

# I Remember the Forum

with

“Ticky” Harries, Clyde Bedell, Barrie Bedell, Ruth Renn, Grace Walker, Wesley James and Julia Early Fenderson

**K**ATHARINE J. “TICKY” HARRIES: I wasn’t an original member of the Forum, which began in the early ’20s, nor were my parents, Lee Miller Jones and Katharine Lea Yarnall Jones. A number of people had already been there and dropped out before we started. My father had been introduced to Dr. Sadler by Fred Leverenz and had joined the early Forum in 1932. I was quite young when I began to notice that every Sunday after church, after the “funnies” and Sunday dinner, Daddy would disappear for the afternoon. It took him a while, but he finally talked Mother into going with him. For many years thereafter she could not get rid of the feeling that “this is all so wonderful, and I believe it, but how could anything so wonderful possibly be true?” Then one day she realized that she didn’t feel that way anymore—she *knew* it was true.

They started taking me with them to 533 Diversey Parkway when I was 11 or 12. Since I was much too young to attend the meetings I would visit downstairs with Mr. and Mrs. Kellogg and read or play games. Many times their daughter Ruth would spend



(l-r): June 26, 1949: Winnifred Bucklin, Al Leverenz, Katharine “Ticky” Jones Harries

the time with me. What a wonderful person she was! Dr. Sadler had his offices on the first floor and Ruth would take me in to see the lead-lined room which was used for X-rays and show me the specimens in the bottles of formaldehyde. On very warm days (there was no air conditioning) we would go up to the roof and sit in the sun. Ruth was quite deaf from a childhood illness, but she could lip-read and we never had any trouble talking with one another.

A number of partial papers had been received and typed by the time I started going to the Sunday meetings when I was about 13. They were not complete as they are now in the Urantia Book, but were completed as more and more questions were asked. I remember my father spending many hours typing questions to submit to the contact personalities so that they could give us new information that would be especially meaningful to human beings.

I was not allowed to “join” the Forum until I was 16 (later the joining age was raised to 18). Joining consisted in having a private chat with Dr. Sadler so that he was sure you were truly



A group of early Forum members in 1934

committed to being a part of the group, studying the papers and attending the meetings every Sunday. There were only three valid reasons for being absent: your health, your family, or your job. And one was never to discuss what was going on or any of the teachings in the Papers with non-members.

Life was very different then from what it is now. On Sundays one went to church in the morning, went home for a big Sunday dinner around noon and then went to Forum still dressed in Sunday Best. That meant silk stockings and dress shoes for the ladies (we didn't have nylon stockings until after WW II), a dress or suit, and for some of them, a hat. The men wore a suit, white shirt and tie.

The room used for meetings was at the front of the building on the second floor, and was originally the living room of the apartment and his wife, Leone, lived with their three children. Dr. Sadler and his wife, Dr. Lena, lived on the third floor. They had an elevator installed which was accessed from the foyer on each floor.

A paper was read aloud the first hour by Dr. Sadler or Bill, followed by a 15-minute break. Refreshments were not provided, so those who wanted to could go across the street for an ice cream or a Coke. The second hour was devoted to questions and discussion.

There was one lady who always sat next to the balcony door and who, in the depth of our Chicago winters, would open the door so she could cool off while the rest of us would freeze. And there was another woman who would argue with just about everything anyone said. She was so negative, but smart, and we'd

all end up laughing about it—and maybe *at*—her.

My father, mother and I went to the meetings year after year and during that time my maternal grandmother, Henrietta Lea “Dearie” Yarnall, who was widowed and came to live with us, started going to meetings too. Our group included males and females of all ages and educational levels and different church backgrounds.

While the Forum continued its Sunday meetings, another group was formed of the most committed members, which started meeting every Wednesday evening at 533. It was thought that these people would be the teachers once the book was printed. Attendance was mandatory and it was necessary to sign in each Wednesday. When all of us who wanted to join were counted, it was found that there were exactly seventy names—thus the name of the group, the Seventy.

