

Man to Share His Vision of Heaven After Devastating Highway Crash

By PASTOR KEVIN BRENNAN

The beginning of a new year is a great time to assess where we've been and where we're going. We know where we've been, but do we know where we are going? What does the future hold for you? Is your life only composed of the events of this world, or is there a world beyond this one?

What if someone had the opportunity to go into a time machine to the future and come back and tell us? Well, someone apparently has, and he will be here in Scotch Plains to talk about it. His name is Don Piper. His book, "90 Minutes In Heaven," was recently listed at No. 9 on *The New York Times* best-seller list.

On Wednesday morning, January 18, 1989, Don Piper loaded up his 1986 Red Ford Escort in the rain and headed home from a conference in Lake Livingston, Tex. At 11:45 a.m., a tractor-trailer weaved across the center lane of I-45 and hit Don Piper's car head on. The wheels of the truck went on top of the Ford Escort, crushing it and Don in the process. The truck then struck two other vehicles, injuring those passengers.

EMTs were on the scene in moments. Blood had seeped out of Don's ears, nose and eyes, indicating severe internal injuries. They checked Don's vital signs...nothing. They pronounced him dead at 11:45 a.m., covered him with a tarp and went to tend to the injuries of others.

Texas state law required that Don be officially pronounced dead before his body could be removed from the scene. Otherwise, he would have to be taken to a hospital. So at 1:15 p.m., 90 minutes later, they came back to Don's body to get ready to extricate it. Before doing so they checked his vitals once again...nothing. They officially pronounced him dead and ar-

ranged for a car to take his body to a mortuary.

In the meantime, Dick Onerecker, one of the speakers at the conference that Don had just attended, was stuck in the ensuing traffic jam. After sitting in his car for about an hour, he felt a prompting to go to the scene of the accident and pray for whoever was involved.

He asked for permission from the police officer on the scene and was told the man in the red car was dead. The policeman warned him, "You haven't seen anything this bad." The only access Dick had was through the trunk. He had to stretch his body over the back seat and extend his hand to touch Don's right shoulder.

Dick prayed the most passionate, fervent, emotional prayer of his life. As he ended his prayer he sang the old hymn, "What A Friend We Have In Jesus." Suddenly, the song became a duet as Dick Onerecker was joined by Don Piper. Don would later say that in that moment he was aware of two things: he could hear himself singing with someone and he could feel a strong, powerful hand clutch his right hand tightly.

During those 90 minutes, Don had gone to heaven. His life is now committed to telling others of what he experienced there. He will be at the Evangel Church in Scotch Plains on Sunday morning, January 28, at 9 and 11 a.m. to describe it. All are welcome to come and perhaps find the answer to the questions about our destiny.

Pastor Brennan serves as pastor of the Evangel Church, located at 1251 Terrill Road in Scotch Plains.

FUSP Series Attendees Invited to Pizza Party

AREA - People who have attended the "Think Globally, Act Locally" lecture series at the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield church and others interested in social justice issues are invited to a community pizza party at 6 p.m. on Friday, January 19. It will be held at the FUSP church at 724 Park Avenue in Plainfield.

FUSP's congregation includes residents of Westfield, Scotch Plains and Fanwood. Since September, the church's Social Justice Committee has hosted four lectures in its series. Topics included oil dependence, education and jobs, urban political organizing and workers' rights.

The "Think Globally, Act Locally" series will resume in February with a lecture on environmental justice by Robert Spiegel, director of the Edison Wetlands Association. Future topics include building peace, racial justice and civil liberties in an age of terrorism.

Another community pizza party in June will wrap up the series. For more details, please call (908) 756-0750. Information on the church and its programs also is available at fusp.org.



Don Piper



WINNING DESIGN...Kaavya Krishna Kumar, left, is pictured with Girl Scouts of Washington Rock Council Chief Executive Officer Donna Dolce of Fanwood. A member of Brownie Troop 82, Kaavya holds her logo design that will commemorate GSWRC's 50th anniversary. Her design was selected from more than 50 entries.

Girl Scout Council Unveils Logo For 50th Anniversary

WESTFIELD - The start of 2007 also marked the beginning of the Girl Scouts of Washington Rock Council's 50th anniversary year. Established in 1957, the Westfield-based GSWRC serves more than 11,000 girls in Union, Middlesex and Somerset counties.

Among the 24 communities within the council's jurisdiction are Westfield, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, Mountainside, Berkeley Heights and Garwood.

In anticipation of the milestone anniversary, GSWRC put a call out to current Girl Scouts interested in designing a logo to commemorate the occasion. The logo contest was held in late 2006, with the design selected in early December.

More than 50 girls of all ages from all across the council's jurisdiction entered logo designs symbolizing GSWRC's 50th anniversary. After considering all the submissions, the 50th anniversary committee, comprised of GSWRC staff members and community volunteers, chose the design submitted by Kaavya Krishna Kumar.

