

## "The Memory Tree"



Gail Roberson

As I stopped at the top of his front porch steps, he rose from his chair, hitched up his suspenders, and stuck out his wrinkled hand for a firm welcome. I found him to be a colorful character, always spouting words of wisdom with a warm voice grown rusty with age. Once he saw what I intended to do with the things he told me, we were friends from there on out. He quickly became one of my best folklore sources. I even created a fictional character for one of my short stories based upon him and his old place out in the country.

We nearly always had our conversations in the shade of the ancient oak tree that sat smack in the middle of his yard. He thought of it as "family" and affectionately named it "Memory Tree." He told me of the days when he swung from its branches and of the many events that the old tree had witnessed through the years. The old man's wisdom of the years taught me of the past, and my knowledge of the present invited some modern into his world, though he made it plain to me just where he stood on every issue. As destiny would have it, I returned for the last time on the very day the huge old oak was being cut down.

I tried not to watch him as the tremendous tree fell, but I could not tear my eyes away from his face. The sky was heavy and gray, like the look on the old man's face. The limbs of the tree were larger than most tree trunks I had seen. I watched him gently touch the exposed rings that marked the years like the hundreds of wrinkles on his hand. A storm had ripped the oak open, and after a long time of watching and waiting, the hardest decision of his life had been made when he finally let them cut the old tree down.

It was beneath this tree that his cradle was placed in summer. It was beneath this tree that he obtained most of his schooling from anyone who happened to have a book and some time. This was where he spent his leisure as a child and an old man, with the years between as good as written on the bark. It was here that his family gathered for summer Sunday dinners and the hog killing tables set end to end just before the first snow. There were babies rocked here, hands held, tears shed, watermelons cracked open, songs sung, peas shelled and even a reputed family murder. Beneath its thick green canopy he had placed a ring upon his new bride's finger. Over sixty years later, he stood by as family and friends paid their last respects to her, gathered around the base of the tree while crispy leaves from overhead swirled and bounced off a casket spray of fresh cut flowers.

Yes, I watched his face the day they cut down his "Memory Tree." My heart lay heavy for what I knew his felt, but it was not until he abruptly turned and walked behind the barn that the impact of the old man's tears also took its toll on me. I sat down on the water trough and cried softly for a new-found friend who had just lost a lifetime one.

A member of his family telephoned me several months later to inform me of the old man's death. "We thought you might like to know that the best of the timber cut from the old oak was used to make his casket," he stated. "That's the way he wanted it, and that's the way it was done. We thought it was appropriate, what with the way he felt about the old tree and all."

Yes, I thought to myself after he hung up. Mighty appropriate. I remembered that he had spoken only a few words the day the tree was cut, and that most of them had to do with "setting the best to the side" to the man who was to oversee the sawing operation. I should have realized what he meant when he said that.

Mighty appropriate. The old man and his "Memory Tree." Together for a lifetime, and now for all eternity.

### Letter To Editor

Dear Editor:  
Are the people in your area in need of rain?

I would like to share a very remarkable testimony with you:

On April 30, 1986 I wrote a letter to approximately 100 churches in our area and requested that the people begin to pray for rain. As a result of this it began raining on May 12th, and we have had an abundance of rain since that time. We have had approximately 25 to 30 inches of rain since May 12th, and all the crops within this area are flourishing in abundance. It has rained from one to two or more times each week since then.

I feel confident that if you will publish this testimony in your

Letter Written to the Churches

April 30, 1986

Dear Brother is Christ:

I am concerned about the lack of rain that we have experienced during 1986, and since we are in the planting season the need is even greater.

God shares the following scriptures in His word concerning this:

11 CHRONICLES 7:14 (KJV)

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

ZECHARIAH 10:1 (amplified)

Ask of the Lord rain in the time of the latter or spring rain. It is the Lord Who makes lightnings, which usher in the rain and give men showers of it, to every one grass in the field.

JOHN 14:13-14 (KJV)

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. Would you please have your congregation join the other churches in the area as we all begin praying for rain on Sunday, May 4th and throughout the entire week?

Thanking you for your consideration in this matter, I remain. Yours in Christ,

(Mrs.) Hilda Strickland

## West Craven High School Class of 1976 Holds 10 Year Reunion

Approximately 86 classmates of the 1976 graduating class of West Craven High School attended the 10 year reunion gala on July 12 at the Holiday Inn in Greenville. With dates and spouses included, 135 were present.

After registering and briefly renewing old acquaintances, all were seated at tables decorated with baskets of red white and blue flowers and balloons. Dinner was served, followed by a brief program by Joanie Dixon and a slide presentation by Gwendolyn Ilock Morris. Afterwards a class picture was taken and a dance followed.

During the program, John Fonville took time to remember our class president and friend Russell Brown, who passed away while we were planning this class reunion. He was sorely missed.

The two who had come the farthest were Teresa Heath Halverson, who came all the way from the Phillipines, and Wilbur Gatlin, who came across the United States from California. The three classmates who tied in the "reproduction race" with 3 children each were, Debbie Gaskins Heath, Charles Cahoon and Jill Moore Campbell. The longest married prize was taken by Sandra Edwards Latham while Karen Ward Taylor took the newlywed prize.

All had a wonderful time remembering the good old days shared, catching up on the ten years since graduation, and making new memories together!

Kim Buck

newspaper and call your people to prayer, God will supply your need even as He has ours.

Romans 2:11 "For there is no respect of persons with God." God is not holding back the rain, but when there is much sin in the land as there is today, satan has the opportunity to bring destruction.

John 10:10 "The thief (devil) cometh not, but for to steal and kill and to destroy: I (Jesus) am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly".

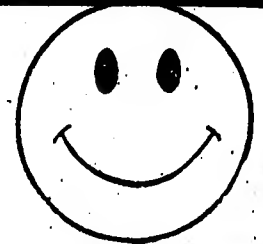
James 4:2(B), "Ye have not, because ye ask not".

Thanking you for your consideration in this matter, I remain

Very truly yours,  
Hilda C. Strickland

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West Craven

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