

1

“IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD” (1901-1917)

There seems to be some appropriateness about his name, for the Word of God is the dominating factor in his life.

—*Christian Standard*, October 25, 1941

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, but Archie Word was *not* God, although some of his most ardent enthusiasts almost placed him on that lofty plane, giving him higher than equal billing with well known proclaimers of the Word. “A greater preacher than Moody or Gipsy Smith” is how one close friend described him in an Oregon newspaper.¹ His detractors, of whom there were several, charged that sometimes he *acted* as if he were God Himself. Nevertheless, the Word became flesh April

21, 1901, and was named Archie James Word. He dwelt among us for nearly 90 years and we beheld, with rapt fascination, the glory of God in his matchless preaching, heart-rending illustrations, thunder, tears, power and pathos.

Do not think that this is merely a play on words. Calling him "devoted to the Word," the *Christian Standard* once said this about him:

. . . Kentuckian by birth and Scotch-Irish by race. Perhaps that accounts for his sterling firmness of conviction, unflinching courage and unflagging zeal. There appears to be some appropriateness about his name, for the Word of God is the dominating factor in his life.²

HIS OLD KENTUCKY HOME

The story begins in Kentucky.

The city of Glasgow, named after her sister city in Scotland, is located in the center of Barren County, which, in turn, is right in the heart of the Pennroyal region of south-central Kentucky. The early pioneers called this treeless stretch of country "the barrens." Beneath the rocky ridges of limestone run many underground passages – the most famous of which is Mammoth Cave, several miles north of Glasgow.

On April 21, 1901, in what later came to be known as Oil City, just outside Glasgow, Archie James Word was born to Luther and Maggie Word. The Bluegrass State was still a place where good Kentucky bluestem could be stained red with blood. Kentucky, according to some, gets its name from a Cherokee Indian word meaning "dark and bloody ground." Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark fought many bloody battles with the Indians. The Civil War saw the state sadly divided:

75,000 Kentuckians fighting for the Union; about 35,000 for the Confederacy. In 1897 Kentuckians revolted against the private ownership of roads – toll roads like the one that runs through Glasgow today. Violent night-time raids saw toll gates and toll houses burned – tollkeepers fleeing for their lives in the flicker of the midnight flames.

Just one year before the new century – two years before Archie Word was born – a bitter campaign for the office of governor took place. Republican William S. Taylor won by the narrowest of margins over his Democratic opponent William Goebel. Goebel, in the best of political tradition, cried "fraud" and demanded a recount. On January 30, 1900, an assassin shot Goebel. The next day the Democratic-controlled legislature declared Goebel, though dying, the winner. "Governor" Goebel died February 3 and Lieutenant Governor J. W. Beckham, also a Democrat, took office. Civil war nearly broke out again in the commonwealth of Kentucky. Finally, in November of 1900, a special election was held and Beckham won. These were the turbulent, troubled times in which Archie Word was born. Five months after Archie's birth President William McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist. The old "roughrider" Teddy Roosevelt became President. Somehow it all seems fitting.

The world should have known the boy would become a preacher. He came into the world bawling at the top of his healthy little lungs. His surname was Word and his famous revival slogan, "Hear A. Word Preach the Word," would put him in *Ripley's "Believe It or Not."* His middle name, though rarely used, was James, a good apostolic name. His father's name was Luther, a name with a fine Reformation ring to it,

although Luther Word was a staunch Southern Baptist, the largest religious body in Kentucky. His beloved mother Maggie was a devout member of the Christian Church, the second largest religious body in the Bluegrass State. Kentucky itself was the home of the storied Cane Ridge revival, a phenomenon which saw 3,000 converts in five days of preaching by Barton W. Stone and other frontier revivalists. Archie Word's preaching converted 3,000 people in just five years (1930-1935) of Depression-era preaching on the West Coast. Thomas Campbell, the acknowledged father of the Restoration Movement, came by boat from Ireland to America with the Restoration plea. Thomas Kenny, Archie Word's maternal grandfather, ran away from a Roman Catholic school in Ireland at 14, boarding a clipper ship sailing to America. Once there he studied himself into the truth, preaching "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" to everyone who would listen. Alexander Campbell, the illustrious son of Thomas Campbell, studied at Glasgow, Scotland, and later preached in Glasgow, Kentucky, where Archie Word was born. The Stone-Campbell movement joined forces on New Year's Day, 1832, in (where else?) Kentucky. One could almost say that it was "destiny" that the Kentucky-born boy would some day become a preacher of the Word in the Restoration Movement.

Luther Word, also sired in Kentucky, was born March 17, 1877, the oldest son in a dirt-poor family of ten children. His father was a farmer and all the children worked hard to help keep the family farm afloat. Unfortunately, father Word was also a whiskey distiller, "chasing his whiskey with a string of oaths." It was not long before son Luther turned

to bootlegging, not uncommon to the land and the times. One of the reasons Archie Word hit the booze business as hard as he did in his preaching was because of what he saw it do to his grandfather's and father's health.

Archie's mother, Maggie Kenny, was born May 24, 1880, in Tennessee, moving to Kentucky when she was very young. Her father, Thomas Kenny, fled from Ireland at 14 and came to America. As a note of interest, the last article ever penned by Archie Word, "The Unusual Story of My Mother's Father, Tom Kenny," was the first time he ever related the incident. Tom's parents wanted him to become a priest but the priesthood was not for him. After coming to America on a "wind jammer" young Tom drifted until he found himself in Tennessee. He married and began to read the Bible, something he had never done in Ireland, although going to a parochial school. In time both he and his wife were immersed according to his new understanding of the Scripture. "That is the story as my mother told it to me," said Archie in 1988. "Thus, through her father my mother learned the gospel, and through her I was led to know the truth. I thank God for the honesty and the courage of my Granddad Kenny and for the influence of his life upon each succeeding generation of my family."³ The Word family did not stay long in Kentucky. Luther's youngest brother had died from a persistent cough. Maggie suffered from chronic bronchitis. She had a sister in California where the climate was healthier. Work was also plentiful. Luther was having a hard time finding good work in the depressed "barrens." Going West seemed the wise thing to do. In 1906 the family of four (Archie's brother Walter was born exactly two years

after he was born – April 21, 1903) packed their belongings and boarded a train bound for the West Coast. A family with a religiously divided marriage (Luther loved Maggie but hated the Christian Church) was leaving a politically divided commonwealth. The year 1906 is significant in Restoration history. In that year David Lipscomb and J. W. Shepherd, on behalf of Churches of Christ that did not use musical instruments, sought and received separate listing from instrumental Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in the official U. S. Census Bureau. A union that was born in 1832 – in Kentucky – was no more. But it is doubtful that Luther and Maggie knew anything of this.

It was time to go. Depressed Kentucky was history. Bright California was the future. Archie was five years old at the time of the move. All he remembered of the week-long train trip was carrying his little pillow from one train car to another. "We stopped a lot of places, and changed cars. In those days you never had a straight-through train. I had a pillow to take care of. Whenever we moved I was always hollering, 'Where is my pillow?' "4 The day would come when Archie Word would travel all across America – and then some – by train, plane, boat, bus and automobile, carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ. But for now he was content to pillow his head in his mother's lap as the powerful steam engine pulled the train across the Great Plains. The persistent sway of the passenger car, the soothing touch of his mother's hand on his head and the hypnotic "clickety-clack" of the iron wheels on the railroad track soon sent him drifting into a peaceful sleep. Years later the *Christian Standard* would report good-naturedly:

Born at Glasgow, Kentucky, in 1901, he left that state and went to California when he was five years old (though we do not mean to imply that his very definite and aggressive personality was so precocious as to determine that removal at that age).⁵

LIFE IN LINDSAY, "THE OLIVE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD"

In 1901, the year Archie was born, a newly built irrigation canal brought water from the Colorado River to California's Imperial Valley. Irrigation proved to be a boon for the Golden State. Vast desert areas were quickly turned into lush fertile valleys. Today, as you drive through the beautiful San Joaquin Valley from Modesto to Visalia on Interstate 5, the beauty and bounty of irrigation can be seen. Mile after mile of vast orchards, groves and vineyards: grapes, peaches, almonds, walnuts, cherries, figs, nectarines, plums, and in particular, oranges and olives. To drive through the San Joaquin Valley in the spring, with your car windows down, is to breathe the air of Eden.

Lindsay, California, where the Word family was headed has been called "the olive capital of the world." Most likely that can of ripe black olives in your pantry came from Lindsay, a town of about 6,924, located about half way between Fresno and Bakersfield, in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. Four miles south of Lindsay, on a road as straight as a string, is the little town of Strathmore where the Words would eventually settle down. Luther's first job was tending an orange grove for a millionaire orange farmer. Luther was paid \$50 a month.

Thousands of people were moving into California between 1900 and 1910. It was perceived as a land of opportunity, ideal for growing fruit and a family.

While the gold rush fever of 1849 no longer existed, the old hue and cry of "Go West, young man!" was still very much in vogue. The Words arrived sometime in 1906, the same year the terrible San Francisco earthquake destroyed 28,000 buildings and claimed 700 lives. But that was San Francisco, on the coast. The bountiful orange groves and olive orchards of Lindsay were well inland. The time was right and the harvests were ripe. It would be another two dozen years before the hard times of the Great Depression and the arrival of migrant families as told in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Words could not have come at a more opportune time.

