

To: First Church Baldwin, United Methodist
FROM: Richard Barnhart

A MEMORY OF FIRST CHURCH BALDWIN

Back in the Eighties, Deryck and Freda Moon sometimes enhanced worship services with dramatic presentations. I remember many of the skits that Freda directed, most of them based on stories from the Bible, but the one that I recall most fondly is my son Matthew's initiation into the world of acting, with its attendant skills of voice projection and stage presence.

When he was a fifth or sixth grader, Matthew Barnhart played the rôle of the prosecuting attorney in the courtroom trial of Adam and Eve. He did a magnificent job of emulating a lawyer's mannerisms: the hand gestures, the pacing back and forth before the witness stand, the well-placed pauses. Needless to say, he won his case.

A year or two later his high voice had dropped to a bass, and he was on a growth spurt that didn't end until he was six and a half feet tall. In high school his acting career blossomed: he was the captain in South Pacific and Henry Higgins in My Fair Lady. At

Princeton, he was in both The Music Man and an opera. If he hadn't been a molecular biology major, he would have acted in many more presentations.

After graduation from Johns Hopkins Medical School and the Bloomberg School of Public Medicine, his career was dedicated to fighting AIDS; but he was also a Mennonite minister at a church in inner city Baltimore. He gave wonderful, animated sermons: great ideas enhanced by energetic presentations. His speaking and dramatic talents continue in his on-going career, where he is in charge of the AIDS program in the African country of Malawi. Whenever I hear of his accolades, I remember how it all started: with a little prosecutor convincing the jury that the defendants, Adam and Eve, were guilty as charged.

Richard Barnhart