



The Christian Science Monitor Youth Forum

After World War II, Christian Scientists noticed their children enjoying events hosted by other churches in town—churches with recreation halls where boys and girls played basketball or danced. The Christian Science church couldn't "officially" engage youth except in Sunday school, since our Church Manual is silent on social gatherings. But we had another choice. We could hitch youth activity to a star, our highly respected, prize-winning newspaper.

The first Christian Science Monitor Youth Forum for young men and women ages 16 to 30 opened in Boston in 1947, and the idea took off like wildfire. Within six years, more than 500 Youth Forums circled the globe. These Forums were usually organized by local Christian Science parents, although some began as college clubs. In 1948, for example, the Monitor Youth Forum at Kansas State College (now University) in Manhattan, Kansas, boasted 30 members. But to reach full potential, such diverse groups needed coordination.

Enter Miss Elizabeth Woolley, a youthful Christian Science practitioner and prolific contributor to church magazines. Hired by the Monitor as "Headquarters Secretary" for Youth Forums, she and her staff occupied a suite of second-floor offices in Falmouth Hall, 241 Huntington Avenue, adjacent to the original grassy park in front of The Mother Church. Built in 1901 by Chickering & Sons piano company, Falmouth Hall featured a 200-seat recital auditorium where Youth Forum events were held. With help from Forums worldwide, Miss Woolley awarded "travelship" grants to deserving members. Some young Christian Scientists saw

Europe for the first time as travelshippers, reporting their adventures in fascinating articles on the Monitor's Family Features page. In 1948, the young president of the Monitor Youth Forum in Berlin, Germany, was awarded a \$250 travelship to help him attend Reed College in Portland, Oregon. His name was Arno Preller, and he later became a practitioner and teacher of Christian Science, as did one of his sons.

Typically, Youth Forum meetings began with a discussion of current news in the Monitor, followed by light refreshments and a social hour. Fellowship was a high priority, and older Sunday school students often met their future spouses at Forum meetings.

That's why many were disappointed on December 31, 1959, when the Monitor closed Forum headquarters in Boston. Individual Forums could remain active, but without "unofficial" coordination, most withered.

Members of the Boston Youth Forum inherited Miss Woolley's furnished offices and Falmouth Hall at no cost, but even with these assets, most stopped attending meetings. By January 1965, the Boston Forum had only one member left. He worked in the Monitor newsroom and hoped to quit the Forum and vacate the office as soon as anyone else showed interest in it. After we spoke briefly about future Forum possibilities, he removed the key to Falmouth Hall from his chain and handed it to me. The Boston Youth Forum was now mine—"lock, stock and barrel."

Touring the unused but well-furnished offices, I found letterhead stationery, typewriters, a mimeograph machine, even a checkbook with a \$200 balance. The telephone worked, so I called four twenty-something colleagues and we formed a planning committee. If the Forum had no future, why not go out with a bang instead of a whimper? Miss Woolley attended one of our meetings to share wisdom gained during her decade as headquarters secretary.

During one planning session, a young lady on our com-

mittee (a graduate of Blackburn College) said she was just hired by the phone company and could make free long distance calls. The Annual Meeting of The Mother Church was only three months away. Back Bay Boston would be awash with church members. Should she call Alan Young in Studio City, California, and ask if he'd give a free talk to the Forum on Saturday before the meeting? We loved her idea, so she called and learned he was coming to Annual Meeting anyway, and would be honored to speak to the Forum. He'd call his talk, "The Role of a Christian Scientist in Show Business."

We had a hunch Alan Young would be a big draw, and here's why: he was playing that role himself.

Several famous actors and actresses were students of Christian Science. Ginger Rogers, Jeanne Stapleton and Georgia Engel often attended the Annual Meeting of The Mother Church. But Young was the only one who co-starred with a talking horse. His role from 1958 to 1966 as Wilbur Frost on the "Mister Ed" show made Young a household name. "Mister Ed" won a Golden Globe, and can still be seen on cable TV today.

Once Young agreed to speak, we began eager preparations. One committee member bought him a small crystal paperweight as a token of appreciation. Three others located hundreds of folding chairs and set them up for maximum seating. I went to E.D. Abbott Company, a small commercial printer at 181 Massachusetts Avenue, near CSPA, to buy printed invitations. We couldn't afford a custom engraving of Mister Ed, and hoped they might have a generic horse's head on file. They had one from the cover of the Suffolk Downs racetrack restaurant menu. It wasn't the famous TV horse, but it was free, so we put it on tri-fold invitations which were posted on all bulletin boards at TMC and CSPA, and sent to as many friends and fellow employees as possible.

A month before Annual Meeting, people were request-

ing handfuls of invitations to give friends. I was only an entry-level clerk in Monitor advertising, but one day a trustee of the Publishing Society called me personally from his paneled office on the 8th floor.

“How can I get an invitation to hear Alan Young’s talk?” he asked. “Someone said I should call you directly.” It was a heady moment for this Blackburn College drop-out.

