

Times Remembered
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What's a GMC?

Have you ever heard of a GMC? Not a truck, but a "God Made Coincident," according to my former pastor at church. This story is, in my opinion, fits the description of a GMC. I found this article stashed in some of my books. I liked it so much that I decided to share the story.

Winter storms had brought Atlanta to a standstill. I inched my van up an ice-covered hill, peering at the addresses on the houses I passed, searching for house number 2002. The truck just ahead of me lost its traction. Another panicked driver almost skidded into me. The ice was so bad that the heating and air technician firm where I worked cancelled all appointments except for emergencies. That's where I was headed now. Luckily, years living in Alaska gave me experience driving on ice, something the folks here didn't have.

I took pride in always being careful. I'm your classic Type A personality. I had all the best tools in my truck, extra equipment for emergencies, even salt for the sidewalk. I never cut corners. I triple-checked everything, especially the paperwork. Like I did again now, 2002. Maybe you could say I was a Type A plus personality.

The numbers on the houses indicated I was getting close. I pulled into a snow-filled driveway and chocked my wheels so the van didn't slide. I climbed out to check the letters stenciled on the black mailbox out front. It was caked with

snow, but the numbers on both sides were clearly visible: 2002. This was it.

I trudged to the house carrying my tools, careful not to slip on the icy sidewalk. I reached the front door and knocked. A woman answered the door. She was wearing a parka and hugging her arms across her chest. Her teeth were chattering. "I'm here to repair your furnace, Ma'am," I said.

She paused a moment staring at me then burst into tears, the one thing a guy like me wasn't prepared for. She motioned me inside. Brrr. No wonder she was so relieved to see me. I checked the thermostat. It read 27 degrees Fahrenheit, same as outside.

Still stifling a sob, she pointed me to the broken heater in the basement and I got to work. I replaced a capacitor and the hot surface igniter, cleaned the flame sensor and the inducer assembly. It didn't take long. That should do it. I flipped the switch and the unit hummed to life. Almost instantly warm air bellowed from the vents.

All total, parts and labor cost three hundred and twenty-six dollars. I checked the paperwork for the job; still under warranty.

"All set, Ma'am," I said to the woman when I got upstairs, "No charge." I headed to the door but the woman stopped me.

"Wait," she said, "What made you come here?" I stared at her, not understanding. "My boss?" I ventured.

She held onto my arm. Clearly she wanted to tell me something. This was my last job. I had a minute. I waited.

"I moved to Atlanta last month," she said. "Just before my husband was deployed to Iraq. Five days ago I had a baby...our first child. I don't know anyone here, so I had to take a taxi home. When I got inside, the house was freezing! I called every heating business in town. But with this weather, they all said it would be days before they could come. I didn't know what to do. I just fell to my knees and prayed. That's when you showed up."

I'm not really an emo-

tional man, but I couldn't help but be shaken by her story.

It sure was a good thing my company decided to send me out. With the house already nice and toasty, I headed to my van and lugged out a bag of pool salt. I salted her front walk and her driveway and said goodbye.

I'd just pulled out of driveway when I got a call from the office on my phone. "The customer at 2002 wants to know when you'll get there," my boss said. "He's waiting." He sounded a touch irritated.

What? I just saw the customer at 2002, I thought.

I glanced at the mailbox at 2002. Checked the paperwork again: 2002. What was going on? I climbed out of the van, scratching my head. I took a closer look at the snow-fringed mailbox. 2002, just as I thought on both sides.

Then I reached out and touched the numbers with my glove. The snow fell away. Now the numbers clearly read 2882. The snow had turned the eights into zeros.

How did I miss that? No wonder the guy at 2002 was getting antsy. I jumped back in my van and drove up the hill.

"Sorry it took so long," I said when the man let me inside. His house had more than one heater, so it wasn't nearly as cold as the woman's house had been. A quick glance at his system showed me the problem. Someone had accidentally flipped the switch off on the heater. It started with no problem.