Every year, in late spring or early summer, a huge picnic was held at Ma and Pa Hales’ mansion in Oak Park, a northwest suburb of Chicago. Everyone brought baskets full of food. The Haleses provided hamburgers and hot dogs as well as card tables and chairs to put out on their lawn. The women would wear cotton dresses and stockings and the men long trousers with shirts unbuttoned at the neck and rolled-up sleeves. There was lots of socializing. After the meal we were all called inside to hear Dr. Sadler give a talk. Our group filled the screened-in porch, living room and spacious foyer, and we younger ones would sit on the broad staircase all the way up to and including the landing.

In the last years of the Forum we would every so often be read a ▶



**The six contact commissioners:**

ABOVE: (l-r) Emma “Christy” Christensen, Lena Sadler, Dr. William S. Sadler, Bill Sadler. LEFT: Anna and Wilfred Kellogg. RIGHT: The Sadler residence at 533 Diversey Parkway, Chicago, where the revelation was received. The Forum room was located on the second floor.



PHOTO: Saskia Praamsma





*A Forum picnic at Pine Lodge, Beverly Shores, Indiana in the late '40s. (l-r): Lee Miller Jones, Edyth Born, Charlie Rawson, Harry Beattie, Katharine Jones, Anna Rawson, "Dearie," Art Born.*

message from "The Boys Upstairs." This is true—it happened! You can imagine the excitement, the butterflies in the tummy—and then the messages stopped.

Later in the summer there would be another big gathering at Dr. Sadler's summer home in Beverly Shores at the Indiana sand dunes along Lake Michigan. The home was rustic and timbered and was large and comfortable. It was another step down in formality from the one at the Haleses but we still weren't in shorts or T-shirts. Bill Sadler and Daddy loved martinis, but Bill liked his 15 to 1, so for a portion of the afternoon the two of them were quite busy out on the big screened-in porch.

As I and some of the other children of the group got into our mid-teens and early twenties, the Sadlers were kind enough to allow us to use their beach rights every summer for a beach party and cook-out. We'd swim, sunbathe, play ball and sit and talk for hours. As evening came on we'd build a fire and cook hot dogs and marshmallows and eat all the good stuff we'd brought. There were Donna and Harry Rowley, Winnifred Bucklin Manjarrez, Phil and Ben Copenhaver and their stepbrother Billy. And, of course, me.

In later years after most of us were married we'd have dinner parties at each others homes. That group also included Barney and Florence Burton and, occasionally, Dick and Irene Renn. This

was the era of young marrieds and babies. What great photos I have of all those wonderful times!

The adults had their groups, too—Mother, Daddy, "Dearie," Charlie and Anne Rawson, Edyth and Art Born, Russell and Mildred Bucklin, Edna and Everett Farwell, Louise and Ernest Pritchard, and Harry Beattie. They had dinner parties at each other's homes, and my parents, the Rawsons and the Bucklins would often take summer vacations together.

Charlie Rawson was a Presbyterian minister. He was tall, with red hair, a bit too roly-poly, and lots of fun to be with. He was a master storyteller and could keep us entertained for hours with hilarious tales of people he had known throughout his life. Everyone was sure he would be our first Urantia Book minister when the time came. Sadly, the time never came. Charlie ate way too much candy and sugar and when he couldn't get that he would eat cough drops instead. His favorite was thick slabs of crisp pure fat cut from the outside of a roast. We all warned him but he wouldn't listen. So—he died very young.

In the early '50s the plates for printing were ready, the money had been raised, and for a year or more before publication Forumites were asked to "subscribe" to buying and pre-paying for any number of books they would like. After a short period, when no more messages had been received, it was decided to go ahead,

and R. R. Donnelley & Sons Co. was given the order to print. On the Sunday after the books were received, they were distributed. Can you imagine what tremendous excitement there was as the people carried them out by the boxful on that day in 1955?