Alan Young’s talk was the best-attended event in the history of the Boston Youth Forum. Every chair was filled and people stood along the walls. He told how he’d been afflicted with asthma as a boy and was often confined to bed. After his mother became interested in Christian Science, she enrolled him in Sunday school and he had an instantaneous healing. One minute he could hardly breathe. The next minute he could breathe freely and even play soccer. As he grew up, he never made a career move without praying about it first. He gave God credit for everything he had accomplished in show business.

After that meeting, some felt the Boston Forum might have a future after all, but they were wrong. The prints of the Divine were on that meeting, but we could never replicate such success. Three years later, in 1968, Falmouth Hall was demolished to make space for the new Church Center Sunday School building.



Actor Alan Young starred in the television series "Mr. Ed." That's Connie Hines, his TV wife next to him. During this time he was a guest speaker at the Boston Youth Forum.



Dining at Mrs. Eddy's home

*M*ost students of Christian Science are familiar with the address 385 Commonwealth Avenue, in Boston. Church founder Mary Baker Eddy purchased this brownstone in 1887, moving in at Christmas time. Eighteen months later, after relocating to New Hampshire, she rented 385 to her students, and eventually Judge Septimus Hanna and his wife Camilla lived there. He was First Reader of The Mother Church, and Mrs. Eddy later stipulated in the Church Manual that all First Readers should occupy her home during their term in office. This was helpful because First Readers usually came from distant cities and had no Boston residence.

Back in the 1960s, the historic home was not open for tours. Unless you were a church executive or a friend of the family, you never stepped inside, so I was thrilled to be invited to 385 for supper one evening. Here's how it happened.

Readers at The Mother Church serve three-year terms, beginning at Annual Meeting. In 1962, Gordon F. Campbell of Santa Monica, California, became First Reader. His son, Gordon Campbell Jr. (Gordo), was about to graduate from Principia College. After graduation, Gordo joined his folks at 385 and found an entry level job in Monitor advertising. When I arrived in the fall of 1963, he was working at the desk beside mine. Soon we were best friends, and when he became engaged to his future wife, he asked me to be best man. I was honored to accept, and soon was invited to dinner at 385 as part of the wedding party. It was an evening to remember.

We pulled the antique bell on the front door, and Mrs.

Campbell greeted us warmly and invited us into the formal front parlor, where elegant overstuffed chairs rested on a deep rose-colored carpet, and a beautifully framed portrait of Mrs. Eddy hung above the fireplace. Rose was apparently Mrs. Eddy's favorite color, and flocked rose and white wallpaper covered the walls. A large velvet drape was drawn across the wide arch into the adjoining dining room, but after a few moments of nervous conversation the drape opened, revealing candles, candles, and more candles—all pink. Two candelabra adorned a long dining table laden with crystal stemware and china, while brass sconces on the walls added a soft glow. Mr. Campbell sat at one end of the table; Mrs. Campbell at the other, with four of the wedding party on each side.

As soon as we said grace, a door to the serving pantry opened and an elderly butler named James entered with plates of artfully arranged food. We all relaxed as we ate and chatted about the upcoming wedding. We were a laughing, happy group and after the last person finished, James magically reappeared in his black suit, white shirt and black tie to remove the plates. He quickly returned and gave each of us a small crystal bowl of water with pink rose petals floating on top. I remember thinking, "This is the strangest dessert I've ever seen, but if Mrs. Campbell eats it, I will too." Of course she didn't eat it. She dipped her fingers into it and dried them daintily on her cloth napkin. I had never used a fingerbowl before, or since. Mrs. Campbell explained, "I like to give you young people the same service I'd give the church directors if they were visiting, so you'll have the experience." Then, again as if by magic, James appeared and replaced the fingerbowls with bowls of ice cream, which was reportedly Mrs. Eddy's favorite dessert. Later I discovered why James' timing was so good. A button lay concealed beneath the carpet in front of Mrs. Campbell's dining chair. When James was needed, she simply placed her foot on the button and pressed it.

After ice cream, James brought each of us a flavorful cup of coffee. Naturally one of the wedding party questioned this, since Mrs. Eddy never served coffee in her home except to visiting workmen. "Oh don't worry," Mr. Campbell assured us. "It's decaffeinated."

When supper was finished, Mrs. Campbell took the young women to her upstairs parlor for a visit. We men joined Mr. Campbell in his study, where he revealed the modern reel-to-reel tape recorder he used to practice his Sunday readings. Finally we all toured the historic upper rooms, including the tower room and one bedroom furnished entirely by Augusta E. Stetson, a pupil of Mrs. Eddy's from New York City.

Gordo's wedding in the Boston suburb of Wellesley Hills is a blur to me now, but memories of supper at 385 are clear as crystal.



Mrs. Eddy resided at 385 Commonwealth Avenue from December, 1887, until moving to New Hampshire in June, 1889. She kept this home as a residence for the First Reader of The Mother Church.