I drove back down the hill. I slowed at 2882. I supposed my boss would demand that I give the woman the bill for my services. But when I thought about her and the baby, I just couldn't do it. I kept driving. My boss might not agree. That's why I'm not revealing my name.

It's true that the woman wasn't our customer. Not our problem. But she was someone's problem, that's for sure. I knew I'd been sent to the right address after all.

I'd say this story was a GMC. "A God Made Coincident." The Lord knew about the woman's problem.

Nothing is more heartwarming for parents than a letter home



America's Heartland

Roger Alford
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Let me share a letter that has been around for at least a half century. I think you'll enjoy it.

Dear Ma and Pa:

I am well. Hope you are. Tell Walt and Elmer the Marine Corps beats working for old man Minch by a mile. Tell them to join up quick before all the places are filled.

I was restless at first because you get to stay in bed till nearly 6 a.m.

But after a while you get used to sleeping late like that. Tell Walt and Elmer all you do before breakfast is smooth your cot and shine some things.

No hogs to slop, feed to pitch, mash to mix, wood to split, fire to lay. Practically nothing.

Men got to shave but it is not so bad; there's warm water. Breakfast is strong on trimmings like fruit juice, cereal, eggs, bacon, etc., but kind of weak on chops, potatoes, ham, steak, fried green tomatoes, and other regular food, but tell Walt and Elmer you can always sit by the city boys that live on coffee. Their food, plus yours, holds you until noon when you get fed again. It's no wonder these city boys can't walk much.

We go on "route marches," which the platoon sergeant says are long walks to harden us. If he thinks so, it's not my place to tell him different. A "route march" is about as far as to our mailbox at home. Then the city guys get sore feet and we all ride back in trucks.

This next will kill Walt and Elmer with laughing. I keep getting medals for shooting. I don't know why. The bullseye is near as big as a chipmunk head and don't move, and

it ain't shooting at you like the Higgett boys at home.

Then we have what they call hand-to-hand combat training. You get to wrestle with them city boys. I have to be real careful though, they break real easy.

Be sure to tell Walt and Elmer to hurry and join before other fellers get onto this setup and come stampeding in.

Your loving daughter,

Alice
In America's heartland, we love a good tale that makes heroes of country folks. And that one surely does. We could perhaps say of that young lady, if she had been a real person, that she was living up to one of the most encouraging scriptures in the Bible.

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

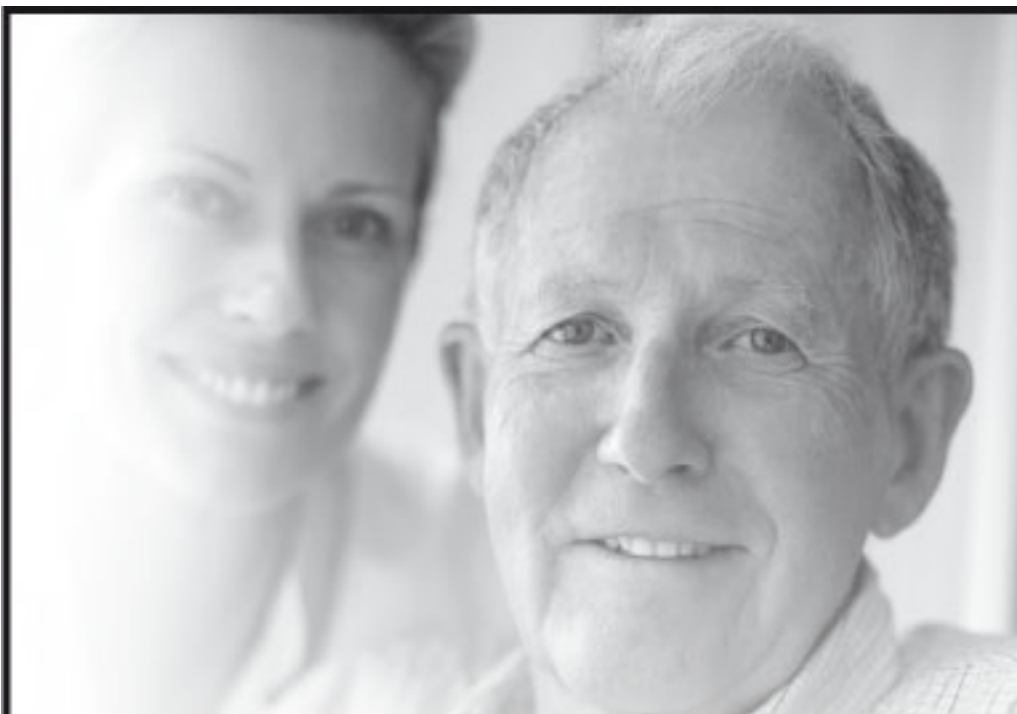
Roger Alford offers words of encouragement to residents of America's heartland. Reach him at rogeralford1@gmail.com.

