

Spreading the word one card at a time

By JOHN ARBTER

woodctystringer@gmail.com

Many people have suspicious natures – meaning that they have doubts about the message and the motives of others.

Perhaps that is as a consequence of living in the modern world. Perhaps, it is because of the amount of fraud which seems to dominate modern, civil society.

Certainly, the relegation of Christianity to a back-bench role in the nation has contributed to this sense of ill ease.

'In God we trust' has been under attack in the United States for quite some time.

These circumstances have forced many to hold their faith tightly to themselves. In a way to protect their faith, and possibly as a personal shield against all the new levels of evil in the world.

That is a sad state. One of the true joys of faith is to be able to see it at work in the words and actions of others. Somehow the fast pace of life in the 21st century seems to be stealing this feature away.

When, there then is presented, someone who is willing to share

thoughts on faith, it is an exciting thing.

Yantis resident Gerald Schmidt rarely goes anywhere without his cards. Contained on both sides of small calling cards is a wealth of thought-provoking ideas designed to do one thing, start a conversation about Christianity.

That conversation could be with Schmidt, or with oneself, or with God.

It was the experience of some events in Schmidt's life which led him to become a card-carrier for Christianity. The events are separated by many years.

The first happened as a young man. He was 28 years old.

As Schmidt relates, "I was a young guy, had a degree in electrical engineering, served a stint in Vietnam as a signals officer, got picked up by a major corporation, and had just completed a graduate degree, when I read a copy of Earl Nightingale's 'Capstone Course on Life.' I thought I had it all in life at that stage, but something was missing."

Schmidt admitted that he was both 'mad and glad' to have tripped across Nightingale's writings – glad that he



had found it and mad that he was only now in his life discovering a simple Christian-based approach to living.

The second event occurred some 25 years ago.

Schmidt had built a successful career as an industrial salesman specializing in drilling equipment.

His work took him around the world with considerable time spent in Korea, Italy and what is now Croatia – all major locations for international drilling companies.

Additionally, he and his wife Joy had lived throughout the United States, with considerable time in the Houston area.

It was while at the height of his career that he awoke one day from a nap.

"I sat straight up and said out loud, "Yes Fa-

ther, I will!"

While he cannot recall what caused him to speak those words. He immediately stood up, fetched a Bible and began to read. That event spurred a study of the Bible which has been ongoing for over a quarter of a century.

The third prompting event occurred while on a field trip with his young daughter, Milla.

They were walking, with a guide, through a wildlife area north-east of Sulphur Springs. He and the guide had a discussion about these events in his life. He was challenged by the field guide to reach out to others.

And so it began. Schmidt freely admits that he has been heavily influenced by authors Earl Nightingale (The Strangest Secret), Matthew Kelly (Becoming the Best Version of You),

and Emmitt Fox (The Sermon on the Mount).

However, the simple positive messages of life, he suggests, are already given to us throughout the Bible. He often refers to Proverbs 4:23: "With closest custody, guard your heart, for in it are the sources of life."

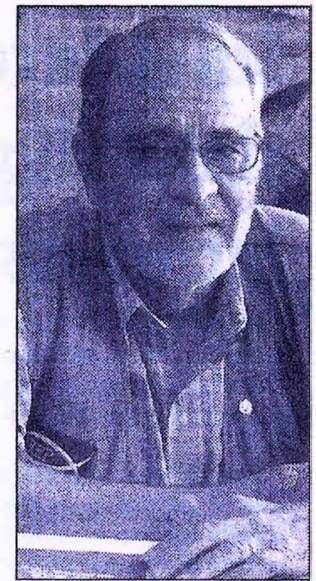
Schmidt takes great consolation in those words, and when coupled with a maxim taken from Nightingale, 'We become what we think about,' he describes what he does as "inviting people to Christ."

There is much to contemplate on those simple cards Schmidt freely provides to strangers. Two banners are printed on each card. One declares 'Thoughts determine your life,' and the second questions 'Who or what shapes your life?'

The messaging on the cards contains a list of Christian life basics, a self-test to judge one's conduct, a summation of exactly what each person controls in their life and a challenge to redefine that life.

Speaking with people about religion is often fertile ground for misunderstanding or a questioning of an agenda.

Schmidt acknowledg-



Gerald Schmidt of Yantis has a unique ministry.

es this, but adds, "I find that most people I speak with already have much faith."

He also admitted that it can be a struggle when speaking with mainstream church hierarchy.

Schmidt offered the thought, "While teaching us how to live, Jesus took great issue with the hierarchy of the church of the day."

Schmidt views his invitations as simply one man's attempts to nurture Christ-like conduct throughout the county. Given the many challenges facing the nation, increasing the discussion of and exposure to Christianity may be the only best way forward.