

Two weeks ago, Lew Otterson died—a few hours after we lost Ashland Shaw, two weeks after Danny Trusty’s mother, Helen, and three days before Charlotte Knapp’s sister-in-law, Gayle. For Trinity generally and the Wesley Advocates specifically, not April, but December was the cruelest month.

Close your eyes and recall Lew’s Christmas letter two years ago: a photo of Lew sitting atop a camel, asking, “Where are the *other* wise men?” Our Lew was a connoisseur of epicurean coffee, of English crumpets, of corn puddings, and of corny puns. He loved words and word puzzles and jokes dependent on words, homonyms and homophones. He wrote hundreds of poems, and he loved telling stories. Lew’s curious and agile mind held onto tales, and he often recounted them to make his points and, in Wesley Advocates, to pronounce his own slant on a topic of discussion. For instance, as we discussed the original Flood story from *Gilgamesh* or Ezekiel’s bizarre vision of a new Temple or the hideous suffering and death of a boy with bubonic plague, Lew might interrupt to ask, “What

exactly has this to do with religion?” and then to follow the question with his own story, somehow pertinent.

In Book 3 of *The Iliad*, Homer describes Troy’s elders, men too old to fight the Greeks, but still full of stories and wisdom: “Now through old age these fought no longer, yet they were excellent speakers still, and clear as cicadas who through the forests settle on trees, to issue their delicate voices singing.” Lew was one of our wise men still teaching us, imparting wisdom through his stories, his voice as insistent as the cicadas.

Through his courage Lew amazed us. When he could no longer see to drive, he simply sold the car and soon enrolled in what he called “blind school,” the Veterans’ Administration facility near Chicago where he learned to walk with a white stick, to select and ride the bus, to cook and clean and launder, to download music, to Skype, to operate special computers—to function as a blind man. Twice during his 80s, Lew went off alone for six or eight weeks to learn new blind-man skills. When he was 74 or 75, for their 50th anniversary, he pushed Luella in her wheelchair all around Paris, delighted that her wheelchair usually moved them right to the front

of the lines. In addition, when Lew was 86, he joined a Roman Catholic group from St. Mary's to visit Palestine and Israel during the worst of summer's heat. When he was 87, he elected to sail around South America, to visit and enjoy the penguins.

And from Lew and Luella, we learned about love. Lew liked to say they "rubbed along together," to describe them as two sandburs stuck to each other. They met as students at Evansville College, both attending classes and working part time. Luella lived at home with her parents, and Lew lived near the campus. To save his dimes and quarters for gifts for Luella, Lew walked everywhere, miles and miles across town, summer and winter. Meanwhile, mindful of Lew's devotion, Luella saved her dimes and quarters to buy him a heavy woolen overcoat for Christmas. Even then, before they married, they seemed like two characters in an O. Henry story. And so their devotion continued right up to Luella's death.

Today we remember Lew and his delight in life, the delight he shared with us. Now, Lew has left the building, but he asked specifically that I close with his words to us: "See you later."