Not that all was roses for the family that had come from hardscrabble Kentucky, far from it. But it surely beat eking out a living in the "barrens." In time Luther would purchase 10 acres of fertile land near Strathmore, clear the land and plant olive trees. But since it took six years before the first crop, he continued to labor in the orange groves of Lindsay. So did young Archie and Walter — most of the time. Archie recalls one time he did not:

I got one of my worst 'lickings' for doing nothing and lying about it. My father told me to stop at a certain orchard on my way home from school and hoe the weeds around the young orange trees. That afternoon two more kids came by, and we became engrossed in playing catch with a nice green orange. There were tracks all over the two places where we stood while we enjoyed the game of tossing the orange back and forth.

When I came home that night, my father said, 'Why didn't you get that hoeing done this afternoon, son?' I politely lied to him and told him that I could not find the hoe. He had had been over there and had seen the

tracks. The hoe was right where he had left it — in plain sight. The next thing I knew, he had me by the neck, and I was over his knee getting the worst 'licking' I ever had in my life! ⁶

This story may be typical of Archie's stormy relationship with his no-nonsense father. His personal recollections of Luther were few, and what incidents he did recall were usually of an unhappy nature. But if Archie was reserved in praise for his father, he was effusive with it for his mother. He recounts his mother's faith when he was 10 years old.

We moved to the country when I was a boy about 10 years old. My father was a Southern Baptist of the 'Hard Shell' variety, and he hated the Church of Christ. He imagined that if he got Mother that far out of town with no buggy she would be 'grounded.' But he did not know Mom nor her convictions.

When Wednesday evening came, she had supper early and then took each of us boys by the hand and said, 'All right, boys. We are going to walk to church.' It was about two and one-half miles over hot, oiled roads in the summer, and wet, muddy roads mixed with some frost in the winter, but she never failed. Often there would not be 10 people there. It was too 'difficult' for them to get out, but we were there.

Later on we got a surrey, and Mom drove an old stallion to church. He was our only buggy horse. She would have to hitch him down the street all alone, about a block from the church, in order to keep him from squealing and neighing all during the services. But she was not going to be stopped in serving her God. . . . How glad I am that I was privileged to have a mother with convictions and a life that started us all on the road to heaven.⁷

(The Lindsay church was organized April 18, 1909,

in the home of James H. Mathes.)

One can infer from this story that Maggie's relationship with Luther was a bit strained, at least in the realm of religion. She was not only a woman of strong will, she was also a woman of considerable physical strength. While Luther picked oranges in the great outdoors of the San Joaquin Valley, Maggie toiled indoors in a hot, noisy cannery. One should read Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* to appreciate her contribution in putting food on the table for the Word family. But she never let her work interfere with taking her boys to church in Lindsay, as the following story illustrates.

An old business partner of my dad's was a rough-talking, swearing, pipe-smoking teamster. He never went to church, and none of his family ever did to my knowledge. He used to say, 'Maggie Word thinks she would go to hell if she missed one church service.'

My mother used to work each winter in the orange packing house to help us out financially during the 'panics' of the older days before they named them 'depressions.' During fruit season the packing houses ran 12 to 14 hours a day, every day of the week. When Saturday night came, my mother would go to the foreman and tell him, 'I will not be here tomorrow. I am a Christian, and I teach a class of fine boys. I feel it is my duty to be there, and if it means I lose my job, I will have to lose it. I like to work here and I hope you will grant me this concession.'

She was never refused the opportunity to be in church on the Lord's day. Others tried to 'get off' on Sunday for various reasons, but it was not granted. Often they would say, 'Mrs. Word gets off - why do you show partiality?'

The answer from old Jack Sullivan, I will never forget: 'Mrs. Word is a Christian. She lives it every day right here in this packing house. She teaches a class and is faithful in her attendance upon divine worship

all the year round, and that is why we allow her to be absent on Sunday.'⁸

In the summer Luther would hire out to put up hay. Maggie used the occasion to teach Archie and Walter stories from the Bible and tell them missionary stories as they sat under a haycock.

I well remember my mother's reading to us boys about the hardships of the missionaries in India and the deaths of thousands of Hindu people during their great famines. While Dad made hay, Mother sat with us boys under a large haycock that Dad had set up with a fork. She read to us about Joseph . . . Moses . . . Elijah . . . Isaiah . . . Daniel . . . Who knows how much of an influence that she has had upon my ministry? Only God will ever know all about it.⁹

The stories about the suffering of the Hindus, as well as the Bible stories, made a lasting impression upon young Archie. An incident involving a Hindu who moved to Lindsay stayed with him.

When I was a boy, we had no electricity where we lived, but in time the power lines were put through. Close to our back yard they placed three large transformers and surrounded them with a big, strong wire fence. On the fence were two large signs saying, 'Danger' and '*Polegero*' (to warn both American and Spanish speaking people to stay out).

A Hindu moved into our community and asked, 'Why the sign?'

He was told that to touch those wires meant instant death. He looked puzzled. He watched birds light on the wires that came into the transformer station, and he said, 'See, the little birds are not harmed. How can it harm a man?' . . .

One day he walked up slowly and softly touched the high wire fence that surrounded the transformers.

Nothing happened, and he said, 'See, I told you that those wires would not hurt you. It is all in your thinking.'

People tried to explain to him the danger of touching the live wires on the inside, but he would not believe it. It did not hurt the birds so how could it hurt him? He would show those superstitious people how wrong they were. So he climbed over the fence and reached up and touched the live wires. He was standing on the cement slab that supported them, and the iron rims of his shoe heels left a burned-out spot where he stood. He fell over dead with his clothes burned off him . . . So they buried him American style.¹⁰

Yet, in spite of hair-raising incidents like this, his mother's instructions and his father's frequent whippings, Archie had to learn for himself. On this particular occasion Maggie did both the teaching and the whipping! Archie later used this story many times in his preaching.

When I was about six years old, I crossed over the tracks (we lived on the 'wrong side of the tracks') to the hardware store where I picked up a cap pistol and brought it home. My mother said, 'Son, where did you get that gun? And how much did you pay for it?' I told her I got it over at Matheson's Hardware store, and that I had just picked it up. I was perfectly honest about the whole deal. I guess my mother decided it was time to teach me to be honest because after she had put on her bonnet, she took me by the ear and started across the tracks again. We took the gun back, and Mother paid the man 15 cents for it. Then she took me by the other ear, and we started home. When we got home, she took me out to the cow barn and from the noise that came out of there, the neighbors thought we had a whole herd of cattle. Then she took me into the house and put me to bed, and while I lay

there she drove a nail up over the door (in my plain sight) and hung that pistol on the nail.

I had to look at it all day and stay in bed all day and remember that when anything is taken out of the store, it must be paid for first.¹¹

In spite of his aching ears and other portions of his young anatomy, Archie Word had a great love and appreciation for his mother. His famous sermon, "Ten Reasons Why My Mother Told Me To Leave Tobacco Alone" (which got him kicked off radio station KALE in Portland), was dedicated to Maggie, "whose life and teaching blessed me more than I knew, in the days of my young sophisticated ignorance, and whose prayers were instrumental in bringing me back to the Christ of God."¹² Maggie had an absolute hatred for the tobacco habit. Archie remembered his mother's warnings.

I can remember very vividly the men around the community telling me when I was a mere boy that I would never get to be a man until I could eat a cigar . . . My mother wanted me to be CLEAN! . . . She was reared in Kentucky where she saw the tobacco business from the time the half-starved 'sharecroppers' made the 'hotbeds' and planted the seeds, to the time when it was planted in the fields, suckered, wormed, cut, hung up and dried and twisted and shipped. She knew the dirty stuff from 'worms to spittoon.' She knew that the filthiest place in the house is the place where the smoker sits and smokes and spits. She found out that the dirtiest car or portion of a train is the place where the tobacco users congregate. . . . It is an unclean and dirty habit, and my mother warned me against it because she wanted me to be clean!¹³

Yet, in spite of Maggie's stern warnings, which he came to appreciate years later, young Archie took up smoking, on the sly, during his teenage years. Perhaps

it was his remorse over disobeying his mother that led him to hit the tobacco business so hard in his preaching years later. Few men ever thundered against tobacco harder than Archie Word. He would often say, with characteristic bluntness, "If you smoke, you stink!" Not exactly a way to win friends and influence people, but Archie Word was out to save souls from the ravages of sin, death and hell.

Luther was a heavy smoker and one of Maggie's fondest hopes was that Walter and Archie would not take up with their father's ways.

. . . my mother had seen men, and women too, who were half crazy when they got out of smokes. She had a husband who used tobacco, and when he was out of the 'soothing weed' he was as hard to get along with as an old sore-headed bear. Thank the Lord, my mother loved me and she loved me enough to warn me against the use of anything that would in time become my master. . . . She was our best rooter in athletics, whether we won or lost . . . but when it came to the use of a drug that could not possibly bring us any good and had proved itself strong enough to enslave and kill some of the world's finest men, my mother handled the situation just like she did a hot stove – by saying, 'No, No, No!'¹⁴

YOUNG LOVE

During the Lindsay years, Archie attended Washington Grammar School, but when the school burned down (no, Archie was *not* playing with matches), classes were held in the basement of the Presbyterian Church. The young scholar also attended grade school at Jefferson Elementary. Later, when he was in the Navy, Archie remembered one of his teachers.

Miss Hollingsworth was my sixth grade teacher . . . but

I'd think she would forget a bone head like me. I'll never forget her though, because she sure was a fine teacher. But look out if she ever got mad. She could shake your head off . . .¹⁵

The final Word was born to Luther and Maggie March 8, 1913. Archie and Walter were delighted to welcome baby Nellie into the family. When the Words moved onto Luther's 10-acre olive ranch near Strathmore, Archie enrolled in Sunnyside School where he attended 7th and 8th grades. Each day he rode his horse "Buster Bill" to school. He was not an exceptional student. Sister Nellie says his favorite "subjects" were football, basketball and baseball.¹⁶ Sports, however, was frowned upon by hard-working Luther. He wanted Archie and Walter to share in the ranch work when the school day had ended. Archie described the work of cultivating, irrigating, pruning and picking oranges in his father's groves. "I was just a kid five years old when I was helping my dad," he once told his grandson. "I helped him feed the horses too."

