

Part I

Forum Days

CLYDE BEDELL: How can a man or woman be so fortunate as to become intimately associated with an epochal revelation—as every reader-believer of this generation is?

My story begins in Chicago in 1921, when I was 23. I was working at the Walter Hoops Advertising Agency. My best friend there was Lister Alwood, much my senior, and a gifted writer and poet. While at Hoops I also met a lovely creature who joined the company after I did. I asked her for a date, she told me “soon,” and I gave her a rain check. But before the rain check could be honored, I left Hoops to join an agency in San Francisco.

After two years on the coast, I received a wire from Alwood urging me to apply for an \$8000-per-year job he had applied for unsuccessfully. (I was making only \$400 a month, and \$8000 was a mint of money at that time!) I agreed to return to Chicago for a personal interview. When I told my boss of my dilemma that good man said, “Go get it if you can, and God bless you. If you don’t get it, come back and go to work and forget about it.” I got the job.

The first evening back in Chicago I had dinner at Alwood’s home. He asked if I would like to attend with him, on the following Sunday, a meeting at the home of a famous psychiatrist—a Dr. William Sadler, a great speaker and teacher. Perhaps there would be some reading, but interesting discussion and conversation for sure. I accepted. Before Sunday came, I had a date with the “Hoops lovely,” making the rain check good. We had not corresponded, but I had carefully kept the address.

The first Sunday I was back in Chicago—the last Sunday in September, 1924—I attended my first Sadler Forum meeting. Afterwards I asked the doctor if I could bring a young woman the next time. He consented.

The following Sunday Florence Evans went with me, and from that day to this we have been identified with the Forum that later received the Urantia Papers.

In 1955 Florence and I knew the first Urantia Book would issue from the presses while we were on a round-the-world trip for me to do some work in Australia and New Zealand. Dr. Sadler's brilliant son Bill, a fantastic student of the Papers, agreed to airmail a book to us as soon as he could lay his hands on one. That copy is now so underlined that the underlining has no emphasis. It bears in the front this inscription:

"First Urantia Book! Glimpsed in Rome, 11:40 a.m., October 1, 1955. Clyde and Florence Bedell." An addition reads: "First reading completed 4/22/56. San Francisco, 10:48 p.m."

Florence departed this sphere for the mansion worlds in 1979, a week after our fifty-third wedding anniversary.

My life, with the enthusiastic approval of both my sons, is dedicated to help, in every way I possibly can, "promote, improve, and expand the understanding of the peoples of the world of the teachings of Jesus." We should all pray that all people in our movement, from Chicago outward over all the earth, might discover those quoted words from the Foundation's Declaration of Trust.

How many people in a millennium can be early recipients of an epochal revelation? It is our duty to bring its message to all the spiritually deprived people we can reach, in keeping with the character of our book.

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.

GRACE 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 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 was a school 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.

WESLEY 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.

C. 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'Connells 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.

KATHARINE J. "TICKY" HARRIES: I come from a background of Church of England, or Episcopal Church, members and clergy. As a child I was baptized, schooled and confirmed, and later I was married in the Church. I had no difficulty with my very solid belief in God, the Trinity, Jesus, angels, and life after death, and I did not believe in hell.

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.

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. Daddy had been introduced to Dr. Sadler by Fred Leverenz and had joined the early Forum in 1932. It took him a while, but Daddy 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 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 then) 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 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.

A paper was read aloud the first hour by Dr. Sadler or his son 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.

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 where Bill and Leone Sadler 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.

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.

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

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 box full 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 for First Urantia Society. Mary Lou Hales was chairman of the charter committee, my mother was secretary, and my father, mother, maternal grandmother and I were charter members.