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CREATIVE POWER AT WORK - II

Glenn Clark, in the years of his awakening, had touched a chord of reality of spiritual living for himself. He had, in sharing it with a strong, encouraging group, learned new ways of communicating some of this spark of the creative energy to a wider group.

Out of his Sunday morning class he had learned that a firm base of creative coworkers is vital to inner as well as outer growth. With such a base, dreams could be dreamed, find their test against reality, and become actualized. And if the dream was kept as clear and true to reality as to the creative spirit, the reality could be as filled with love as it was with power, unable to be used to hurt or crush the creative heart of anyone involved and capable of living for as long as the seed, the seedling, and finally the mature plant appeared, watered and cared for in the spirit in which it was born.

One Sunday Glenn threw out the idea of athletes of the

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spirit as an illustration of how a Christian can learn to train for the goal of living in the kingdom of heaven. The track field was especially close to his interests, for he had coached track men for many years. He had thought much about what it takes for a young man to concentrate on winning the 220 or the mile, to jump, broad or high, to put the shot, or throw the discus. He wrote a little booklet about it, "Power in Athletics." It was a mental and practical approach to training. And the new idea was growing. Think of yourself as a bullet or as a ball, and let yourself go, giving yourself completely to the winning with no unclear thoughts or worries to drag you down and hold you back.

Some of his audience insisted on taking the idea seriously. Why not have a training camp for the life of the spirit just like a training camp for football players or preseason track training camps?

It came as a surprise to Glenn that others might want to take part in this idea. But why not get off for a few weeks and train for spiritual living? Talking is one thing, and inspiring is another; but going out and organizing a summer camp is a major undertaking. What college professor with no money and a family to support would do that? Twelve businessmen underwrote a three-week camp. A name for the camp was chosen from Glenn's enthusiasm for Monhegan Island off the coast of Maine which he had visited in 1929. He had called it the "island farthest out." From this had come the symbol of the seeking for spiritual growth, a booklet called "The Thought Farthest Out." The Camps Farthest Out was obviously the correct choice.

Thus in the summer of 1930 a three-week family camp was held on the shores of beautiful Lake Koronis in

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Minnesota. Here not only the children attended, but people came from all denominations, some Jews, a few Catholics, and many who had lost sight of their religious beginnings but wanted a spiritual home. Now was launched an intimate, intense summer camp untroubled by church administration but with no subsidies, being dependent on individual aid. It was a true training ground of the spirit. Lectures were given but twice a day. This was not a school where everyone had to pass tests or go home stuffed with new knowledge and facts like many of the church training schools and camps.

Living creatively was most important. The Bible was a constant reference point, but not the entire program. Some regretted this and did not come again. Strains of new ideas other than of the churches were admitted. He was not a minister, so he neither had to defend the existing church nor was he called on to defend a falling away of the church. Ministers attended with their families from the very beginning. Singing was vital. A young student worker, Glenn Harding, fitted singing perfectly into the spirit of what Glenn Clark had established, and they worked together closely for many years.

Glenn Clark believed in exercises for everyone. He brought new concepts to this activity. At least he found others who could lead classes in what has become "rhythms," a combination of rhythmical setting-up exercises performed in groups and to music with the same sense of release which Glenn was bringing to the daily talks. Vivian Combacker Osburn and Alice Kraft were two of those who developed "rhythms" into a fine art.

Creativity in a specific sense was soon included: painting, sculpture, and writing. Hundreds of amused

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amateurs had their first taste of brush and paint long before the current popularity had developed. Art teaching was as important as lectures and swimming instruction. Verna Gale and Geneva Mercer were early aides, loving art but loving their students more and helping them to see the self-awareness that can come from the simplest daubs.

The sympathetic atmosphere helped businessmen, housewives, social workers, ministers, and people from every walk of life put their own lives back in place. There was meditation, study, relaxation, music, sports, fun, prayer groups, and special visitors from all over the world, like Frank Laubach, who became a vital permanent part of the camps.

The camps grew, and with them grew Glenn Clark's confidence and understanding of himself and his mission. New creative ideas welled up. Louise shared his ideas and was his balance wheel. Always with gentleness but with firmness she would make her feelings known. Her people had steel in their backbones, and her firmness was not without its frustration to Glenn. But her advice and her love for him and his plans were great, and they were always close, the one needing the power of the other. Prayer had been the beginning and the ending of the camps. The prayer meeting was a part of the camps, but with Glenn's desire for the fullness of power in them, there was a new life in praying times.

It was like a creative ball high in the air. There was an expectancy in praying. Thousands saw prayer in a new, powerful light, not as appeasement of an angry God or as a rote duty of reverence. Into the camps Glenn drew leadership of a special kind. His very helpers expressed the creative spirit he knew could be found in everyone, if

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you looked for it. First leaders included Franz Aust, Ruth Raymond, Louise Eggleston, Agnes Sanford, Ruth Robison, Starr Daily, Roland Brown, Rufus Moseley, and many others.