All work and no play could have made Archie a dull boy. Dull he was not! When he was about 12 years old something (more properly, *someone*) came into his life that put an extra spring in his step for the rest of his life. Her name was Florence Procter.

The Procter family, like the Words, had come to California from back east. Like Archie, Florence rode a train when she was five years old, but her train ride was considerably different. Elmer and Ida Procter had five daughters and a son. The boy was born first but died early. Florence, born May 13, 1902, was the last addition to the family, joining sisters Mary, Ruth, Edna and Evelyn. The Procters lived in Warren, Ohio, a large northeastern Ohio city about 14 miles northwest

from Youngstown. Elmer suffered from asthma so badly that he decided the climate out West would be better for his health. Taking the three oldest daughters with them, the Procters rode the train to Redlands, east of Los Angeles. Evelyn and Florence stayed in Warren with relatives until the family was settled in Redlands. Incredible as it sounds, they were later sent for, "tagged like baggage"¹⁸ and sent to California by themselves. Kind old conductors saw them from station to station and good-hearted passengers took care to feed them on their journey West.

Florence attended school in Redlands until she graduated from the 8th grade. About this time Elmer bought an alfalfa ranch in Lindsay and moved his family again. Archie Word and Florence Procter first met at a revival meeting in the Christian Church at Elmwood and Frazier streets in Lindsay. Evelyn and Florence, newcomers in town, became separated from their parents after the evening service. They spotted a nice looking boy who looked like he could help them.

Rather shyly, Florence asked, "Do you think you could help us find our dad?"

"Sure thing!" Archie had no idea who her dad was or what he looked like, but he was not going to let this opportunity pass by. Before long he had located Elmer Procter in the milling crowd and reunited him with his daughters. Florence smiled her thanks to Archie over her shoulder as she left the church building. Archie was hooked forever. His feet barely touched the ground as he sped home to tell his mother that "he had found the girl he was going to marry."¹⁹

Florence was about 12 when she was baptized in the Lindsay church; Archie about 12 or 13. They both belonged to Christian Endeavor, although Florence

took it more seriously and was more involved in the activities than Archie. One night he took her to a young people's party at the Presbyterian Church, but was too bashful to even sit by her. Thus, a courtship began that would last nearly 13 years. They grew up together in their beloved Lindsay, hiking, riding horses, swimming, playing tennis, attending parties, going to the movies at the Lindsay Theater.

The Procters lived right in Lindsay, just behind the High School, where Elmer also worked as a janitor. Archie, who rode "Buster Bill" everywhere, says his horse came to know the way to the Procter place. "The horse knew where to go when it came to town. When I would go to town, I had to watch or he would turn into her place."²⁰ Archie got along with Elmer pretty well — as long as he was living straight. When Archie came back to Lindsay after World War I, Elmer, an elder in the Christian Church, was not impressed with Archie's wild living. Nor was Florence. She absolutely refused to go out with him when he was not living clean for the Lord. Each dated others but they always came back to each other.

"OVER THERE!"

In the summer of 1914, a tragic event took place in distant Europe that would eventually alter Archie's young carefree life. On Sunday, June 28, while Archie and Florence were undoubtedly in church under the watchful eye of mother Maggie and elder Elmer, the Archduke of Austria-Hungary was shot to death by a Serbian. One month later Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia — in effect starting World War I. On May 7, 1915, a German submarine sank the British oceanliner *Lusitania*, sending 1,198 souls (including 128

Americans) to a cold, watery grave. Although President Woodrow Wilson did all he could to keep America out of the growing war, unrestricted German submarine warfare against U. S. merchant ships eventually pulled the United States into the vortex of the international conflict. America declared war on Germany April 16, 1917 – five days before Archie Word's 16th birthday – hastily putting together a selective service act requiring all men ages 21 to 30 to register for the draft, but any man 18 years old could join.

Now that America was in, most citizens abandoned the isolationist position and plunged into the war effort with unbridled enthusiasm. Loyal citizens were encouraged to buy Liberty bonds. On nearly every street corner, Lindsay being no exception, recruiting posters of a stern-faced, fingerpointing Uncle Sam could be seen, along with the message, "I Want YOU For The U. S. Army!" The most popular song on the radio in those days was George M. Cohan's "Over There." When he was stationed in San Diego, Archie sent Florence a clipping;

"An' then the littlest kid of all
Swells up until his buttons tear—
'Shucks, they ain't in it with my dad!
Why, fellers, *he* fought *Over There!*' "²¹

"The Yanks are coming!" was the hope of the Allies. In America, the sound of war drums was building to a fever pitch; patriotism was rising like the "Grand Old Flag." Nearly every young American boy wanted to fight in France and kill the Kaiser. Indeed, over 2,800,000 men answered the call of Uncle Sam and were promptly inducted into the Armed forces. Another 2,000,000 freely volunteered their services —

among them an underaged boy from Lindsay, California — Archie Word. But Archie was one of the fortunate ones: 116,516 red-blooded "doughboys" would never return. They would be buried in lonely graves, "Somewhere in France." After he was in the Navy, Archie sent this poem to Florence, perhaps envisioning the day he would be in France and she would be left by the garden gate.

She stands alone beside the gate,
Where oft with him she stood before,
And seems to hear his voice relate
Life's sweet story o'er and o'er;
A hand she feels upon her own,
Unconsciously a tender glance
She gives, then starts and stands alone,
The lover sleeps — Somewhere in France.

She could have kept him if she would—
His heart and soul were all her own—
But true love knew and understood
That Honor is its own true throne,
She heard the bugles' blaring sound
And whispered, 'Go and take your chance,'
There 'mid the scenes of war he found
Eternal Peace — Somewhere in France.

She knows not where that spot may be—
On barren plain, in hidden dell,
In wooded hill, beside the sea—
The lips that would will never tell;
She knows not what his last words were,
The thoughts that came with Death's advance,
And yet, she feels they were of her,
Those last fond thoughts — Somewhere in France.²²

To his disappointment and to her relief, Archie Word never made it to France. But somehow, to no

one's real amazement, he did make it out of Lindsay and somehow managed to fast-talk a San Diego Navy recruiting officer into believing that he was old enough to sign on with the U. S. Navy and go fight against "Kaiser Bill."

NOTES

1. Walter Stram in *The Montavilla Times*, July 21, 1933
2. *Christian Standard*, Oct. 25, 1941
3. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Sept., 1988
4. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
5. *Christian Standard*, Oct. 25, 1941
6. *The Other Day*, p. 31
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 60,61
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 91,60
9. *The Voice of Evangelism*, Nov. 26, 1960
10. *The Other Day*, pp. 83,84
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 30,31
12. *The Church Revealed in the Scriptures*, p. 131
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 138,139,144
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 136,137
15. Letter written to Florence Procter from Archie Word while stationed in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, April 17, 1919
16. Letter to the author from Nellie Word Arnold, Feb. 1, 1989
17. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
18. Author's interview with Margaret Word Hunt, Feb. 1989
19. Letter to author from Nellie Word Arnold, Feb. 1, 1989
20. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
21. Clipping sent to Florence Procter from Archie Word while stationed in San Diego, Aug. 26, 1918
22. Poem by LeRoy C. Henderson sent to Florence Procter by Archie Word, Aug. 26, 1918

2

THE RUNAWAY
(1918)

The only time I ever prayed was the night the torpedo bumped us.

—Archie Word, Dec. 13, 1918

America had been in the war a little over a year when Archie Word ran away from home and joined the Navy. Years later, comparing the war in his day to that of Vietnam, he explained, "In those days you didn't run off and go to Canada. We ran off and went to war. We believed it was right."¹ The "we" he mentioned included a close friend of Archie's, Mitch Finch. He and Archie often double dated the youngest Procter girls, Florence and Evelyn. Two other boys, Monroe and Otto, were supposed to join Archie and Mitch in their adventure but backed out at the last

minute. Archie had harsh words for Monroe. "You said the class party was held. Did you elect Monroe as President in my place? Be good to that 'Yaller' Dawg, because he backed out."² In subsequent letters to Florence he reserved less-than-complimentary words for Otto.

THE RUNAWAY BOY

The date of Archie's departure from home is not certain. He had finished his freshman year at Lindsay High School and would have been a sophomore in the fall of 1918. Sometime between April 22 and June 3 he and Mitch Finch headed south for Los Angeles. On April 22 he was still in Strathmore. He dropped a note to Florence in nearby Lindsay saying that he hoped she was over the measles and would be back in school soon, hoping to see her in church the next Sunday. He then added an interesting postscript: "I didn't get thrown last Saturday night."

Florence kept every letter Archie wrote to her after he ran away from home. The next letter, in sequence, is dated June 3, 1918, and was postmarked Venice, California. Archie told her how he and Mitch made their getaway.

We traveled separate to Ducor [about 20 miles south of Lindsay – Author] and from there on to the summit of the Tejon Pass, and there we broke down the front wheel. But as luck would have it a rich man and his wife came along and helped us into Hollywood. From there on we rode the cars into Venice.³

It is not clear if the vehicle that broke down was their own or not. Evidently they abandoned it and after getting the lift into Hollywood, continued their

journey by hopping freight cars. They spent their first day swimming in the ocean and combing the beaches at Venice, just below Santa Monica. "There sure is a mob of short skirts here," Archie teased Florence. "But I can't enjoy them because of one little brown-eyed girl up in Lindsay. . . . I haven't been homesick yet but I sure have been lovesick." His hopes were high for getting quickly into the Navy. "We will be in the Navy inside of one week, I guess. Then. 'Look out!' " As it turned out, it was another month-and-a-half before the Navy accepted Archie. Mitch couldn't wait and soon joined the Army. By this time Archie was using another name, "Fred Williams," and instructed Florence to write him in care of the Arizona Hotel in Venice.

