



Times Remembered
Betty A. Young

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There was nothing quite like a summer day growing up in Kentucky. Despite being older now, the memories of a perfect summer day is still fresh as paint on a finished canvas in my mind.

The early morning coolness and fog faded quickly as the powerful sun began its journey across the blue sky. The clouds looked beautiful, like huge cotton balls, so pure and white.

I remember the hot air heavy with humidity packed with the aromas of wild roses and honeysuckles. Now and then a gust of wind brought a little relief from the heat, which often seemed to be bouncing off the ground.

Garden plants thrived, they seemed to grow right in front of your eyes. The heat unleashed the color

A Perfect Summer Day

of vibrant flowers. New roses continually appeared on bushes, daises and Queen Annie's Lace danced in the breeze. I remember beautiful butterflies flitting about, and grasshoppers jumping ahead of my feet as I helped Mom in the garden.

As the setting sun pulled the shades on one of these perfect summer days, the air turned cooler in that gray zone between sunset and moon glow. The first star blinked on and a slice of moon appeared, and the sky acquired the texture of lush, black velvet.

The family gathered on the front porch at night to share news and thoughts and to experience the cool breeze. One lone light bulb served as the gathering place for moths and an assortment of bugs. Crickets and locusts provided background music for conversations and fireflies entertained the kids. The evening seemed so much cooler and peaceful just listening to all the night sounds

I ran through the wet dew on the grass and caught "lightning bugs," as I called them and put them in a Mason jar by my bed at night to use for a night light. I wanted to keep them forever, but

Mom always made me throw them away the next day, but there was always plenty more to catch every night.

And on some really memorable nights, the air would become engulfed with the scent of rain. Soon, the clouds opened and the raindrops fell. I would sleep with my older sisters on the screened-in front porch. The pity-pater of the raindrops on the tin roof were music to my ears as I slipped into a restful slumber.

You know, home is a wonderful place and there was no place else I'd rather be. The memories of home and those summer days are so vivid, sometimes I'm still there.

I think about all the people who lost their homes from tragic hurricanes or fires. How horrible that your house and belongings are there one day and gone the next.

God is always with us even though we don't understand why bad things happen. The Bible's words are our hope. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble." "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give away and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

In bout of confusion, little old lady chooses the wrong 'hymns'



America's Heartland
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I got such a kick out of a joke Sheila Baker of Wheatley, Kentucky, shared the other day about a pastor who had what he thought was a great idea for a fundraiser.

"Whoever gives the most money gets to choose three hymns," the pastor announced to his congregation.

A little old lady gave \$1,000 and won the contest. She walked to the front of the church, turned around, surveyed the congregation, and said, "I'll take him, and him, and him."

I used that joke as a sermon illustration here while back at South Fork Baptist Church, and I found I had underestimated just how funny it is. As I said, I got a kick out of

it when Sheila told me, but the folks at South Fork absolutely cackled. Perhaps we all can envision a feisty little old lady who might actually pull such a stunt in a bout of confusion.

I really appreciate a congregation that can laugh, a congregation whose members are happy in the Lord and who are able to rejoice in Him. It's easy to fall into the old trap of being so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good. I remember the story from generations ago about the little Puritan boy who wasn't allowed to do much of anything physical on the Lord's Day. He couldn't run, jump or play as little boys like to do. He couldn't fish or catch crawdads. So he took a walk through the meadow where he encountered a long-faced mule with those sad mule eyes. The little boy said, "I see, Mr. Mule, that you're a Christian, too."

Serving God isn't supposed to be onerous, as the Pharisees tried to make it in their day. If you remember, Jesus called them out for that, saying "they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4).

Jesus made it clear that serving Him should not be burdensome. He said, "come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I'll give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

As the Apostle Paul ministered to folks in the early church, folks who faced severe persecution, he continually called on them to lighten up. He'd say things like, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and, again, I say rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

The prophet Zephaniah offered some of the most encouraging words we can hear in the book that carries his name, in Chapter 3, verses 14-17: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away thy judgments. He has cast out thine enemy. The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee."

So, you see, the Bible makes clear that there should be rejoicing among God's people.

That said, I can only hope the little old lady who won the church fundraiser rejoiced when she found out her \$1,000 entitled to choose "hymns" instead of "hims."

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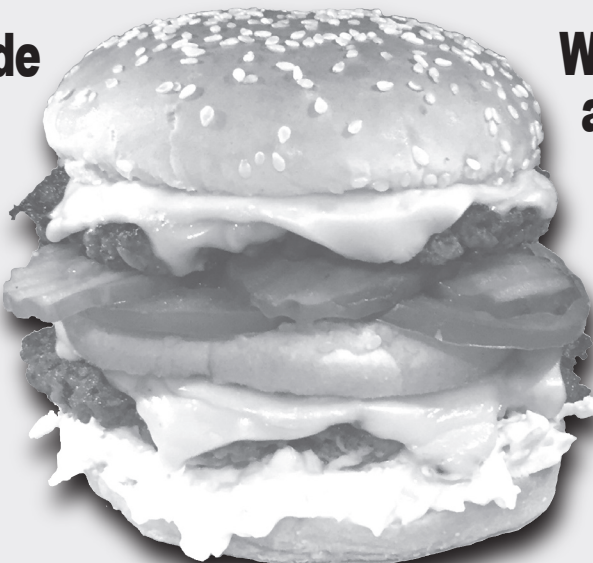
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