A third-grade Brownie from the Fanwood-Scotch Plains community, Kaavya's design incorporates the traditional Girl Scout hand sign with the key phrases of the national mis-

sion statement in all three fingers - courage, confidence and character. According to the GSWRC, the logo will be reproduced on T-shirts and other apparel and also will be featured on a patch. Kaavya is a member of Troop 82.

For more information on the GSWRC and its programs and services for girls and adults, please visit the council's website at westfieldnj.com/girlscouts.

Rotary Club to Hold Benefit Wine Tasting

FANWOOD - The Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club will hold a wine tasting event on Wednesday, January 17, from 7 to 10 p.m. at Giovanna's Restaurant, located on South Avenue and Terrill Road in Plainfield.

Wine expert Tom Jackson will tell those in attendance about the background of the wines served during the three-course dinner.

The cost is \$65 per person and all proceeds will support the charities of the Fanwood-Scotch Plains Rotary Club. Interested individuals are asked to respond by Monday, January 15. To respond or obtain more information, please call Neil Schembre at (908) 889-9500.

King Association to Conduct Annual Memorial Service

WESTFIELD - On Monday, January 15, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association will hold its annual memorial service honoring the late civil rights leader at 1 p.m. It will take place at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, located at 140 Mountain Avenue.

A procession to the church will begin at 12:30 p.m. from the Martin Luther King Memorial on the circle near the Westfield train station. All are invited to attend both the procession and the service.

The Reverend Leon Randall, president of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Association and pastor emeritus of St. Luke's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in Westfield, will be the featured speaker at the memorial service.

Active in Westfield for years, Reverend Randall led the effort to dedicate a street to the memory of entertainer and activist Paul Robeson as well as establishing a permanent memorial to Dr. King in the town.

He has been a member of the Rotary Club of Westfield and a Westfield Senior Housing trustee and served on the mayor's Planning Commission for a Better Westfield.

During the service, the top high

school essay and poem from the association's annual essay contest for students will be read and certificates presented to all winners.

The theme of this year's essay contest was the power of forgiveness. Children in all grades were invited to submit poetry, essays and artwork illustrating what forgiveness means.

Winning essays and poems will be featured as a supplement to the memorial service program. Prizes for the contest are savings bonds in \$50, \$100, \$200 and \$500 denominations at the various grade levels and categories.

African Violet Group To Meet Next Week

SCOTCH PLAINS - The Union County Chapter of the African Violet Society will hold its monthly meeting on Thursday, January 18, at 1 p.m. at the Scotch Plains Public Library. The library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue.

Jan Riemer will offer a slide presentation on the "Minneapolis Convention Show." Anyone interested in African violets is invited to attend. For further information, please call Joe Kelley at (908) 232-4491.

Retrospective to Showcase History of Blacks In Film

FANWOOD - A program on the contributions of African-Americans to the film industry is among several upcoming events at the Fanwood Memorial Library. The library is located at North Avenue and Tillotson Road.

Local film/video archivist Russell Scholl will present "Underneath the Harlem Moon: African-Americans in the Early Years of the Cinema" on Wednesday, January 17, at 7:30 p.m. It will showcase the pioneering work of black actors and filmmakers from the first half of the 20th century.

The program includes "all-black cast" shorts plus excerpts from feature films, and incorporates drama, comedy, cartoons and Soundies - short music films made for coin-operated "video jukeboxes" in the 1940s. It is designed to show contemporary viewers how some things have changed over time while others have remained the same.

On Thursday, January 18, the library's Adult Book Club will discuss "The Man In My Basement" by Walter Mosley at 7:30 p.m. All are

welcome but participants are encouraged to read the book before the meeting date. Those needing a copy of the book are asked to call the library.

For children, "Winter Storytimes" are being held on Tuesdays through February 13. Sessions take place at 10:30 a.m. for four- and five-year-olds and at 11:15 a.m. for three-year-olds. Each session includes a story and craft or activity. A parent or other responsible adult must remain in the children's department during this program.

"Nursery Rhyme Time" is being held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays through February 14 for children 18 to 35 months old and a participating parent or other caring adult. Sessions feature songs, rhymes and fingerplays.

Finally, "Brain Games" for both adults and youngsters will take place on Monday, January 22, from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Activities for all ages will be featured.

For more information about any of the library programs, please call the library at (908) 322-6400.

Cookbook Authors To Appear at JCC

SCOTCH PLAINS - Authors Barbara Wasser and Risé Routenberg will discuss their cookbook, "Divine Kosher Cuisine," on Thursday, January 18, at 7 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Central New Jersey.

They will prepare a variety of dishes featured in their cookbook for all attendees to sample. They also will discuss techniques, answer questions and sign books.

This event is open to both JCC members and the community at large. The cost to attend is \$24 for JCC members, \$29 for non-members and \$20 for senior citizens and students. Space is limited and advance registration is strongly recommended.

The JCC is located at 1391 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains. For more details on the workshop or to register, please contact Susan Lemerman at slemerman@jccnj.org or (908) 889-8800, extension no. 205. Information also is available at jccnj.org.



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