Why did 17-year-old Archie Word run away from home? Several factors seem to have been involved in his decision. One was his temperament. Archie was a strong-willed child. And he was impulsive. If he made up his mind to do something, even on short notice, he would do it, even if it was not the wisest thing to do. Another reason that has to be factored in was the patriotic fervor that had captured the country. Uncle Sam wanted him to fight "Kaiser Bill," and by jingo he would go! A third reason was his intense dislike for school – especially the subject of algebra. But it was not long before he admitted, "I played a foolish game when I quit."⁵ Still another contributing factor was his eroding relationship with Luther. Before Archie left home he exchanged strong words with his father. "I guess Dad just 'raved and raved.' Well, I say let 'im rave. I'm a long ways away."⁶ He never spelled out what the argument was over but it could have been over Archie's wanting to play football that fall while

Luther wanted him to work on the ranch after school hours. Finally, Archie was walking a mighty fine line with the Tulare County cops. He boasted, "Well, I don't think I will bother the Tulare County cops for a while."⁷ In his next letter to Florence he made a confession of sorts: "I'll admit that Fred W. [the name he had assumed – Author] is fleeing from justice."⁸ How much of this may have been youthful bragging and how much was actual fact may be debatable, but in his later years Archie recalled one incident that leads us to believe that he had a serious problem with respecting authority – at home, school and with the law.

I never had too many fights, but when I did it was rough. My Dad was a fighter, so I guess it was just my nature. My Dad did not always drink – just after he began making some money . . . I never drank much, but one Saturday night, after the dance, I took the Deputy Sheriff's badge away from him. I never remembered anything about it. The next day the Sheriff came out and wanted the badge back. I never even knew I had it. . . .⁹

This story (which could have happened either before or after Archie's stint in the Navy) illustrates his anti-authoritarian spirit. So what did he do? Joined the Navy – the very place where authority existed and would be taught to him in no uncertain terms!

Little Nellie remembers how heartbroken Maggie was when Archie left Lindsay. "I was only four years old when Archie ran away from home to join the Navy. I can remember my mother crying and working hard to keep busy – trying to forget how she was hurting."¹⁰ Florence tried to be a peacemaker and recon-

cile the estranged boy with his parents.

Won't you reconsider and, before it is too late, return? Please. I ask it with the good of everyone and everything in mind . . .

Archie, don't be angry with me, but I have told your Mother. I could not help it. She was hurt to think you changed your name. I am dreadfully sorry if it hurts you, but I could not do otherwise.

Your father is looking for you, but you need have no fear. I will not in anyway aid him . . .¹¹

By this time, however, "Fred Williams" had left the Los Angeles area and gone on down to San Diego. His next letter, dated June 15, informed Florence that he was now working on a ranch near the Mexican border. He still had hopes of getting in the service. "I tried to pass in L.A., but was too young. So I came to San Diego and passed. But I had changed my 'age.' "¹² Later he elaborated on the age change. "Yes, I have changed my age. I am 18 now so we are two years apart now [Florence was 16 at the time; hence the "two" year gap from Archie – Author]. It did not take me all night to grow old (only about 10 minutes)." But he assured Florence that he had enlisted under his own name. "Ma just gave me h_____ because I went under a false name. Say, for God's sake try to explain to her . . . that I enlisted in my own name."¹³

Yet, some of the training and instruction Archie had received from church and his mother must have stayed with him. He attended a church in San Diego. He even considered returning to Lindsay. "I am coming up to see you if I am not called right off (and won't we step!)." There even seemed to be a slight change of heart toward Luther and the hard work he had to do at home without Archie's help. "Believe me,

Dad won't haul 'em around when I get home. I'm gonna do that." He wanted Florence to keep "Buster Bill" in shape: "Well I say, ride the hair off 'Buster Bill'!"¹⁴ But the very next day he told her the hoped-for return to Lindsay was off: he had been called! Boot camp started in just three days. "I'm awfully sorry that I could not come back, but I'm glad I'm a *man* in a uniform."¹⁵

BOOT CAMP

How does a runaway boy who changed his name and lied about his age feel once he's finally in the Navy? "Well, I'm here because I'm here. And I'm having some time. I'm training like a fool. I'm glad I was called when I was. Because I did not have to come home in civilian clothes. If I'd a known how good the Navy is, I'd have joined in 1886. The Doctor here told me that I have the best pair of lungs that he ever saw in a human." Now that he was in uniform he was eager to go to Europe and fight. "It's a long way to Berlin, but we'll get there and I'm on my way, by heck."¹⁶

Archie seldom called Florence by her given name in his letters. In all his Navy correspondence he called her "Billy," a nickname hung on her early in life by everyone in Lindsay. "Billy" was short for "Billikens," a popular comic strip character.¹⁷ Archie wrote his letters on stationery provided by the YMCA National War Work Council. Billy was working that summer of 1918 in a cannery in Visalia, staying at a boarding house at 509 W. North Street. Her letters were always mailed in pink envelopes and were eagerly devoured by Archie. However, only a few were found in his personal belongings at his death.

Early in August he described his training exercises: "I'm learning Semaphor signaling and the Morse code now, and I've just about conquered all of the infantry drills . . . Last night was my first night on guard. I walked sentry from 12 o'clock until 2:30 a.m. It sure is lots of fun. I nearly scared two guys to death with my bayonet. They were new guys and they sure did jump."¹⁸

BOXING CAREER BEGINS

Archie Word's real "claim to fame" in the Navy during World War I was not won with a bayonet but with boxing gloves.

It was in the Navy that he began his boxing. He was just an onlooker watching some of the evening fun when [he was] dared to join in. He had never boxed before, and finding himself in the company he knew he was going to have to depend on strength rather than boxing skills, so immediately he landed a 'hay-maker' blow, knocking the man out. He was an instant hero. He said that proved to be one of the biggest mistakes he ever made, for from that time forth all he did in the Navy was box, which neither helped his humility nor the condition of his nose and ears.¹⁹

Fighting ran in the Word blood. Luther Word, an extremely strong man for his size (160 pounds), once cold-decked a 210-pound-man who questioned the legitimacy of his birth. Archie had seen his share of back-alley brawling in his young life. The sanctioned boxing program in the Navy allowed him to hone to a razor's edge his native fighting skills. Plus, as he later told a reporter, "you got better billet as a boxer."²⁰ He started fighting at 165 pounds and was soon up to the 175-pound division. He loved the Navy's boxing

program. "We had a place where we could lift weights, skip rope, run. We'd box and spar, right on the ship. We'd fight for company honors, regimental honors and for station honors."²¹

After Archie got out of the Navy and finished high school, he did some prize fighting in Fresno. When he hit the revival circuit in 1930, his handbills advertized him as an "Ex-sailor, Ex-prizefighter." Half a century later the newspapers were still referring to him as "an old-time revivalist [who] preaches with a voice full of thunder and a fist full of punch."²² Here is how one reporter described his pulpit manner.

And preach he does. Like the former boxer he is, he paces and bobs, shuffles his feet, jabs the air with his fist and pounds out a fundamentalist hellfire and damnation message.²³

But the young pugilist paid a heavy toll for his years in the ring. By the middle of October he would be in sick bay with ruptured ear drums. He told Billy it was due to gunfire and, in part, that may have been true. He was plagued with mastoids throughout his life and had to wear hearing aids in both ears in later years. Still, he enjoyed listening to prize fights over the radio. I remember listening to a blow-by-blow ringside account of a heavyweight fight with Archie during the rest night of a revival he held in Lexington, Nebraska in 1970.

A WAR OF FLESH VS. SPIRIT

In August Archie learned that he and his buddies were headed for the shipyards of Brooklyn in October. By this time he had transferred into the Armed Guard because he felt he would get into action faster. He had

tried to get into officer's training school but they told him, "You are NOT 21!" Even fast-talking Archie could not convince them. He assured Billy that he was still true to her: "You're the only girl friend that I have left, besides my Mother. And she sure is a friend. . . . When I hear 'So Long, Mother' I don't think of her because I never told her a real good-bye. Some way I always think of 'So Long, Billy,' on the last night I was with you. It seems like it has been 40 years." He confessed that he was forced to "lie pretty nearly every day" about his age.²⁴

In the middle of August a movie actress named Bessie Barriscale visited Camp D. The day after her visit Archie went to a Protestant church service and heard a sermon, "Giving Your Life." He also attended a Catholic service and was impressed with the sermon. "I heard as good a sermon there as I ever heard in a Christian Church pulpit."²⁵ A tract from the YMCA came into his hands that made quite an impression on him — enough to swear off swearing!

Say Billy, I've got something to tell you. This may make you feel good, and I don't think it will make you sorrowful. But I've just cut out swearing altogether, and I've also quit telling dirty stories. I was reading some Y.M.C.A. junk on 'Don't Take a Chance' and it opened my eyes. I just decided to live all around clean instead of just half way so I cut it out. The little book says, 'Live for the girl that is living for you back home,' so I've quit. I'm not a going to even play a game of pool.²⁶

Although young Archie's intentions were the best, he was not able to live up to them. It would be almost seven years before Archie would come under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit at a prayer

meeting in Bible College and would "bid farewell to the way of the world, to walk in it nevermore." Seventeen years old, away from home, surrounded by sinners, his spirit was willing but his flesh was weak.

