

After-Thoughts

When Elma Lea Holladay and I pledged our lives to each other “till death do us part” in 1945, how could we have envisioned 57 years together? The thought of parting at any time was too disturbing to think about. But as the years rolled by, we knew that the time was near. Instead of living in fear of it, we thanked God that he had given us these many years together with hope of extended life after the parting.

Now that earthly ties are severed, instead of dwelling on it, I thank God that I was so richly blessed by a companion whose love was never doubted, who gave me two wonderful children, who stood by me in the thick and thin, and who made me a better, happy person. As the years brought increasing disability, I prayed that God would let me take care of her until the time of parting. He answered that prayer but not without Mira taking the lead in the final weeks. She has been super. It had been so long since Lea had enjoyed a pain-free day that I could be thankful to see her relieved forever.

I am thankful for medical science and dedicated health care providers. They can be dreadfully expensive, so I am thankful for Social Security, Medicare, the supplementary insurance we had, and for finances enabling me to pay for the staggering cost of prescription drugs in recent years. God has often used the good hearts of others to share our load. So, having so much for which to be grateful, how could I complain?

The memorial service for Lea brought tender tears and gentle laughter as tributes were made to Lea and happy times were recalled. Initiating the service, I thanked those present for honoring Lea by their presence. Ryan Hook, our grandson, led “Amazing Grace” and “How Great Thou Art.” Daniel Hook, the older grandson, recalled his childhood memories of visits to his Grannie’s house, and gave a touching tribute. Sol Hook, our son and their father, provided a historical obituary and offered emotional tribute to his mother. A friend, Andrea Henderson, sang, “His Eye Is On The Sparrow,” one of Lea’s favorite songs.

Four years ago I wrote a piece honoring Lea titled, “Riding In The Front Seat.” She said then that it would be sufficient for her funeral. None of the family felt that we could get through it, so we imposed on Ron Stump for that. Being so long, it had to be edited. Ron gave a masterful presentation of it.

Paul Prince, our son-in-law, led in singing “Abide With Me” and “My God and I.” Sol gave an impressive reading of 2 Corinthians 4:6 - 5:9 from Peterson’s “The Message” and offered more thoughts about his mother. After a brief period of “open mike” with the audience, Ron ended the service with a prayer and all were invited across the street to our place for food and fellowship. I would like to know that Lea was watching and listening in. She would have been pleased.

A picture of Lea when she was about twenty years old was used on the program folder. I wanted to include it in this mailout, but Vic says there would be problems with that, so he

is to make it accessible at our web site. Already, you may access a picture of Vic, Lea, and me taken about five years ago.

As your calls, cards, email notes, and other gestures of kindness and condolence have come, my first impulse has been to go to her room and share them with Lea. But that part of life-long companionship is past. However, she has known of your love and prayers which you have often expressed. Your messages have comforted me in my time of pain. You have reflected God's loving concern by the abundance of expressions which have come from our kin, our church family, our neighbors, and many of you across the nation and in several other countries.

An important realization has been impressed upon us in recent months, weeks, and days as Lea's life seemed to ebb away. That truth: There are many good, caring people in this world. The sordid face of humanity is shown to us daily by the media causing us to lose faith in those around us. Many doctors, specialists, technicians, nurses, and care-givers attended to Lea's needs. Without exception, each showed great concern for her well-being, taking time to deal with her as a fellow-human being who had feelings and anxieties. Not one fitted into that negative stereotype of the non-feeling professional.

When someone tells you, "I am praying for you," you do not reply, "I do not agree with you doctrinally, so never mind." Doctrinal issues fade in the glow of loving concern.

Many of the email notes we have received were from people whose names I did not recognize, some giving no indication as to where they live or what church they were affiliated with. But they displayed the identifying character of disciples of Jesus. Yes, there are many good, God-serving people ready to reach out to us.

Wanting to make a DONATION HONORING LEA, some have inquired which cause we would choose to receive it. She would be honored by a donation given to any worthwhile cause of your choice. In a special honor for us in 1997, the Westside congregation, set up a Scholarship Fund in our name at Cascade College, a local school operated by dedicated Christians. Adding to that would truly honor her. If you choose it, send your donation to: Westside Church of Christ, 17414 NW Walker Road, Beaverton, OR 97006 and designate it for that purpose.

I want to devote myself to the unfinished tasks God has left me here to complete. I intend to continue in the outreach that he put into our hands with the many partners he has sent until it is evident that he is ready for me to rest. And I trust that it will be a welcome rest.

Thank you for letting me share my feelings with you. The last several weeks have been totally draining for me. I am making progress of recovery and readjustment but it will take some time. I will read again your notes for the supportive strength they offer, and they will not be discarded soon. Thank you for you continued prayers.

Because some of you were not on our mailing list when I published "Riding In The Front Seat" about four years ago, I plan to print it again with a few updated revisions for the next mailout.

(Cecil Hook; June 2003) []