My father, along with many others, wrote letters of introduction for the Urantia Book and spent days and weeks wrapping and mailing them to senators, congressmen, members of the clergy and others in places of importance all over the country. We had such great expectations of the wonderful things this book was going to achieve. A few books were returned, unread, and the rest? We heard absolutely nothing!

Work was started by the Brotherhood to set up Urantia Societies, and on June 17, 1956, we met at 533 to sign the charter

**BARRIE BEDELL:** World War II was raging, rationing was in effect, and citizens of all ages were pouring all available money into savings bonds and stamps to support the war effort. Signs and posters and radio announcements barraged us with warnings to keep mum about defense activities: "Loose lips sink ships." Everyone was aware of the subversive "fifth column," spies and espionage agents working for the Nazis.

I was in my early teens, a mediocre high school student, obsessed with sports, and reasonably well informed on the progress of the war. At some point—I don't remember exactly when—I noticed that my folks, Clyde and Florence Bedell, would disappear like clockwork every Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening. I began to question them, "Where are you going?"

"Oh, the Forum," was the usual reply. On Wednesday nights the answer would be, "The Seventy."

"What is the Forum? the Seventy?" I would press them. "What do you do?"

The typical response was maddeningly vague, not at all satisfying to an inquisitive teen: "We read and talk about a variety of subjects."

"Like what?" I would demand.

"We really can't say."

I began to harbor doubts that soon turned to suspicion. Something was terribly wrong. Then one blustery winter night I watched them depart in blizzard conditions. I began to think the unthinkable, that perhaps my parents were involved in something sinister. I came to the terrifying conclusion that they were involved in the Nazi fifth column.

I was greatly relieved when a few weeks later, on my fourteenth birthday, my parents announced: "Now we can tell you what we've been doing every Sunday and every Wednesday evening." They took me to 533 Diversey Parkway and introduced me to Dr. William Sadler, who told me about the Urantia Papers and invited me to attend the Forum. I was excited about what I was soon to experience and, as all who had joined before me, I took an oath of secrecy. It was a pivotal day in my life, for which I will forever be profoundly grateful.

Frequently on Saturdays I went to 533 where I would sit in a small, dark anteroom on the ground floor and read papers one at a time— typewritten manuscripts, each page pasted onto heavier stock, each paper supplied in a kraft envelope handed to me by Christy. Later, typeset galley proofs replaced the typewritten pages. My favorites were "Life Establishment on Urantia," "Government on a Neighboring Planet," and the Adam and Eve saga.

I also regularly attended Sunday meetings upstairs (except when away at school), always greeted by Wilfred and Anna Kellogg. Papers were read by Dr. Sadler or his son, Bill. During breaks I hung out at O'Connell's Coffee Shop across the street with somewhat older members Tom and Carolyn Kendall, Nola Evans, Al Leverenz, Phil Copenhaver, Donna and Harry Rowley, and others. My brother Jeff started attending the Forum in 1951 when he was 13 or 14.

Disturbing as it was for a while, I am proud my folks honored their vow of secrecy, as did all but one or two Forum members from the very beginning till the day of publication in October, 1955.

**RUTH RENN:** In my early years it was difficult for me to accept the message of being redeemed by the blood of Jesus. I was constantly on a quest for truth. I searched in many libraries for books that might give me what I wanted and needed. On the radio, Preston Bradley in Chicago came the nearest to imparting the truth I was seeking.

In 1925 I went to the Chicago Institute of Research and Diagnosis on Diversey Parkway for a complete physical examination. One appointment was with the co-owner, Dr. William Sadler, for a psychological test. He asked me many questions regarding my thoughts and desires. The question about religious beliefs was, "Do you believe in a Creator?" The conversation led to truth. I mentioned that I would like to be closed in a room to read and read until I found the truth I was looking for. I remember the doctor's face as I said this. He seemed to have a satisfied spark in his eyes and he nodded his head up and down. Not long after that I received a note in the mail inviting me to attend a Sunday meeting called the Forum at the Sadler home.