The day after promising he would not even play a game of pool again, Archie got "liberty" for the first time. Sporting a new white stripe on the right shoulder of his crisply pressed uniform, and two smaller stripes on the wrist, Archie and a couple of pals went to a floor show. "San Diego sure treats the boys in uniform nice," he told Billy. "Three or four drunks stopped us and told us they were not German spies. It sure is funny to watch them stagger around. . . . We are located near a Marine camp and 'Praise the Lord' I'm glad I'm in the Navy!" He thought dancing was a "great sport" but said he didn't have the "ambition" to dance much. (After Archie got out of the Navy he ran not one but *three* dance halls in Fresno!)

Now that he was on Harbor Patrol, Archie decided the manly thing to do was visit a certain dockside proprietor and get a tattoo. He cautioned Billy, "Don't tell Mother because she would go wild. She just despises them. Mine is a small anchor with U.S.N. on it, so you see it is not bad. I had it put on my shoulder so Mother won't see it when I do come back. But you know a fellow can't be a 'Salt' without tattoos."²⁸ But somehow Maggie found out about the tattoo and gave Archie a royal scolding in a letter. Archie grumbled that if a tattoo was a disgrace, then Admiral Dewey was a disgrace because he had a tattoo.

In the fall of 1918 Florence was ready for her final year of high school in Lindsay. Archie was wistful that he would not see her play basketball or go to class par-

ties with her, adding that he could make things "lively" at the parties, especially if he met up with Monroe and Otto, the two boys who backed out on the Great Escape. Still, in spite of his tough talk, he missed such things as Christian Endeavor: "I would like to hear another real Christian Endeavor talk in Lindsay once again. . . . If I can't go to church today, there is one thing I can do. That is think about Sunday School back in Lindsay."²⁹ Twenty-four hours later a revved-up Archie dashed off a quick note.

I'm leaving here with my division within forty-eight hours. We'll go to Frisco for a while, then to Brooklyn. Everybody here is simply wild because every move brings us nearer to France. Everybody's washing clothes and praying that the Kaiser will live until we can get a shot at him.³⁰

EAST TO BROOKLYN

The U.S. Navy moved its men by railroad to the East Coast. At Needles, California, Archie mailed a post card to Florence describing the euphoria aboard the train. "Everybody in our car simply wild. Candy, gum, tobacco and everything to eat is just thick. Our car is painted all over with nice things about Germany and the Kaiser. It does not seem reasonable that a fellow can feel happier the farther away from home he goes, but the farther away the nearer to France, so 'hip hooray.' "³¹ On the first of October Archie's division arrived at the Naval shipyards in Brooklyn, New York. Archie called Brooklyn "some little burg," expressing awe at the sight of 40-story buildings and trains that raced a mile a minute in the honeycombed subway system beneath the streets of Brooklyn. One of the first things he did was take in a Fatty Arbuckle movie,

“The Waiter’s Ball,” calling it “one grand laugh.” He was disappointed that the Brooklyn Dodgers were not in the World Series, but he made up for it in other ways, meeting some French sailors, “a jolly bunch of men.” On Sunday he went to church—“a swell service”—but expressed surprise to see how few churches there were in the “fast-living town.” Cafes, theaters and “swell dance halls” were in abundance. He described the war fever in New York:

Say Billy, have you got a Liberty Bond? I got one this time because Dad paid my other one out. Everybody that lives in N.Y. City that can pay for it is buying one. You people in the West don’t realize we are in the war. The East is feeling it now. Saloons are going broke and beer is seldom seen now. But of course some people here *will* get drunk. . . . There was a big explosion this morning somewhere within 70 miles of here. The earth just shook, and a few hours later eight airplanes went over that way. Everybody here thinks it was a munitions works. Ships leave here every day with crews from our bunks. Maybe we’ll leave in the near future. . . . Boxing here yesterday and there were two knockouts. All good fights.³²

Two weeks later Archie’s unit was still in New York, parading in dress blues before a visiting Montenegro General. “You can’t imagine how big a fellow feels when he marches down Fifth Avenue in N.Y. with flags hung thick as leaves, and people clapping and swell music to march to,” he wrote Billy. The subway system fascinated the boy from little Lindsay. “When I ride under a river in a car and then ride over a river in the same car, and underground in another car and up in another, it’s more than unreal, it’s a dream.” Skyscrapers were another sight to behold. “A

20-story building here is a small building. N.Y. is really the most wonderful city in the world.” But he also saw the seamy side of city life. “Billy Kid, there is just as low, filthy and mean people in N. Y. slums as you can find any place in the world. There is no place that I’ve been yet that can compare with little old Lindsay. There is too much smoke and ashes in the air here to suit me.”³³

About a week before Archie’s 14th Company was transferred to Hampton Roads, Virginia, he marched in another parade, “the largest and best that N. Y. City has ever seen . . . the greatest parade that the world has ever witnessed because democracy was shown by men, women and children.” President Woodrow Wilson led the parade. A naturalized citizen tried to shake hands with the President and got “skinned up pretty badly.” The parades really pumped Archie up. “Say Billy, I could fight a whole regiment of Huns if you would say, ‘We will stand behind you’ to me just before I meet them. If I ever get a hold of Kaiser Bill I’ll give him all the punches that he needs and then an extra hard one will help finish him. I’ll use a table leg or something like it.”³⁴ But just before leaving for Virginia, he admitted that the parades were getting “tiresome.” He wanted to be back in school. “Don’t give it up like I did,” he warned Florence. “I played a foolish game when I quit. . . . If you always stick to the West, Billy, you’ll never be disappointed. In N.Y. horses are as scarce as airplanes are in Lindsay. I’d sure love to see old ‘Buster Bill’ again.”³⁵ His postscript noted that his unit might go abroad that week, adding that he was “just a little nervous.” Florence would not hear from him again for over a month. And there was good reason for the dearth of mail!

A BROKEN PLEDGE

Florence Procter, "Billy Kid" to Archie, was a conscientious Christian girl, very concerned over her boy friend's spiritual life. Active in Christian Endeavor, she sent a "Quiet Hour Enrollment Blank" to both Archie and Mitch (who was now in France). The pledge stated,

Trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I will make it a rule of my life to set apart at least fifteen minutes every day, if possible in the early morning, for quiet meditation and direct communion with God.

Archie responded, "I will gladly sign the card and I'll try to live up to it. But time is scarce here."³⁶ He signed his full name, "Archie James Word," and gave as his church affiliation, "Christian." It was the last letter she received from him for many days.

Mitch Finch also signed the card. He wrote Florence from Aix, France: "I put *Christian* on this card before I thot. If you want you can scratch it out and put Presbyterian. Now, if I can only live up to the pledge. The signing is the easiest part you know."³⁷

It must have been very hard for Archie. The next time he wrote was November 24, 1918, from a "floating eight-million dollar Palace" called the *U.S.S. South Dakota*, docked at Norfolk, Virginia. World War I was over, the Armistice being signed November 11, 1918. Sixty-four years later Archie Word returned to Virginia to preach a revival meeting in a town called Galax. The editor-in-chief of the *Galax Gazette* interviewed the ex-sailor. Archie told him, "I remember coming to the Norfolk Naval Base, just after the war had ended. I was mean then, real mean. I was far from being a peaceful person." He told the editor he had been

locked up 21 times in 24 days for drinking! "I was always fighting. That was my downfall."³⁸

Something caused Archie to drink and fight and spend three weeks in the brig, but what? Was it disappointment that the war was over and he hadn't made it to France to fight like Mitch had? Whatever it was, he never mentioned this sorry episode in his letters to Florence. He knew it would have broken her heart. He did mention, however, the broken pledge.

I signed that card, and at the time I believed I would live up to it. I read the Good Book until the first night aboard ship. I forgot about my Bible being on a beam right over my hammock in the barracks, so the Bible stayed where I read it last. I'm sorry I lost it because I sure missed something to read when I was out.³⁹

The forgotten Bible may have led to the sad downfall of Archie, at least in part. The three weeks he spent in the brig were while he was on board out in the Atlantic because a November 24 letter mentions just returning to port after 25 days at sea. And during one of those days (more properly, *nights*), probably before the November 11 Armistice (but possibly shortly afterwards), an event took place that may have sobered up Archie more than his 21 days in the brig.

TORPEDO!

The night was inky blackness as the *U.S.S. South Dakota* knifed its way through the frigid waves of the Atlantic Ocean, "75 miles out of New York City."⁴⁰ The big ship was part of 16-ship convoy patrolling the East Coast from Norfolk, Virginia, to New York. No one saw the deadly wake of the torpedo because of the night darkness.⁴¹ The torpedo took the *South*

Dakota right in the boiler room, exploding the huge boilers. The ship's captain radioed that they had been fired upon (years later a German submarine captain claimed credit for the kill).

A gaping hole in her side, the *South Dakota* began taking on water, listing badly. Men began to jump over the side of the wounded ship, splashing into the icy Atlantic far below. Archie, fitted with a large cork "doughnut," climbed over the rail and leaped into the ocean. He clung desperately to the "doughnut" while awaiting rescue from one of the sister ships. All around him he could hear men crying for help. Several of them slipped beneath the surface, never to reappear. Is this how it would end for a 17-year-old boy who had run away from home? Would he never see his beloved Lindsay again? Would he never again kiss the girl he had left behind? Would his mother's nightly prayers avail for him this time? And what about the broken pledge and the God he had turned his back on?

On that night and in that desperate hour Archie Word began to pray. We will never know what he prayed, only that he did. A month later he admitted to Florence, "The only time I ever prayed was the night the torpedo bumped us."⁴²

God must have heard the poor sailor's prayer. Archie was fished out of the drink as the eight-million dollar palace tilted and slowly sank out of sight.