Starr Daily, who had come from behind prison walls to be one of the clear lights of Christian faith for thousands, illustrated the feeling other leaders had for the way Glenn worked with them: "As a spiritual leader, Glenn Clark exemplified many qualities which few other leaders possessed. He seemed to be totally devoid of professional jealousy. He had a child-like faith in persons of small talent and would often push them forward ahead of himself, hoping always they might say something or do something to prove his trust in them. When they did justify his confidence his heart would rejoice, and he would praise their efforts."

The CFO idea had a contagion to it. At first they grew slowly for they were unusual. In Minnesota, then California, and then New Hampshire. After that they grew faster, and today they number over seventy in the United States and several in other parts of the world. Their success is especially remarkable and only possible because it is based on the highest form of creative effort of large groups of people working in harmony. Each is managed by its own council ring in its own area. There was no national organization except in later years when coordination became more complex.

The council ring, or the loose governing body of each camp, was formed in the Quaker way. All decisions were usually arrived at in prayer and unanimously. Glenn was not reluctant to give suggestions, but he knew that if he tried to run everything the camps would never grow in their own creative, individual way. Sometimes the

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camps grew too fast. Sometimes Glenn was misinformed or misled in organizational matters for a camp. He could make mistakes just as anyone and was at his best when he had strong, creative guidance. The fact, however, that the camps have grown and flourished since his passing is the greatest tribute to his creative organizing sense and to the central purpose on which they were based: Christ for others.

He was a great intuitive organizer but not a natural one. And when he was tired, under the weather, or roused in a rare moment of anger, his judgment was as hazy as any man's. Yet when he was well briefed, when he was undergirded with prayer, when he had let God and his unconscious dwell on the subject, he was a uniquely creative organizer.

Glenn believed so deeply in the creative force in each person he worked with that he could usually inspire that person to powerful action. Needless to say, this unorthodox method had a strength which outlasted most kinds of organization. It had its problems, too: any lack of alignment or unity of spirit could infect it with seeds of disharmony. But in the creative spirit the camps grew. After the success of *The Soul's Sincere Desire*, Glenn continued to write. Books and articles and booklets were finished and published.

One day Harpers, the prize publisher for many writers, asked him for a manuscript. He had many ideas. But he had one in which he summed up the many ideas he had developed for living at the spiritual level and the steps by which one reached that level. The book was *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes*, one of his best read and most loved. In its practical methods of living it caught the same spirit which he was portraying in the camps.

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Glenn wrote constantly. He was busy every day with his stubby pencil and his endless little notebooks. In the mornings he awoke at four or five or six and with his notebook in his hands, propped up with his pillows, the Bible and other books around him, he would fill page on page with undecipherable words, thoughts that were parts of books unborn but which finally were born out of his creative concern. After a breakfast of a peeled orange, a bowl of shredded wheat, and milk, he would be off walking up Goodrich Avenue to his office, always hopeful that his secretary would be able to decipher his early morning code.

Filled with ideas and wanting them to reach a wide public at the least cost, he sometimes could not wait for the major publishers. When Little Brown would not publish his new short booklets, he went to see a printer in Minneapolis, a member of his Sunday class. Glenn was on his way to being in business for himself. The business grew out of his home, out of his college office, out of the first small store building into a building of its own, a former mortuary, which provided its share of humorous references to this new, life-giving business.

As the business grew with Clayton and Marie Dunham and others to keep track of the bills and send the books, the Macalester Park Publishing Company became home base for endless programs and plans and dreams. He never took a salary from it, but he used it unmercifully to promote the camps, retreats, world tours, the "Third Front," and many other programs, offering free space, time, money, secretarial, and printing costs. Still the "Pub" grew and became a business grossing \$100,000 a year. Some years it even made a profit. Whether there was a profit was never a great concern to Glenn. If it did,

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he usually had a new program to work for, and the money went into that.

On October 3, 1939, Louise, Glenn's partner in life for over a quarter of a century, died in their home, as a great aurora borealis filled the sky. The sight would have been compelling even to one not given to seeing God's creative artistry in every moment of living. To Glenn, it was the most overwhelming symbol of the afterlife into which his wife, his helpmate of this world, was moving. One poetic idea of Glenn's was the sense that a loved one's passing over brought or gave new strength, new power, new life, and new vitality to the one remaining. With his mother's death in the early 1920's, he had the sense of her working for him, and it was a period of great inspiration. Now with the death of his wife came a new era of inspiration. In the next eighteen years all his dreams were multiplied by his beloved infinity.

Glenn Clark's ideas and personality had power, but without a higher authority, figuratively speaking, he could not peel potatoes. He could not have used his potential in the great opportunities, which increasingly opened up in a steady stream these years, without that firm reliance on God's power. Each era of his life found him successful beyond any dream he might have had. He planted seeds everywhere. With the end of the war, he had a great new opportunity seeing the world searching for its creative heart. For this he prayed with all his strength for people everywhere.

He longed to see a great unity among men of all the world which might be possible if all men could see themselves with the one central force of the universe, God himself. Now Glenn was ready for the next step.