

Merry Christmas



and
Happy New Year



HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER

A LAST SAY SO PRODUCTION

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EIGHTH EDITION

Stronger, Kinder, Wiser.

by W. Marichal Gentry

Happy Holidays from the Gentry family. I began writing this letter on a beautiful fall Sunday morning in mid-October, where the leaves are falling, and where the torrid heat and humidity of the summer are yielding to the welcomed chill of autumn. It's been an extremely dry season, and the deer that I'm used to seeing in my back yard, have opted for, perhaps, a different place to graze and frolic with their young doe, because the water supply near my house is depleted.

The past 18 months have been as polarizing a time as I can remember. We've moved into an era plagued by passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive displays of hate; we see examples of people verbally vandalizing each other's hopes, dreams, and spirits; and we fail to see our country and the world as one that can be shared peacefully with one another. It seems that anything goes now.

When we turn to the news channels on our televisions or computers, we see paid pundits screaming over each other to make a point, no matter what. Work colleagues cease talking to and working with each other, when they learn that they are political opponents. The rhetoric they hear from politicians now make it all but possible to find common ground as friends or as colleagues. A child

comes home from school vowing not to return because he is being physically and verbally bullied by another child. The bully, because of his youth, doesn't realize the impact of his words or deeds; the bully only was repeating behaviors he learned at home.

The anxiety, fear, and uncertainty that many young people have are real. Young people believe that the use and abuse of alcohol and drugs and other harmful, self-injurious behaviors will abate these feelings, but I know that this is not the case.

I am a realist, and I share the caution that many of my family and friends have when we drive our cars, or when we are out in unfamiliar places. The images we've seen of unwarranted aggression give us cause to worry. Retaliation also isn't the answer and has proven ineffective.

I also am an optimist. I dream of a stronger, kinder, wiser world. I dream of a world that is at peace. Russian novelist, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, once said, "The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart." Blessings for a stronger, kinder, wiser year ahead. Read on. Love, WMG

Exceedingly Abundantly Above and Beyond



Mom singing at the piano with Vanessa, Cheryl, and Deborah.



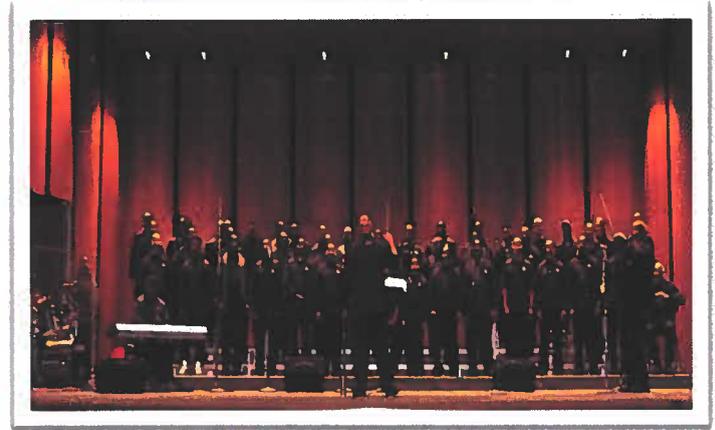
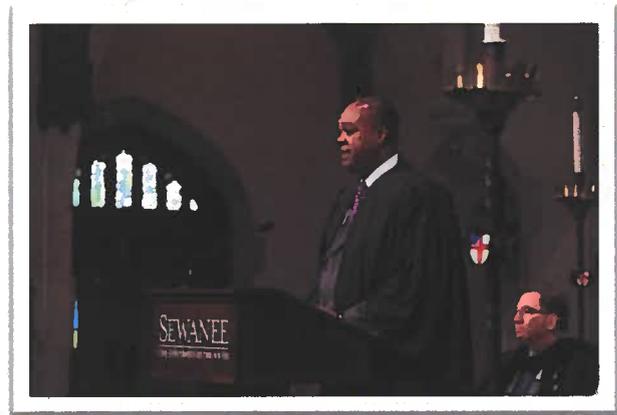
On Saturday, June 4, 2016, my nephew, Taylor Gentry, married his longtime sweetheart, J'Chante Miller, in a beautiful church wedding. His younger brother, O'Brien Gentry served as his best man.

The wedding was well-attended, and was beautifully officiated by Taylor's pastor, Anthony Walker.