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Estill Co. School Menus

Monday, Nov. 19

South Irvine Preschool

Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, Rolls, Potato Smiles, Pineapples, and Milk.

Estill Springs Elementary

Breakfast: Breakfast Pizza or Toast/Cocoa Puffs, Pineapple Tidbits, Asst. Juice, and Milk Choices.

Lunch: Chicken Tenders, Roll, Macaroni/Cheese, Baked Beans, Fresh Broccoli/Dip, Mandarin Oranges, Milk, BBQ Sauce/Ketchup.

West Irvine Intermediate

Breakfast: Pancakes/Syrup or Cereal, Apple, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Chicken Pattie/Bun, Potato Smiles, Baked beans, Peaches, and Milk.

Estill County Middle School

Breakfast: Pancake Porky w/Syrup, Mini Wheats, Cereal Bars, Assorted Pop-tarts, Apple, Assorted Fruit Juices, and Milk Choices.

Lunch: Oven Roast BBQ Chicken or Chicken Nuggets, Roll, Mashed Potatoes, Peas, Apple, Strawberry Cup, Milk or Juice.

Estill County High School

Breakfast: Breakfast Honey Bun, Cereal & Cereal Bars, Pop Tarts (2), Mini Chocolate Donuts, Oranges or Apples, Juice, Milk.

Lunch: Pepperoni Calzone, Chicken Quesadilla, Marinara Sauce, Glazed Carrots, Normandy Blend Vegetables, Tropical Fruit, Sidekicks, Juice/Assorted Milk.

Tuesday, Nov. 20

South Irvine Preschool

Breakfast: Cinnamon Toast Crunch Cereal, Banana, Milk.

Lunch: Turkey, Dressing, Gravy, Roll, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Cooked Apples, Ice Cream, and Milk.

Estill Springs Elementary

Breakfast: Pizza or Toast/Cocoa Puffs, Pineapple Tidbits, Asst. Juice, and Milk Choices.

Lunch: Cheese Pizza, Corn, Steamed Broccoli, Pears, Milk, and Ice Cream.

West Irvine Intermediate

Breakfast: Toast/Egg Extravaganza or Cereal, Mandarin Oranges, Juice, and Milk.

Lunch: Walking Taco, Taco Meat/Chips, Shredded Cheese, Salsa, Refried Beans, Pineapple Tidbits, and Milk.

Estill Middle School

Breakfast: Oatmeal & Toast, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Cereal Bars, Assorted Pop tarts, Pears, Assorted Fruit Juices, and Milk Choices.

Lunch: Cheeseburger on Bun or Pork Chop on Bun, French fries, Lettuce, Tomato, Onion, Mandarin Oranges/Mixed Fruit, Milk or Juice.

Estill High School

Breakfast: Breakfast Honey Bun, Cereal & Cereal Bars, Pop Tarts (2), Mini Chocolate Donuts, Oranges or Apples, Juice, Milk.

Lunch: Hot Ham & Cheese, Pizza Hut Pizza, Tater Tots, Baked Beans, Strawberries, Blueberry Applesauce, Juice, Assorted Milk.