

A PIECE OF WOOD

Story by John F. Hall

In 1990, Wayland Holyfield and Richard Leigh wrote the song, "Only Here For A Little While." Each lyric in that song is a story unto itself. The readers of my stories know that I like the power of musical lyrics to inspire, to motivate and to entertain. The truth is that all of us are only here for a little while. We all have a terminal disease, some are just diagnosed earlier. In 1974, the Righteous Brothers sang the song, "Rock And Roll Heaven." One line from that song is, "If you believe in forever, then life is just a one-night stand." If you look at the average person, they go through predictable passages of life. They go to elementary school, then middle school and then to high school. Many will go on to college, get a job, get married, have children, and then retire. There is not much time left after they retire. Many years ago, a person that works for the Social Security Administration asked me this question, "When do you intend to start drawing your benefits?" I told him that I had not made that decision. He told me that if I waited until I was 67, to draw the maximum benefits, then statistically I would only draw 17 checks before I died. At first, I did not believe him. Then I shared what he told me with other knowledgeable friends. They told me that they knew other people that could verify what the Social Security man said. I decided to draw my benefits at age 62. My purpose at that time was to just recoup what I paid into the system.

At the age of 75, I ponder the wisdom found in Psalm 90, verse 10, "The years of our life are seventy, or by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone and we fly away." What is important, regardless of the span of life that we are given, is to live a life that makes a difference. It means being present for those that we love. This corresponds to the lyrics, "Gonna hold who needs holding." Each day brings a



new opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people that we care about. The next lyric in that song, "Mend what needs mending," is much easier to say than to practice." I became a part of a very Christian family that has three daughters. The father died unexpectedly. The mother gave the family piano to one of the youngest daughters. The oldest daughter felt so slighted, that she has nothing further to do with her mother or her sisters. The mother sadly told me that she could not believe that her family was torn apart over a piano, a "piece of wood." It may not have been favoritism, but to the oldest daughter, who may have cherished that piano, it was.

When Christ was crucified on the cross, I have not read anything that said that people were fighting over that cross, a "piece of wood." The sad thing about this story is that I was a guest in the home of this Christian family on many occasions. I attended the marriage of the oldest sister and that of her son. The mother told me what happened. She might have thought that I could do something to change her oldest daughter's heart. In this life, we cannot make anyone love us or forgive us if they don't want to. Harden not

your heart are words found in the Bible. Forgiveness is found in the Lord's Prayer. I am a peacemaker, not a pastor. Forgiveness is a two- way street. I don't believe that turning one's back on one's family is worth the eternal price.

Material things like a piano, which is nothing more than a bunch of plastic keys, wire and wood, can bring happiness. I sometimes think that I suffer from a naive belief that crafting words and putting them in a letter can change things. I wrote the oldest daughter, twice, in the hope that she might change her mind and show a little forgiveness. Like in the silence of the grave, no response was heard. I did not want her dad to look down on me and say that I should not have given up on his oldest daughter.

Perhaps I should have shared, with the oldest daughter, another verse in the song, "Let me love like I'll never see tomorrow. Treat each day as though it's borrowed. Like it's a precious child. Whoa, take my hand, let us reach out to each other. Cause we're only here for a little while."

I believe that the Good Lord keeps me around to write just one more story. I've seen my share of people being angry and disappointed. Parents have the right to dispose of their property in a way that their children may not approve. Not knowing if the youngest daughter's dad wanted her to have that "piece of wood," may never be known.

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>