

"A Conversation at the Gates"

One day in the not too distant future, I will find myself standing in front of the Pearly Gates.

I knock.

A pleasant voice calls out, "Who's there?"

"Sherwood Schwartz," I answer.

"One moment," says the Voice. "I have lots of Schwartzes on my list. Did you say 'Sherwood?'"

"Yes, Sherwood Schwartz. I was born November 14, 1916. My parents were Rose and Herman Schwartz."

"Yes, yes, I have it right here. Your parents loved you very much."

"I loved them very much as well. I lived with them until I got married."

"To Mildred, according to my records," says the Voice.

"Yes. I never believed in love at first sight until I met Mildred. I always thought "love at first sight" was just poetic babble."

"That's what they all say until it happens to them."

"I loved Mildred with all my heart for over sixty-nine years. I'm sure she loved me as much as I loved her."

"She did," says the Voice. "And you had four children, Donald, Lloyd, Ross and Hope."

"Four wonderful children," I couldn't help adding.

"All of them quite different, but all of them talented, and hard-working. I'm pleased I was able to watch each of them reach certain goals."

"You sound very proud of them," says the Voice."

"Mildred and I were always very proud.

We took good care of them when they were young, and they took good care of us when we got old."

"I see they each have two children; Donald, two girls, Lloyd two boys, Ross two girls, and Hope two girls."

"All of them talented and industrious, like their parents," I say.

"All well-educated in different professions:

Medicine, Law, and Entertainment."

*"I see you also have four great grandchildren.
Two great granddaughters, and two great grandsons."
I say, "You keep very good records."*

*"I have to," says the Voice. "People keep
coming and going all the time. You've been pretty
busy yourself. After college you started writing
and you never stopped."*

*"That's because writing isn't a profession; it's a
disease. And it's accompanied by a disease that's even worse,
rewriting."*

*"I know all about that," says the Voice. "You're not
the first writer to knock on my gate. But at least
you were successful. Many writers are not."*

*"That's true. I've been well-rewarded with plenty of money for me,
for my family, and for my many charities."*

*"A good life I would say," says the Voice,
"With plenty of awards and honors."*

"And plenty of hard knocks from critics," I reply.

*"That comes with the territory," says the Voice. "But you've had
lots of compensation. Not just money; thousands of fan letters
you've received from people all over the world,
thanking you for entertaining them
with words that brought them a smile or a
laugh, sometimes when they needed it the most."*

*Then the Voice continues apologetically, "I
didn't mean to keep you waiting outside the gate. Go ahead: Ask.
Ask what they all want to know when they knock at my gate:
Am I going to Heaven or not?"*

*"That's what I was going to ask when I got here," I say.
then I suddenly realized something when we talked.
Heaven is where I've been since the day I was born."*

A fond farewell,

Shirley Schwartz