One Sunday I persuaded my husband to attend a meeting with me to see what it was about. As we ascended the stairs of the building at 533 Diversey Parkway, my husband made the remark, "You will never get me down here again." We were greeted by Dr. Lena Sadler, the doctor's wife, who said, "These beings told us to build the scaffolding; they would do the rest."

When the meeting opened we were fortunate to hear Paper 1, "The Universal Father." I was astounded. Never had I realized that we could be told so much about God. All the following week I was remembering little snatches of what I had heard about our heavenly Father, his love and mercy. I had found what I had been searching for.

The following Sunday my husband Roy was preparing to go to the meeting with no thought of what he had said the week before about never going again. Our lives were changed from that time on. And, for over sixty years, I have endeavored to be a faithful disseminator of the Urantia teachings.

**JULIA EARLY FENDERSON:** In 1939, after teaching school for ten years in New Mexico, Julia Early found herself in Chicago, a single mother with two young sons and unable to find a teaching job. One Sunday morning she attended services at a Methodist Church and heard the name Dr. William S. Sadler mentioned, not only as a world-famous psychiatrist but as a counselor who had successfully guided a number of people. She said, "I was quite shy but I was also very poor and in despair, so even though it was Sunday, I went out to the church parking lot and called Dr. Sadler from a pay phone." Dr. Sadler agreed to see Julia the following day. He helped her find a job and gave her ►



# ANNUAL PICNICS 1942—1949



The grounds of the Hales residence, where most of the early picnics were held



ABOVE: (l-r) Lucille Kulieke, Lee Miller Jones, Helen Gill Thurman Carlson, Bill Sadler, Leone Gill Sadler, Thomas E. Wideroe, Emma "Christy" Christensen. TOP RIGHT: Mr. and Mrs. Hales and Dr. Sadler. LEFT: Margaret Stevens, Julia Early. RIGHT: Marian Rowley and Dr. Sadler. BELOW: Marian Rowley, Martha Sherman, Alvin Kulieke, Lucille Olson.







TOP LEFT: 1947. Anna Rawson, Lee Miller Jones (hidden), Rev. Charles Rawson, Phil Copenhaver, Jr. (face hidden), Marie Vlasto, "Dearie," Everett and Edna Farwell, Katharine Jones, Art Born, Katherine Douglas. TOP RIGHT: Beverly Shores, 1949. Harry Rowley, Winnifred Bucklin, Ben Copenhaver, Billy Copenhaver, Phil Copenhaver, Jr., "Ticky" Jones. LEFT: June 1948. (l-r) (unknown, Art Born, Lee Miller Jones, Charlie Rawson. BELOW LEFT: 1949. Bill and Leone Sadler, Edith Cook, Elizabeth James. BELOW RIGHT: Pine Lodge, Beverly Shores. Everett Farwell, Art Born, Edna Farwell, Katharine Jones, Lee Miller Jones, "Ticky" Jones. FAR BELOW, LEFT: At Hales' in 1949. Ben Copenhaver, Harry Rowley, Donna Rowley, "Ticky" Jones, Phil Copenhaver, Jr. FAR BELOW, RIGHT: Beverly Shores, 1948: Bob Burton, Fred Leverenz, Harry Rowley, Al Dyon, Wilfred Kellogg.



some books to read, including *The Mind At Mischief*, but did not mention anything to her about the Urantia papers.

Julia read every word, and when she went back to see Dr. Sadler on the third floor of 333 Diversey Parkway she questioned him about the case he referred to in the Appendix to *The Mind at Mischief*. Sadler was evasive but Julia was so persistent that finally, in near exasperation, he said, "Julia, sit down and I'll tell you the whole story." He told her about the Urantia papers and she didn't sleep that night.