Following the wedding ceremony, we all had a wonderful time at a sit-down dinner at the Bell Buckle Banquet Hall.

Taylor and J'Chante work and attend school. They reside in Murfreesboro, TN with their dog, Bruno.





Photos from work

100 Men in Black Male Chorus at Sewanee (in concert).

At dinner with author and NY Times columnist, Bob Herbert.

Posse Foundation, Inc. founder, Debbie Bial, visits Sewanee to facilitate a diversity workshop.

Marichal delivers a speech at the Honor Code Signing Ceremony at Sewanee.

Author of "How to Parent an Adult, Julie Lythcott-Haims, and Sewanee's Vice Chancellor, John McCardell.

Student Life Staff comes to my house for dinner.



The Year in Review

I'm in my second year at Sewanee, and while there have been many challenges, my work is moving along, as planned. I have many good, supportive and dedicated colleagues.

The year started out with a bang. The 100 Men in Black Male Chorus from North Carolina was invited to Sewanee to celebrate the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. They arrived late Friday night of the MLK Weekend, and checked in to the newly renovated Sewanee Inn, described as one of Tennessee's top five destinations. On Saturday, the 100 Men in Black toured Sewanee's campus, and then they all assembled in Guerry Auditorium for rehearsal and sound check. Following rehearsal, members of the Sewanee community, led by our very own Vice Chancellor and his wife, joined the male chorus in a community sing-a-long. The members of the 100 Men in Black taught one of its songs to the participants in the sing-a-long, and during the concert, which took place on Sunday, the following day, the 100 Men in Black invited Saturday's sing-a-long participants onstage to perform the song they'd learned.

On Saturday morning, the men's head basketball coach emailed me to express his disappointment that his team couldn't participate in the sing-a-long, as it conflicted with their afternoon basketball game. He asked if there might be a chance that one of the 100 Men in Black Male Chorus singers would be willing to sing the National Anthem before the game. Knowing that the 100 Men in Black, as a group, sang a beautiful, stirring rendition of the National Anthem, and had done so at a Charlotte Hornets NBA game, as well as at Duke basketball and Durham Bulls baseball games, I asked the coach how he would feel if the entire male chorus were to stop by the game and sing. After getting the athletic director's approval, I arranged for the 100 Men in Black to sing at Sewanee's basketball game.

Imagine 70 men (68 of them African-American) all dressed in black, walking into a gymnasium filled mostly with white people, lining up with precision, and standing at attention under the basket waiting to be introduced to an unknowing crowd. The sure sound of that many seasoned voices rang out through the gymnasium like nothing ever before heard. At the final line of the anthem, "and the home of the brave," I watched tears rolling down the faces of many fans, both from the home and away crowds—the 100 Men in Black's rendition of the national anthem simply was that powerful. The assistant athletic director walked over, eyes welled up with tears, to shake my hand. As professionally as the 100 Men in Black entered the gymnasium, they exited with the same professionalism to resume the work that they needed to do to prepare for the concert that was to take place the next day. A few fans even followed the group out to the lobby where they stored their coats, either to thank them or to find out who they were. There were many highlights that weekend, but the 100 Men in Black's singing of the National Anthem, was, perhaps, the best, most spontaneous of them all.

In February, I made the fourth of five trips to Monterrey, Mexico, where I serve on the international advisory board at the University of Monterrey (UDEM). I've enjoyed my work there, and after each trip, I feel as if I've made a real contribution to a young University that aspires to attain the sophistication that many US institutions have attained. My work at Monterrey will end next March.

I've really grown to appreciate the Mexican culture and the Mexican people. I've made some very good friends as a result of my visits there. While I look forward to planning my final official visit to Monterrey, I'll miss being a part of the assembly of student life professionals from around the world who make up UDEM's advisory board. I've learned way more than I've contributed.

