subject line).

of interest . . .

The World Bank cancelled a meeting scheduled to take place in Barcelona on June 25, afraid that anti-globalization protesters would have intimidated delegates and prevented free discussion. The Bank called the protesters' actions "anti-democratic." The Bank was planning to hold its annual development economists' conference on the internet. The video conference will entertain e-mails from around the world. Some hackers sympathetic to the anti-globalization movement have threatened to disrupt the conference.

The Bank argues that open economies are the key to rising living standards, but concedes that the world's rich countries have not opened up their markets enough to the exports of developing economies (Copyright 2001, *British Broadcasting Corporation*).

* * *

Scientists in Spain have identified a new form of fungus that eats compact discs. A geologist at the Museum of Natural History in Madrid discovered the fungus, which belongs to the common *Geotrichum* family, on CDs brought back from the central American state of Belize. The fungus had attacked the outer edge of the disc, consuming plastic and even aluminum. It rendered the CD unplayable. Experts say it is unusual, but not unknown, for a fungus to attack man-made substances like plastics (Copyright 2001, *British Broadcasting Corporation*).

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announcements . . .

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2001

At-a-glance

France: Barlin, July 27-29

United Kingdom: Hyde, August 3-5; Sheffield, October 27, 28

Nigeria: Aba, Abia State, November 28-30

Poland: Lublin, July 13-15; Wolka Niedzwiedzka, July 16-18; Wroclaw, July 20-22; Bydgoszcz, July 23-25; Krakow, September 14-16

Ukraine: Lvov, August 17-19

United States: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 30-July 4; Athens-Nelsonville, Ohio, August 24-26; Chicago, October 19-21; Tulsa,

November 16-18

Details

United States

Athens-Nelsonville, Ohio, August 24-26

Site: Ramada Inn Hocking Valley, State Route 691 and U.S. 33, Nelsonville, Ohio 45764 ((740) 753-3531). Rates and Reservations: \$62.50, single; \$67.50, 2-4 people per room (taxes not included). The class has reserved a block of rooms. Please telephone the Ramada Inn and say you are attending the LHMM convention. The reservation cut-off date is August 11; reservations made after this date are not guaranteed. Check-in time is before 6:00 p.m.; check-out time (Sunday) is noon. Group meals will be served all 3 days of the convention. The suggested buffet price is \$10.00 for adults, free for children under 12; contributions toward meals accepted. For transportation and other details, please contact the class secretary, Mrs. Diana Stover, 887 Orchard Drive, Lancaster, OH 43130; telephone: (740) 687-5107; e-mail: dianalyn10.@mindspring.com.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS Bernard W. Hedman, General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4

John Davis, Associate General Editor

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4

Carl W. Seebald

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Chicago, August 11, 12; Ohio Convention, August 24-26; Minneapolis, September 22, 23

Ralph Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Lewiston, Maine, July 21, 22; Springfield, Massachusetts, August 5; Ohio Convention, August 24-26; Auburn, Massachusetts, September 9

Richard Blaine

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Largo, Florida, July 22; Ohio Convention, August 24-26; Fort Lauderdale, September 9

Robert Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; New Haven, Connecticut, August 26; Lewiston, Maine, September 15, 16

John Wojnar

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Boston, August 26

John Detzler

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Derry, Pennsylvania,
July 6; Nelsonville, Ohio, July 8; Indianapolis, July 9; Chicago,
July 11; Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 14; Muskegon,
Michigan, July 15; Minneapolis, July 17, 18; Boulder, Colorado,
July 22; Eugene, Oregon, August 23; Seattle, August 25, 26;
Osoyoos, B.C., Canada, August 27; Spokane, Washington,
August 28; Moscow, Idaho, August 29; Yahk, B.C., Canada,
August 30; Calgary, Alberta, Canada, September 1, 2

Leon Snyder

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Germany, July 6-11; Poland, July 12-26; France, July 26-31; England, August 3-9; Ohio Convention, August 24-26

Baron Duncan

Philadelphia Area Convention, June 30-July 4; Ohio Convention, August 24-26; Springfield, Massachusetts, September 2

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, Sebring, Florida, August 25; Jacksonville, September 2; Denver, September 15, 16

Tom Cimbura, Muskegon, Michigan, July 21; Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 22

Harry Hammer, Grand Rapids, September 8; Muskegon, September 9

Harold Solomon, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 12 Jack Zilch, Minneapolis, July 14, 15