Julia said, "I was skeptical. I'd been brought up in a scholarly home. I'd been raised in the Methodist Church and had always had utter faith, but I'd also been taught not to believe that there was only one way to think." She remembered the old Sioux Indian saying: "Don't judge anyone until you've walked ten miles in his moccasins." This was nearly sixteen years before the Urantia Book was published.

Julia became an avid student of the papers and a member of the Forum. "The more I examined them the more I came to believe," she said. The caliber of people who read with her also furthered her belief in the Urantia papers. She described Dr. Sadler as "one of the brainiest men I ever met."

There was also Sir Hubert Wilkins, an English authority on Arctic exploration. Julia frequently read with him in between the Sunday meetings and she asked him why he believed. "It is their utter consistency from beginning to end," he said. "No human being could have written these papers with so much consistency of detail . . . there would have been a crack someplace." Marian Rowley was appointed Julia's "friendly helper," someone new readers could talk to about questions, and the two became close friends.

At a Sunday Forum meeting during the winter in the early 1940s Dr. Sadler asked all those felt committed to the papers and really wanted to work with them, to come up the following Wednesday night. That night was cold and snowy. Exactly seventy members arrived and signed their names in numerical order. Julia was number seventeen. The purpose of the meeting was to sign up for special training and courses of study to better prepare members for the future of the Urantia movement. However, Julia felt that it was necessary to be cautious about becoming too organized. "Basically," she said, "The Urantia Book is between the reader and God; it's an individual thing." [ELLEN MONTGOMERY INTERVIEW, 1980]

**G**RACE WALKER: I was raised in a religious family in the suburbs of Chicago. My father was an evangelical minister, a circuit-riding preacher in his early ministry. Before the Depression, I wanted to be a missionary or a missionary doctor. In college I was exposed to what was called "higher criticism," which questioned the authority of the Bible. This caused me to do a lot of thinking about religion.

Later, I found a book by a German professor that was quite profound. I asked my doctor, Dr. William Sadler on Diversey Parkway in Chicago, if he had read this book because I just felt he knew something. He said he *had* read the book, then added, "I've got something I think you'd be interested in." He told me about the Urantia Papers, and when I showed interest he said, "What are



Jane Allen, Ruth Renn and Marjorie Bates in the garden of the Hales home.

you doing on Sunday? Could you possibly come to the Forum next Sunday afternoon?" Explaining that it would take too long to describe the purpose of the Forum in his office, the doctor invited me to come early. Upon joining the Forum, I signed, at the doctor's request, a pledge of secrecy concerning the Urantia Papers.

I began reading the Papers in 1945. I worked in downtown Chicago, and after work on Friday nights I would take the bus to 533 Diversey. Afterwards I'd take a late train and wouldn't get home until midnight. Reading one paper at a time, I started with the Jesus papers, then began reading from the first part of the book. I was convinced that what I read was true, because the story of Jesus' life as father to his brothers and sisters touched on so many of the same problems I had had in my life.

One time, when I first began to read. I approached Mrs. Kellogg, who was the proctor at the desk, and asked, "Do you really believe all of this?"

"I certainly do!" she replied.

The Sunday afternoon group, which had started as a discussion group, was called the Forum. At the time I began attending it had become an open-house time for readers. I also belonged to a group called the Seventy. There were just seventy people in this group originally, made up of those who had read the Papers in their entirety. Within this group a school was formed to train teachers, which held evening classes at 533. The problem was that there were teachers but no persons to teach at this time. Teachers far outnumbered new readers.



In the Seventy group, each person had to write a paper on a Urantia topic. These were passed by the doctor and read on Sundays.

My parents, who were by then in their seventies, lived next door to me, and they were curious about where I was going on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons. I finally had to tell them a little about the Papers. My dad was skeptical, but my mother was quite open-minded. They both actually held some of the same ideas as the book already.