NOTES

1. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
2. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, June 26, 1918
3. *Ibid.*, July 3, 1918
4. *Ibid.*
5. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Oct. 16, 1918

6. *Ibid.*, June 15, 1918
7. *Ibid.*, July 9, 1918
8. *Ibid.*, July 16, 1918
9. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
10. Letter to author from Nellie Word Arnold, Dec. 20, 1988
11. Letter to Archie Word from Florence Procter, June 8, 1918
12. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, June 15, 1918
13. *Ibid.*, June 26, 1918
14. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1918
15. *Ibid.*, July 24, 1918
16. *Ibid.*, Aug. 1, 1918
17. Author's interview with Margaret Word Hunt, Feb. 13, 1989
18. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Aug. 5, 1918
19. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 10
20. *Salem Statesman-Journal*, July 16, 1981
21. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
22. *Eugene Register-Guard*, June 14, 1981
23. *Ibid.*
24. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Aug. 9, 1918
25. *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1918
26. *Ibid.*
27. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Aug. 14, 1918
28. *Ibid.*, Sep. 23, 1918
29. *Ibid.*
30. Post card to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Sept. 1918
31. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Oct. 5, 1918
32. *Ibid.*, Oct. 19, 1918
33. *Ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1918
34. *Ibid.*
35. Letter to Florence Procter from Mitch Finch, Oct. 1918
36. *Galax Gazette*, April 7, 1982
37. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Nov. 28, 1918
38. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 10
39. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Nov. 28, 1918
40. *Salem Statesman-Journal*, July 16, 1981
42. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Dec. 13, 1918

3

RETURN OF A PRODIGAL (1918-1922)

You were a lily in a briar patch . . . and I am sticky as a
briar . . .

—Archie Word, Jan. 11, 1922

. . . as for being a lily, I am far from that perfection.
You a briar? Yes, if you want to be. No, if you do not
want to be . . .

—Florence Procter in reply letter

“It took a long time for the ship to go down. The injured were put in the webbing around the center of the ‘doughnut.’ Others were in loops around the doughnuts. The ship sank and we all boarded her sister ship, a 600-foot cruiser. We lost some men, I don’t know how many. That was 66 years ago.”¹ The fearful sights and sounds of that fateful night stayed

with Archie the rest of his life. In the early days of his music ministry in Dallas, Oregon, he would don his old sailor suit and tell the story of his rescue. In time he would become, in the words of the hymnist P.P. Bliss, a spiritual rescuer of "some poor fainting, struggling seaman." Because God, in His providence, saw fit to spare the life of Archie Word, "a poor sailor, tempest-tossed,"² Archie may have felt a debt to rescue the souls of men sinking deep in sin. The repayment of that debt, however, did not begin for many more years.

It is possible that Archie Word may have rescued a sailor on that never-to-be-forgotten November night. Or perhaps it took place on another occasion during his Navy experience. Years later he related to a reporter the incident.

During a stint in the Navy, he saved a fellow seaman from drowning. But when a representative of a private foundation quizzed him for a possible medal of bravery, Word proudly insisted he was not frightened for a moment during the rescue. But being aware of the danger involved was a prerequisite for that honor.

'That man took his medal home, and I went down below the deck a liar,' Word said, chuckling. 'That's kids for you.'³

THE LONESOME BUGLE BOY OF COMPANY D

In spite of all his bravado, Archie Word was still just a kid. On the last day of November, 1918, he wrote to his "little girl at home." It was his first "liberty" in 35 days, but he pulled guard duty and couldn't go ashore. "I'm all alone," he wrote. Thanksgiving had come and gone. By December he had reluctantly become a bugler. By this time many sailors were trying to get

out of the service so they could go home, especially for the holidays. Although Archie wanted to go home, he still wanted to see some action at sea, perhaps against Japan. "Everybody is putting in for affidavits to get out of the service," he told Florence. "Some for marriage support, school and important jobs. Here is one fellow that is going to stay until Uncle says, 'I don't need you anymore.' Then I'll come back to Lindsay for a little stay."⁴

Now that the war was over, time in the Navy was not nearly so glamorous. As a bugler he had to learn over 100 marches and calls. Day after day went by in December without a letter from Florence. One day was particularly bleak. Two weeks before Christmas the steam heating plant in Hampton Roads, Virginia, burned, leaving the barracks stone cold. Since all the cooking was done with steam, the men had to eat "hard tack" with canned milk for several days.

Deep inside his heart, Archie was a frustrated, homesick boy. He had joined the Navy to prove he was a man. But the war was finished, Christmas was only a few days away and here he was, stuck in a cold Navy barracks on the East Coast, far from sunny California, home and friends. Fighting soon became commonplace in the barracks. Archie's old company was put on restrictions for an unlimited time for nearly killing a man in a fight. Morale was at an all-time low. Archie, who had lied to get in the Navy, now took great umbrage that some were lying to get out. He described gambling, dice, fighting and even a shooting. 1918 came to an end with Archie blowing a bugle in the Navy, longing to be back in California where he could go to church, watch Billy play basketball, even wondering if his folks would let him play football. He

spent his first Christmas away from home bugling all day. On New Year's Eve he went to a church and heard some "pretty good songs," but sorely missed the annual Watch Night service in Lindsay.

1919 — STUCK IN THE NAVY!

The dawning of a new year seemed only to depress Archie. It was now apparent he was not going to be released; that, in fact, he might have to serve the full term for which he had enlisted. His January correspondence was filled with reminiscences about the familiar hills of Lindsay, hiking, car rides and picnics. He was totally demoralized when he got a rare letter from Luther informing him that he had made Archie's favorite riding horse, Buster Bill, into a work horse.

One day his bunk mate said, "Say, Word, you know how I used to think if I could only get in the Navy? Now I think how tickled I'd be to get out." Archie heartily agreed with him. Norfolk and Hampton Roads were now considered "no good towns" to him; he preferred Lindsay and the Sierra Nevadas. By this time it had sunk in that he had made a great mistake in quitting school and running away from home. He explained to Florence why he failed in school. "I didn't try, and I didn't care very much. But listen Billy, you just watch my dust when I get back in school."⁵

SICK BAY IN GUANTANAMO BAY

Although Archie didn't know it at the time, he would providentially be given the opportunity to make good in school again in less than eight months. But not before he was back out on the open seas. It seemed to lift his sagging spirits. "Free again and on the great big ocean once more. Gee, it's great."

Archie's new ship, the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania*, was described as a "610-foot modern Battle Wagon with 14-inch turrets and 5-inch high powered casemates." Now bugling wasn't so bad. "We've got a swell little compartment of fellows all to ourselves. Nothing but Buglers and Radio men. I sure like my place as a Bugler. No decks to holy stone, no paint work to scrub, and no loading stores or coaling ship. Just blow like (what the flu is)."⁶

The flu is what Archie soon caught — putting him in Sick Bay upon arrival in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He was so ill that a pal, Everett Bowers, had to write to Florence for him. In time Archie was transferred to the *Good Ship Solace*, a floating hospital ship in the bay. A month later Archie was down to 145 pounds, 30 pounds less than his heavyweight fighting class of 175 pounds. In March he was still "a pretty sick woman," but was able to enjoy the sights of Cuba from the deck. He described the mountains and fruit trees and the activity in the bay: launches filled with sailors in whites with their neckerchiefs waving as they go on recreation to the beach; Captain's speedy Gigs darting here and there; Admiral's Barges with American flags flying at their stern. All the sights, however, could not take his mind off home. "I get to thinking of Lindsay and my friends and then I've got to write or read or sing or work so I just write awhile and then try to forget."⁷

On April 21, 1919, Archie Word "finally" turned 18. A month later he was welcomed back on board the *Pennsylvania*. "It was almost like coming back home again. Everybody shaking my old mitts and asking how I felt. Well, they made me feel good and welcome. Then, to make things come to a wonderful climax,

were your letters. They made me feel like a new man. I fairly 'ate' them."⁸ News from home was that Mitch was home from France and would go with the old gang to a Christian Endeavor picnic. Archie sent word for him to make up for lost time and eat for two. After a quick cruise to Jamaica ("uneducated, ruled by the Priest, wet with Rum"), Archie and his crew were back in New York on April 25. Archie was glad to be back in the States again, even if it was not California. "Sunday gave me time to think. When church call came and we began to sing, maybe you know how I felt."⁹

One night Archie visited the Metropolitan Opera House and saw a "swell show." He had a two-dollar seat and ate about a dollar's worth of chocolate – all for free. Another outing, "something I'll never forget," was a visit to a major league baseball game. The short-stop who had played on the *Pennsylvania* baseball team was now on the roster of the Boston Braves. Archie went to see him play at either Ebbets Field or the Polo Grounds—"a wonderful field covered with short green grass." A trip to Coney Island convinced him that even Venice, California, could not compare. By this time he was back up to 170 pounds, thanks to all the chocolate, popcorn and Coney Islands, and was boxing again (though he mentioned that his ears were still hurting when he took some hard blows to the head in the ring).

While his ship was in "dry dock," Archie got into a fight of another sort at Madison Square Garden. "We had a riot in N.Y.C. last night. A crowd of Sailors and soldiers found out about a Bolshevik meeting near Madison Square Garden and of course they had to stop it. When they got there they found they had the cops

to whip before they could get to the big meeting. Well, they tried to but a hundred mounted cops knocked the plans in the head. Look out tonight! We will have some nice time with something besides our fists."¹⁰

One day the mail clerk brought mail on board during Captain's inspection. Archie was undeterred. He casually opened his mail and began reading it, while the skipper "looked hard" at him. Archie bragged, "A little Gold Braid can't worry my young life. I blew 'Attention' for him so he can't kick."

