

TO BE REMEMBERED

By John F. Hall

I believe that we all want to be remembered, loved and missed when we are gone. Back in the day, 1962, prior to the tech age, I was a soldier in basic training at Fort Gordon,



Georgia. The mail delivery was the most important part of the day. I was detailed to bring the mail to the barracks, and to call out the soldier's name. He would come up to me, and I would hand him his mail. The mail brought all the news from home, and a song also brought comfort to soldiers as well. I had a record player and about fifteen 45 rpm records. And I would play them over and over again, in the barracks. I still have that record player and those records. In 1964, when I was dating my future wife, Paula Andree Oakley, I would mail letters to her, at Post Office

Box 56, Golden Pond, Kentucky.

In 1956, Wally Gold wrote the song, "Look Homeward. Angel." These are some of his lyrics: "Look homeward angel, tell me what you see. Do the folks I use to know remember me? Look homeward angel, find my lady fair. Does she dream about the love we use to share? So she'll know how very much I miss her, angel, while she's dreaming, won't you kiss her? Look homeward, angel one thing I must know. Do her arms still yearn for me alone? . . ." Thomas Wolfe wrote a novel called, "Look Homeward Angel." Angels are a mysterious, symbolic presence in Wolfe's novel. They may represent hope and are symbolic reminders of a world that we cannot see or understand. Chuck Brodsky wrote the song, "We Are Each Other's Angels." These are some of his lyrics: "I hope I see you later - 'cause it's time for me to go. That's my ride that just pulled over and it sure was good to know you. So go answer your calling - go fill somebody's cup. And if you see an angel falling - won't you stop and help them up? We are each other's angels - we meet when it is time. We keep each other going - and we show each other's signs..."

Gene Graveline wrote the poem, "Remembering." These are his words: "The beauty of a memory is that it is always there. Like a penny in your pocket, you can take it anywhere. And when your heart is heavy and your heart is filled with tears, you can focus on a memory and travel through the years. Your heart can visit happy times, when laughter filled the air, and the presence of your loved one, will lesson your despair. So, as you travel on in life, take comfort as you go, in a lifetime of 'sweet memories' of one who loved you so." , , ,

Helen Gleason wrote a short poem called, "The Worth of a Friend." These are her words: "A heavy burden lighter grows because a friend has prayed for me, and helps to share when trials o'er whelm 'til I some light in darkness see. Alone, a burden's hard to carry on life's sometimes toilsome way; a friend to share, and care and pray means more than words can ever say. A friend is God's love gift to us worth more than money, goods or fame; who stands with us when things go wrong, whose love always remains the same. So, thanking God, Who gives to us a friend whose caring has no end and; as we, together, share life's trials, I pray I, too, can be a friend." Kenneth Guinn, the former vice president

of the Bank of Cadiz, and I were friends. His health was failing, and the last time that we talked, was in Hancock's Market in Cadiz. Kenneth said to me: "John, two weeks after I die, people will forget that I even existed. I believe that I told him: "Ken, I won't forget you." And this story may help keep his memory alive.

Christina Rossetti wrote the poem, "Remember Me." These are her words: "Remember me when I have gone away, gone far away into the silent land; when you can no more hold me by my hand, nor I half turn to go yet turning stay. Remember me when no more day by day you tell me of our future that you plann'd: only remember me; you understand it will be too late to counsel then or pray. Yet if you should forget me for a while and afterwards remember, do not grieve; for if the darkness and corruption leave a vestige of the thoughts that once I had, better by far you should forget and smile than that you should remember and be sad."

James (Jim) Etheridge, a member of the small church that I attend, talked to me one Sunday. Everyone went home after the religious service, except for Jim and me. Like



many veterans, who fought in World War II, they came home and never talked to their family and friends about what they had experience and seen. Why after, 80 years, did Jim want me to know about some of the horrific things that he had experienced and witnessed as a soldier fighting in the Pacific islands, that took so many American soldier's lives?

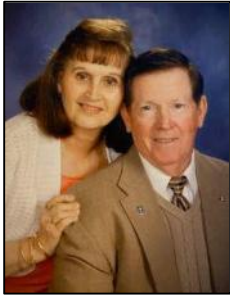
(Pictured: John F. Hall & James "Jim" Etheridge)

Jim had fudged his age, and enlisted in the Army, when he was just 15 years old. I enlisted in the Army on my 17th birthday. Jim loves for me to give him my stories. Since World War II ended on September 2, 1945, or 80 years ago, that makes Jim 95 years old. We were in the church parking lot, and I was about to get into my Ford Escape SUV, when Jim came over and talked to me. He knew that I was a fellow infantry soldier, like him. I listened as he told what he endured in the Pacific islands, and in Korea too. For 80 years he kept those horrible details silently in his memory. I was no stranger to death and gore on Kentucky highways, that became Kentucky die ways. Two weeks out of the State Police Academy, in 1973, my training officer, Trooper Joe Ward, was hit and killed by a car going 70 miles an hour, as we were investigating a traffic accident, on the Pennyrile Parkway, in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

Jim is in poor health, and so am I. The last time, that Jim and I talked, was outside of the Church's Fellowship Hall, in October, when photographs were being taken for the new church directory. Jim had his picture taken and was about to get into a van. He was on oxygen, and he was being assisted by his daughter. When he saw me, he gave me a big smile. I walked over and we hugged. I was wearing my Army Dress Blue uniform. I felt that this would be my last picture for the church directory. Paula and I had our picture taken together. I told the photographer that I wanted a separate picture of me. I wanted it

to be my obituary picture, down that long and broken road. I also ordered wallet size pictures to give to family and friends.

I will end this story with the lyrics of country singer Alan Jackson. He wrote the song,



“Remember When.” These are his lyrics: “Remember when I was young and-so were you. And time stood still and love was all we knew. You were the first and so was I. We made love and then you cried. Remember when? Remember when we vowed the vows, and walked the walk. Gave our hearts, made the start, and it was hard. We lived and learned, life threw curves, there was joy, there was hurt. Remember when? Remember when old ones died and new were born. And life was changed, disassembled, rearranged. We came together, fell apart, and broke each other’s heart. Remember when? Remember when the sound of little feet, was the music week to week. Brought back love, we found trust, vowed we never give it up. Remember when? Remember when 30 seemed old, now lookin’ back, it’s just a steeping stone. To where we are, where we’ve been, said we do it all again. Remember when? Remember when we said when we turned gray, when the children grow up and move away, we won’t be said, we’d be glad. For all the life we’ve had and we’ll remember when. Remember when? Remember when?”

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:

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