Living so far away, I wasn't able to keep up with the meetings. I was divorced and had much responsibility. These Papers helped me raise my children. I also learned that with disappointment we have another chance. The Urantia teachings literally changed my life.

**W**ESLEY R. JAMES: I've never had the experience of finding the Urantia Book. That distinction belongs to my grandmother, Elizabeth James, and to my parents, William and Mary James. Because of their efforts the UB has always been a part of my life.

In the late 1920s my grandmother began searching for answers to religious questions that troubled and intrigued her. The answers her Bible and church background provided lacked consistency as far as she was concerned. There were even questions she was told should not be asked, because they showed a lack of faith. She studied the philosophies and attended the meetings of a number of cults and isms that were popular in Chicago in those days, from the Swedenborgians and Rosicrucians to the Silver Shirts of a Dr. Pelley.

At one of these meetings my grandmother mentioned to some people her growing concern that none of the groups she had found thus far had the answers she was looking for. These people—Mrs. Jessie Hill and Fred and Alice Leverenz—suggested she might be interested in a group they belonged to that met on Sundays at 533 Diversey Parkway in Chicago.

After meeting Dr. Sadler and learning about the purpose of the Forum, my grandmother signed the pledge and became a member. Years later as one of the Seventy she was often praised for her prodigious memory and ability to quote verbatim from the unpublished papers which later became the Urantia Book.

The change in my grandmother after she joined the Forum so intrigued my parents that my mother wrote Dr. Sadler asking if they too could become Forum members. In response, Dr. Sadler asked my grandmother if she wouldn't like to have her entire family in the Forum, and so my mother, father, and uncle, Wesley John James, became members.

As our family grew, my parents weren't able to attend Forum meetings regularly. My grandmother almost always came for Sunday dinner after the meeting and would share with us what had been discussed. My oldest brother and I were very young, at most in first or second grade, and it was assumed we wouldn't understand, but I can still dimly recall parts of what was said. I can definitely remember the strange looks and laughs my brother and I got when we told the neighbors' kids that there had once been blue, green and orange people!

Early in her association with the Forum my mother asked Dr. Lena Sadler if they should teach their children the advanced UB ideas before the book was published. Dr. Lena replied that if they didn't, both they and the children would miss the chance of a lifetime. So, although we went to regular Sunday school and church, at home religious questions always received UB-oriented answers.

When I was 15 my grandmother asked me if I would like to become a Forum member. Coincidentally, the Sunday I signed the membership pledge and went to my first meeting, Alfred Leverenz, the son of Fred and Alice, was also attending his first meeting as a new member. While I completed reading all the papers on my own, I can't say I understood a great deal of what I'd read. Even after my grandmother had me memorize the various orders of angels, the names and capitals of the superuniverse divisions, and the difference between "triata" and "ultimata," the teachings still didn't always strike me as true. I was a "UB burn-out" at a very early age!

It was after the book was published and I started attending a study group founded by Al Leverenz, that I began to acquire a fuller understanding of the teachings. It was now possible to read the book as slowly as I wished, and to talk to others in various stages of reading and understanding, and to listen to their stories of how they'd found the book. This is when I more fully began to appreciate the UB myself—not the facts, but the *truths* of the book.

Finding these truths has been an ongoing process. Truth expands as one's ability to comprehend expands, until in eternity we find the Source of Truth. ■



June 19, 1948: Edith Cook, Elizabeth James, Leone Sadler, Helen Thurman, Eva Vincent

PHOTO CREDITS: The photos in this article come from the collections of Katharine J. "Ticky" Harries, Marian Rowley (from the Urantia Book Fellowship website), the Sherman family, and Martin Early. Many of the picnic photos were taken by Forumite Erle Steinbeck, who made copies and distributed them to everyone, which accounts for the same pictures showing up in different collections.