Archie's ears were a little better now, enough that he could climb back into the ring. In early May he mentioned a big upcoming bout. "We don't box for fun in this Navy so tomorrow I may be a sorry looking guy." Florence wanted him to give up the sport but he would not. The bout came off as scheduled. "We were to fight three two-minute round but my opponent decided he would quit in the second round."¹¹

Mother's Day, 1919, caused Archie to reevaluate his mother and sister. "Sunday was Mother's Day and we all had nice white carnations to wear. I heard a fine sermon at the Y. The man that spoke to us knew almost everything a mother was for. He even told me how my mother felt when I joined the Navy and never told her. He was a wonder and what he would cause several fellows that I know of to stop and think. I know he changed my views of mother and sister as well."¹² When he became a preacher of the Word, Archie Word, who at this time was concerned only with raising lumps on boxer's heads, would bring lumps to the throats of those who heard him preach on the value of mothers. In his famous sermon, "God's Blockades on the Road to Hell," the first blockade he

mentioned was Mother. "My own mother's prayers kept me from knocking a man in the head in San Diego. I saw my mother's face! . . . Why aren't some of you men and women in hell? A mother's prayers and teaching have kept you out!"¹³

Slowly but surely Archie Word was learning something from the hard lessons of life.

It has been most of a year since I've seen you or home either. I think sometimes I've grown to be at least 30 in that one year. My whole life has changed. When I left I didn't care very much for anyone or home or life in fact. I was out for adventure, but time has changed my ideas. Now I know who I love and where I intend to go some day. Home will be a novelty.¹⁴

He even admitted that the Superintendent of the Lindsay school, a Mr. Boren, who hadn't exactly seen eye to eye with Archie when he was a freshman, was "a fine man, even if he didn't agree with me all the time." A contrite Archie added, "I think he and I could get along together a great deal better now than we used to."¹⁵

DISCHARGED

Florence graduated from Lindsay High School in May 1918. The same month Archie's best friend in the Navy, Everett Bowen, was honorably discharged and went home to Utah. Archie was now stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. There he made a new friend, "Swede" Bomberger. It was a friendship that lasted long after their Navy years. And he continued to pummel his opponents in the ring. Because his ears hurt so bad when he got hit, he would look for the first opening and then "let him have it hard."

On a beautiful day in June Archie visited Washington, D.C., taking in the Capitol, the White House and the Washington Monument. He was so tuckered out from his walking that he slept for three hours in a city park. In mid-June he was back in New York, hoping to be discharged in time to reenter high school. In July he spent another 24 hours in the brig, this time for blowing a call wrong. By the end of the month he was fairly sure that he would be back home in a month. He was not far wrong. Fortunately he was able to obtain an honorable discharge from the U.S. Navy ("owing to lack of funds"), after having served a little more than one year. He would remain on "inactive status" until 1922, the year he graduated from high school. It does not appear that the Navy ever found out about Archie's underage enlistment.

In August Archie was sent to Mare Island in San Francisco, ready for discharge. The last letter Archie wrote to Florence while he was in the Navy was dated August 21, 1919.

Dearest Little Pal,

Back home again in California, and I'm on Mare Island. Seems as tho I could nearly reach down to Lindsay and pinch you. . . . Gee! I'm happy and I don't know for sure when I'll get out yet either. Are you coming to 'Frisco to see the Pacific Fleet? It will be grand. Oh, boy! I just go bugs when I think of being in Lindsay again where I can come see 'Billy' again. Wow! Some day it will be all over and I'll be home to stay until some more war comes along.

Your True Pal,
Sea Pop¹⁶

Four days later Archie Word, a modern prodigal son, was back in Lindsay again. There is no record of

the happy reunion with the "little girl back home" who had been true to her sailor boy during his brief stint in the Navy, but it must have been a happy one. One of the things Archie had written about was climbing the foothills outside Lindsay with Billy once he got back. A faded photograph dated 1919 shows that Archie kept the promise. The two young friends are shown side by side; Florence in a sailor blouse, Archie in suit and cap, standing atop Elephant's Back, the sun brightly shining on them, a portent of good things to come. But not for a good while yet.

BACK HOME AGAIN

How did home look to ex-sailor Archie the first time he turned down that familiar lane? His sister Nellie, then but six years old, remembers. "It was a big day when Archie finally came home after the war was over. I was playing in the yard with a little neighbor boy, Jack Webb, when we heard a bugle blowing half a block away. Little Jack, who dearly loved Archie, cried, 'I'm going to kiss him!'"¹⁷ [Jack Webb was killed in the South Pacific during World War II — Author]

Walter, by this time a strapping 16-year-old, pounded 5' 9" 178-pound Archie on the back. He looked up to his big brother, although he was now taller than Archie. What a duo they would make on the football team, if Luther would let Archie play. Teammates called Walter "Horse" because of his size and strength.

By this time Luther was realizing a little ready cash since the olive trees he had planted back in 1912 were now bearing fruit. He was glad to have Archie's help on the ranch once more and even relented to let both

boys play on Strathmore's football team that fall. However, now that he had money he was turning to drink again. Mother Maggie's faithful prayers had been answered. Her wayward son who had broken her heart was back in the fold again, safe and sound. All was forgiven. Archie even attended church with her after returning from the Navy, but not on a regular basis. "I wasn't a Christian, far from it. But I would go to church with my mother when she wanted me to, once in a while when I came back."¹⁸ One of those occasions made a lasting impression on him.

Where we were going to church they were raising money for the Christian college in Southern California [Pacific Bible Seminary, now Pacific Christian College — Author]. They were making an appeal to build. I didn't have any salary or anything yet. I was just out of the service. I had \$33, if I remember correctly. I gave it all. And just 10 days later I got back 10 times what I had put in (back pay from the government). I thought later about that when I learned about tithing. That made quite an impression on me.¹⁹

In years to come Archie Word would preach with power on the subject of giving because of that experience. But that was several miles down the road. Right now he was not ready to settle down. He had lost a year of his life and was ready to make up far lost time.

A FRIENDSHIP ENDS

The Procter family saw a noticeable change in Archie when he came calling, and they did not like what they saw. Elmer was one of the elders in the Lindsay church and talked to Archie about some of his ways he had picked up in the Navy. Archie later said that Elmer was "not so friendly as he was before,

because I was not a Christian then. I didn't go to church very much. Florence had enough sense not to see me at that time."²² One place he did see her from time to time was at the Lindsay Theater where Florence worked. When school took up in the fall, however, she boarded with a family in nearby Springville, where she taught eight grades of children in a one-room schoolhouse. That left only weekends and then she was under the watchful eye of Elmer and Ida Procter. Archie would occasionally write letters to her, but they were few and far between. She consented to dates only when Archie was behaving; when he was "misbehaving" all dates were off.

The two young friends, who had been so close during the war though separated by thousands of miles, now began drifting apart, though only a few miles were between them. Archie began to see other girls. He loved to dance. At a couple of dances, one at Plano and the other at "Wotten's Place," news got back to Billy that other girls were receiving Archie's affections. She and Archie had a heated discussion one weekend when she was home from Springville.

"Billy, every time I've been to a dance I've told you truthfully who I've been with!" Then he did something he was prone to do — swear off swearing and dancing altogether! "I'll never have to tell you about going to a dance anymore. I've sworn off on public dancing." In the same letter he apologized for swearing in Billy's presence one Sunday afternoon, pleading with her not to give up on him. "With you to live for I could do anything."²¹

Florence blamed herself for being too "cowardly" to rebuke Archie. "I do care for you, Archie," she told him. "Oh! So much." But while she saw Archie's sins

as sins of commission, she saw her own as sins of omission. She promised him that in the future she would do a better job of policing Archie's behavior. "I am your friend and I am going to try to be more frank with all my friends — particularly you."

Throughout the summer of 1921 the differences continued. In October things seemed to come to a head. Archie was becoming increasingly jealous of any male who came close to Florence. Again and again she tried to explain that there was nothing to it, that these friendships were purely job-related (which they proved to be). Then Archie wanted Florence to accompany himself and some friends on an overnight trip. Billy flatly refused. "There are conventionalities," she rebuked Archie. Archie, who had sworn off swearing, cut loose with a blue streak. Florence responded, "Archie, no gentleman is going to use impure language, particularly before a woman!" (Florence was now keeping her promise to be more frank with her friend.)

Archie wanted her to go to dances with him. Florence replied, "Dancing just for dancing's sake is not objectionable; in fact I rather like some kind and do not know as they hurt you or would me; but look to Romans 14:21." The thing that really seemed to hurt Florence the most was Archie's making fun of her desire to be a missionary some day. After twitting her for being "holier than thou" at a party, she replied, "That [being a missionary — Author] is an ideal have held for years and still hold. And if it is at all possible I mean to go; alone if necessary in spite of having once known someone I would like to have had go with me."²² If there were ever words that must have haunted Archie Word in the years to come, it must

have been those words. But instead of joining Florence as a mission party, Archie chose to party with the world. Shortly after this incident he received an invitation to a Halloween party.

Come taste the witches brew,
Dress in witches costume,
And if you like a good time,
We'll show you what to do.

The break between Florence and Archie came in January 1922. She was still teaching school in Springville and Archie was in his senior year at Strathmore. On January 11 Archie sat down and wrote a letter that he had "intended to write for a long time."

