

4-7 BOTTLE CAPS, TOY VOLKSWAGENS, AND HOT SAUCE

By *Brandon Smith*

From rock collections to long distance bike rides, our Open Bible family members pursue a wide variety of hobbies. Read our feature section and meet others who share your interests.

8-9 MISSIONARY COMPOSITE

View the enclosed pictorial of our Open Bible missionaries and national field leaders directing ministries in 44 nations of the world. Keep it by your Bible and use it to pray for this fine group of men and women and the countries they represent.

12 BIKING THE BLACK HILLS

By *Rich Kopp*

What do three buddies from childhood, now in their 50s, do for fun? How about a bike ride across the Black Hills in the heat of summer?

13 MONTH OF MIRACLES

By *James Ager and Rick Brennan*

Many in America question why we don't see more miracles. Read about one congregation that experienced two in one month.

Plus Much More!

All Work and No Play?



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

Each workday morning, before I can talk myself out of it, I roll out of bed, change clothes, and go down to our basement to exercise. During

this time I rid my mind of remaining stress from the previous day, and, if I have a good workout, my body from several toxins! I began this routine when my children were small and I was confined to the house. I would tune into an aerobics program on television and use soup cans for weights. Since that time I've graduated to real weights, a punching bag, and an elliptical trainer. By the time I'm finished, I'm wide awake for my prayer time.

Obviously I don't spend a lot of money on this hobby but it rewards me in many ways. In fact, if something prohibits this morning routine I am mildly agitated all day. It could be partly genetic. My siblings and I have all been accused by at least one in-law of being a little ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and all of us list exercise as a priority.

My sister, Anieta McCracken, has a pretty incredible story. I'll let her tell it:

At age 45, I was coughing up blood clots because of chronic bronchitis, asthma, and the after-effects of a punctured lung. I was sure the end of my life was in sight and determined to enjoy what was left. So I kept cycling and walking, and started jogging – a quarter of a block at a time.

I dropped about 35 pounds. My blood pressure lowered. And my lungs healed. The duration of my yearly bout with bronchitis shortened, and eventually stopped. In October 2007, at age 50, I completed my first 10-miler and won second place in my gender and age bracket. I am now training for a half marathon in April.

Running has also improved my emotional state. I am ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). For me that has meant getting flooded with too many thoughts without the ability to concentrate on any one. I can easily become overwhelmed, sometimes to the point of contemplating suicide. When I run, however, it's as if the synapses in my brain suddenly realign, and peace and calm center down where confusion and anxiety once threatened. Even my family likes me better now that I run.

Hobbies can do that – bring out the best in a person physically, mentally, and spiritually. God made us multi-dimensional. We were never meant to work all the time.

For me, the benefits of daily exercise spill over into other hobbies, like camping and hiking, making them more enjoyable. The most captivating part of a hike for me is marveling at the immense creativity of the Master Artist. What could be more breathtaking than the dramatic contrast of the red sandstone towers of Sedona rising up against the blue of an Arizona sky?

The first time my husband and I hiked Squaw Peak, near Phoenix, I realized I needed to get more cardiovascular exercise in my routine. By the time we reached the top, I was winded, but pretty proud of myself for making it without stopping. Then I turned just in time to see a 60-some-year-old man reach the top after jogging the entire trail. He was breathing no harder than I was! Jogging up Squaw Peak was his normal workout.

Of course that's another wonderful aspect about hobbies. We can pursue them throughout our lifetime. And then, who knows what activities the Lord will have for us in heaven?

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea".

Andrea Johnson,
Managing Editor