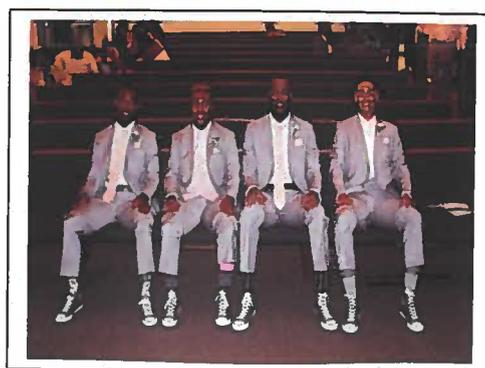
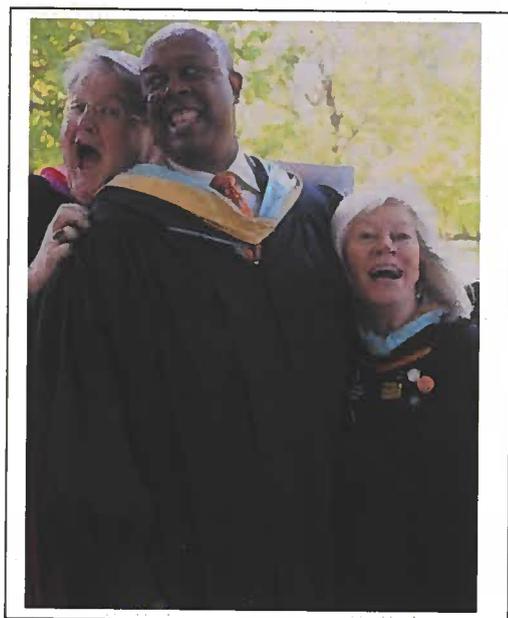
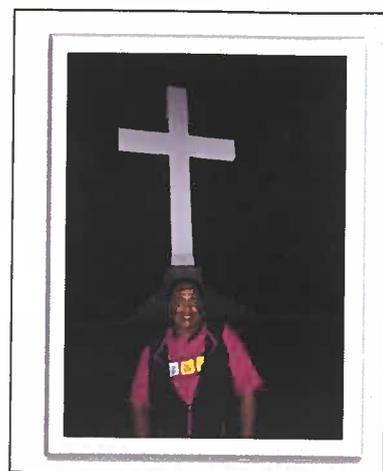
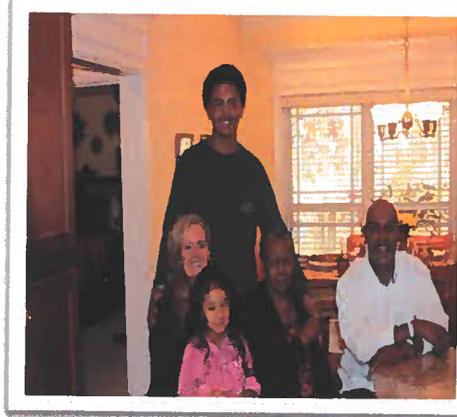
Professionally, the Vice-Chancellor added to my title. In addition to being the Dean of Students, I now am Vice President for Student Life. This new title is more reflective of my true role at the University, and I am honored to have the great responsibility of guiding student life and leading a team of professionals.

After nineteen long months on the market, the house I owned in Connecticut finally sold. A nice, French-speaking family from the Congo bought it. Other than the great memories I'll always cherish from my time at Yale and in Connecticut, my Connecticut house was the only remaining vestige I had left in New England. I'm so glad that I only have to manage one house now.

At the end of last year, we sold mom's house in Lewisburg. It was bittersweet to sell it, because it held so many memories, but it was not benefitting anyone with no one living in it. The family that bought it is enjoying it, and from what I've been told, is living up to the challenge of keeping up with mom's all out Christmas decorations, inside and out.

Mom has settled into a comfortable routine at Sewanee. She seems to do best maintaining a simple daily schedule. She and I enjoy visitors, and we look forward to seeing you. Love to you all, and like He has for me, may God bless you exceedingly, abundantly, above and beyond all we ask and think, according to the power that works in us. That's my prayer for you. WMG

Photos: Thanksgiving with family; Pamela London at the Cross at Sewanee; Marichal and Masha; Ariona and Marichal; Marichal and Terry; Marichal with Chaplain Neal and Lee Ann; Ariona playing in the leaves; and Taylor and his Groomsmen.





Photos: Mom, on her birthday; Mom meets DJ, her hairdresser, Toya's new baby; Marichal with John and Ann Hanson and Bonnie McCardell; Mom napping on my shoulder; Mom with her favorite caregiver, Heather; Marichal with friend and former Yale colleague, Emily Bakemeier; Mom with grandson, O'Brien on her birthday; and The Taylor Family with nephew, Taylor, on his big day.

Until next year . . .

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