This is all I have to say: Our friendly tour over many years was all a mistake. I was in the wrong pew and so were you. Now that I have thought over the situation, I can readily see the mistake of our young lives. You were a lily in a briar patch, and I was trying to be a lily when I am sticky as a briar. . . . So I am glad that is all over now. You can be a lily and I can be a briar. . . . I thank the Lord that we found out before it was too late. This may seem like foolishness to you, but it is a hard fought battle for me because I tried so long to be something I was not. Don't think I am not your friend because I am. And I will do anything to help you but don't be surprised if I seem different to what I used to be. A 'nice' fellow is not my part so I may not be one from now on. Good-bye, good luck and God bless you.²³

Other than a formal "I heard you were sick – please get well" letter in February, this would be the last letter Archie would write Florence until 1925.

When Florence received Archie's farewell letter she was hurt and bewildered, but firm in her conviction.

First, she addressed the "lily-briar" comparison:

I think the comparison to the lily and briar patch very unfitting in this case. I have always tried to do and be my best which is perfectly natural for anyone who strives for high ideals, but for being a lily I am far from that perfection. You a briar? Yes, if you want to be. No, if you do not want to be. . . . You can make of yourself just what you desire. You ought to be ashamed of yourself to speak as you do, intimating that you were handicapped in some way. Any one with the brains, backbone, physical stamina and mother back of him that you have should be able to make a – yes, even a lily of himself if he tried.²⁴

Her righteous indignation spent, she let her hurting heart speak.

Hurt? Yes, of course it hurts to be cheated out of friendship because some one does not care enough about his home and friends to aspire above the 'briar patch' . . . I wish I could see you once more and have a talk with you. Perhaps then we could really straighten things out as they should be; however, use your own judgment. If you are content to let things rest as they are, I shall have to be too.²⁵

FINISHING UP SCHOOL

For many years the community of Strathmore had sent their children to Lindsay High School, but in 1919, the year Archie reentered school, Strathmore Union High School opened its doors for the first time. Twenty-two sophomores enrolled including 18-year-old Archie James Word. He was determined to finish school this time and the records show that he did a good job. "One thing he had learned in the Navy was that if he ever expected to amount to anything, he needed to have an education. Before his Navy

experience his grades were not good. After he came home and went back to school he did excellent work."²⁶ In three years at Strathmore High Archie took English, Spelling, Penmanship, Dramatics, Biology, General Science, Algebra, Geometry, History, Stenography and Typing, Commercial Arithmetic, Manual Training, Mechanic Arts and Physical Education. He found a new love – the stage, something that would help him in his later career as a singer and revivalist. He would often practice his part at home, repeating his lines over and over in the presence of an awestruck and attentive audience of one, sister Nellie. He starred in the Junior Class play, "The Man From Home," and in several plays his Senior year, "Her Christmas Hat," and "Nothing But The Truth." In the latter play he had the part of one Bishop Doran. During his senior year several "world-famous" singers and actors visited Strathmore, making further impressions on Archie. In October 1919 a "world-famous" soprano, Madam Ellen Beach Yaw, with a four-octave range, gave a number of selections. In March 1920 a professional actor, Loriman Percival, visited the school and presented several scenes from Shakespeare.

But the number one love in Archie's life from 1919 to 1922 was sports. The football coach must have licked his chops when he saw Walter and Archie show up for practice. Three other ex-servicemen were also on the team. Walter played center and Archie played left tackle. "I wasn't too fast," said Archie, "but I was strong and I could get through. We wore pads and helmets. One of our men on the line wouldn't wear a helmet. He had thick curly hair. So I quit wearing my helmet."²⁷ Helmet or no helmet, the boys from Strathmore whipped their opponents in regular

season play, making it to the semi-final round of the Southern California football championship.²⁸ Nellie was proud of her brothers. "I used to love to go to the football games because my two handsome brothers were very popular and all the girls treated this little kid sister really neat. Archie was always very kind to me and I was proud to be his sister."²⁹ Walter was good enough to receive a four-year football scholarship from Whittier College. He would go on to do post-graduate work at USC and then coach football, baseball, basketball, track and swimming for 37 years at Santa Maria Union High School, Santa Maria Junior College and Allan Hancock College.³⁰ Archie played football again his Junior year, but by his final year in high school he could no longer compete in that sport because of two mastoids, recurring injuries from the pummeling he had taken in the boxing ring and the booming 14-inch turret Navy guns.

Archie turned to basketball when winter came. His senior yearbook, *The Pleiades*, reported that Jack Wilcox and Archie Word, guards, "were the strongest players on the team." "Every time an opposing forward would fix his mouth to shoot a basket they would spoil the shot for him." The final game of the season saw Strathmore top Porterville 35-15.

Spring was always met with the welcome sound of ash meeting horsehide. Strathmore had a good baseball team in 1922, losing only to Porterville 5-3. A county judge used to drive miles to see the battery of Bert Lindquist and Archie Word perform. Bert eventually signed a contract with Reno in the Pacific Coast League but quit when they tried to make a first baseman out of him. During his junior year Strathmore played for the league championship against Visalia.

Larry French, a top-notch left hander, was on the mound for Visalia. After Strathmore managed to tie the score Visalia came up for their last at bat. They had a man on second with one out when a batter hit a sharp ground ball to the second baseman, who picked it up and threw it to first for the second out. But the runner at second rounded third and headed for home. The spooked first baseman threw the ball home, high over catcher Archie's lunging grasp and into the grandstand and the game was lost.³⁰ The Strathmore nine had nothing to be ashamed of that day. Visalia born and bred southpaw Larry (Lefty) French went on to pitch for 14 years in the National League with Pittsburgh, Chicago and Brooklyn, winning a total of 197 games, appearing in seven World Series games!

THREE YEARS LATE — GRADUATION!

Archie Word was voted Vice President of his senior class. The class motto was, "To Be And Not To Seem." Archie's graduation picture in *The Pleiades* was captioned, "He has talents equal to his business." In the "Last Will and Testament of the Senior Class of 1922" Archie's will is found. "I, Archie Word, do leave my ability to bring forth those rosy blushes on the fair cheeks of Miss Brinkman to Evan Todd." The "Senior Analysis" rated Archie "40% 'hard-boiled', 50% 'good fellow', 10% divided between the school play, the Annual and baseball." He was manager of *The Pleiades* and also served as a Student Body officer.

On May 13, 1922, Archie James Word, who had celebrated his twenty-first birthday a month earlier, received his long awaited diploma from the Principal of Strathmore Union High School, A.B. Snyder. Archie (baritone) and Mrs. Myrtle Bouldin (mezzo soprano)

sang a duet, "One Fleeting Hour." The Commencement Address, "The Conference on Limitation of Armaments," was given by Dr. Tully Knoles, President of the College of the Pacific. With the singing of the class song by the class of 1922 and the benediction by one Rev. N.C. McCay, Archie's high school days came to an end.

A runaway boy had come back home and made good. In the eyes of the good citizens of Strathmore and Lindsay that is. In the eyes of Mother Maggie there was still a shade of pensive wonder. In the eyes of Elmer Procter there was unguarded doubt. In the eyes of young school teacher Billy there was dull disappointment and hurt. And in the eyes of God, you ask? Well, there was yet another chapter in the life of Archie Word to be played out before he made good in the eyes of God!

Between the years of 1922 and 1925 Archie Word would run the gamut of sin. He would sink so low that only the grace of God could save him. Little wonder that in later years he would bill himself as "A Sinner Saved By Grace." Archie Word, a good singer and actor in his own right, was about to take center stage in a tragic opera called *The Prodigal Son*, Episode Two.

Notes

1. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
2. "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning", by P.P. Bliss
3. *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, Nov. 24, 1983
4. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Dec. 9, 1918
5. *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1919
6. *Ibid.*, Feb. 4, 1919
7. *Ibid.*, Mar. 1, 1919
8. *Ibid.*, Mar. 8, 1919

9. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1919
10. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1919
11. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1919
12. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1919
13. Sermon notes, "God's Blockades on the Road to Hell"
14. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, May 22, 1919
15. *Ibid.*, June 8, 1919
16. *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1919
17. Author's interview with Nellie Word Arnold, April 22, 1990
18. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
19. *Ibid.*
20. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Oct. 5, 1985
21. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Feb. 1, 1921
22. Letter to Archie Word from Florence Procter, Oct. 5, 1921
23. Letter to Florence Procter from Archie Word, Jan. 11, 1922
24. Letter to Archie Word from Florence Procter, Jan. 1922
25. *Ibid.*
26. Letter to author from Nellie Word Arnold, Dec. 29, 1988
27. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988
28. *The Life Story of Archie Word*, p. 10
29. Letter to author from Nellie Word Arnold, Dec. 29, 1989
30. Interview with Archie Word by Don Hunt, Jr., Feb. 1988



M/M Thomas Kenny, Archie's maternal grandparents



Early on Archie had a leg up on the world!



Archie (12) with Walter and family dog



Archie (holding bicycle), Walter, Maggie and Luther



At 17 Archie joined the Navy



Hitting the line for the Strathmore eleven



Archie and Florence atop Elephant's Back after WW I



Archie's first love, Florence Procter (18)



The class of 1930, Eugene Bible University. Archie is at top left.



The Lindsay church (now called "Memory Hall")



The Crabtree church, where Archie preached his first sermon

Hear This

FEARLESS FIGHTER FOR GOD

MARCOLA
"Church of Christ"
(CHRISTIAN CHURCH)

Every
Night
7:30

—
Preach-
ing
without
Fear
or
Favor



Big
Song
Service
—
Instru-
mental
and
Special
Vocal
Numbers

EVANGELIST A. WORD
Ex-Sailor & Prize Fighter

Handbill from Archie Word's first revival

PART II

(1922-1930)

A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE

"If he is ever converted,
he will be a real power for God."
—W.S. Lemmon, 1925