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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

LIVING WITH MEMORIES 2

(second in a series)

I remember the first sermon I ever preached. One of the elders in the church at Broken Arrow had taken an interest in some of us boys in the 14 to 17 age range. He taught us to lead singing, pray publicly and even make little talks to our peers. One afternoon he called and asked me to come by his store (he was in the furniture business) and there on a Tuesday told me I was going to be preaching in the absence of our regular preacher. It was the first Sunday in July, 1950. Talk about being scared, this was it.

I will remember that day and the things surrounding it as long as I live and have a mind. We had constructed a new building some time before and the house was packed. In fact, it seems to me there were a few extra chairs. I preached 27 minutes that morning and 25 minutes that night. One lady told me as they were going out of the building that she hoped the baby didn't bother me. I was told later there was a baby screaming bloody murder all the way though. (That was a time before nurseries in buildings) I did not know there was any disturbance at all.

I remember the birth of my children. What days those were, and what hopes I had for them. Their upbringing was about the usual I guess but each of them excelled and made me proud in their own way. I saw a lot of people thrust themselves into the lives of their children and become meddlesome pests and I decided never to do that. My children have always been independent because that is the way they were brought up. The boys, Richard, the eldest and Randy the younger, are both industrious, productive men today and I am thankful for that. They have always been

dependable workers. I could give them a job and know they would do it whether I was there or not. I am indeed proud of them in this.

My youngest son is 51, and with both boys in their 50's I am beginning to feel kinda old, but that goes with the territory. The boys take care of their dad and I appreciate that very much. The Bible says "train up a child in the way he should go..." and I made a stab at it. In fact, in some ways, I see those results now, in other ways not. My goal for most of my life was to preach the gospel, first and foremost, and the second was to take care of my family. Some gains, some losses.

We lost my daughter eight years ago and of course I remember that, but I don't like to dwell on that day. She was a beautiful, caring, hard working person and I will miss her always.

The day Paula died.

There are some days and events you just cannot forget, no matter what. It was January 8, 2003 at 5:30 in the morning that my phone rang. It was my sister-in-law, Shirley Cooley and she said, "Ed, I hate to be the one to tell you this but Paula is dead." It takes some things, shocking things, unexpected things, some time to soak in. I knew what she said but I just couldn't process it for a few moments. I don't remember the conversation after that. It was brief and what happened the next few hours is kind of a blur. There were calls and conversations about arrangements, how long it would take me to get there, the funeral preparations, etc. I had been in the wheelchair for something like a year and did not travel well. Finally I decided not to try to make the trip. I know some think that terrible but I have always hated looking into caskets and this was my only daughter.

Paula did not have an easy life. She married badly, a man that experimented with drugs (I guess he was addicted) and did not seem to have the notion to work much. In the 25 years of their marriage he worked only three years. I did not understand her attachment and told her so a few times but I still loved her. She was always and always will be "my little girl." Paula was 47 when she died, much too young. She had two sons she left behind. Their father had died a couple of years before.

I miss her every single day.

I could write a lot more about my family but this will suffice for now. Next time I will tell you about some “special friends.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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