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Going Home

by

Tom Holbrook

A couple of weeks ago Judy and I flew to WV to attend a wedding. We had bought our tickets to go back right after a friend of ours from school e-mailed and said her daughter was getting married and would we come. Shortly after buying the tickets Judy's sister contacted us and said her grandson was getting married that same weekend and the wedding was the exact same time as that of our friend's daughter. Decisions... decisions... of course family won out. Judy's sister from Ft. Worth was also flying in for the wedding and we were anxious to see her since we hadn't seen her since that now historic high school reunion that brought Judy and I together after 25 years having not seen each other.

Judy and her sisters have a special bond that few sisters do and seeing them together for the first time as an insider of the family was a joy and fun filled time for me. One would think they were the same fun loving adolescents they were in days gone by. Laughter filled Carol's house the entire weekend. If that had been all we had flown home for it would have been worth the trip.

The wedding was beautiful and the reception was one of the nicest I had ever been to. The wedding party's ring bearer, a cousin of the bride, performed his task of carrying the ring (*They don't actually trust a kid to carry the ring do they,*) and he was the prince of cuteness as he was supposed to be. Did he come meekly and somberly down the aisle, afraid of tripping over his own feet? Not this young bearer of grand tidings. He occupied the honored position immediately before the Bride and he came down the aisle with a big grin and a HUGE brass bell. As he walked he rang it very loudly and cried out, "*The Bride is coming! The Bride is coming!*" Everyone stood and got into mood of the festive occasion and burst out laughing when the handle of the bell came loose and the bell, with clapper intact, rolled, bounced and clanged the final 10 feet to the altar.

The reception was fantastic as well with food and drink galore, including some of the best Crab Spread and iced down steamed Shrimp I've had in years. In addition to the now expected throw away cameras for candid shots, every table also held its own wedding cake accompanied by a silver knife and pie server. Of course there was still the obligatory Bride and Groom cake from which the honored pair could feed each other their first bite of food as a married couple.

We could only spend a few minutes at the reception, however, since we had to race an hour away to the reception of our friend's daughter. We got there shortly before its conclusion but we were very glad we had the opportunity to be with our good friends on their proud and memorable day.

The following day was spent driving to the town where Judy and I had grown up from the age of three until the time we left at the age of 20, going our separate directions. I was scheduled to sing at the church in which we both had been baptized and her mother had been the youth leader for decades. Seeing

all the familiar faces and walking the streets where we used to fall and skin our knees was very poignant. We only lived three streets apart and in between were the alleys and empty lots where Kick-the-Can, Sand Lot Football, Red Rover, Red Rover send Judy right over, and the infamous game of Tag were played. (*We all know that Tag was a game established by girls as a means to justify aggressively chasing boys.*) Many of the houses on our streets of old have been moved to new locations within the town, and we think they did that just to confuse us. (*How come we don't see houses being moved as much as we did back then? Maybe they wouldn't stand the stress?*)

We also were able to stop to talk with some of the “adults” of our time who helped shape us into what we are today, including a neighbor and friend of Judy’s who had taught her to tap dance, and the preacher, now in his mid-nineties who baptized both Judy and me in our teenage years. A wonderful visit with each of them, and one would think they appreciated it almost as much as we did.

People say that one can’t go back to where you once were and that is so true in the physical realm. We will be sorely disappointed if we go back expecting it to be exactly as it was a half century earlier. However, within each of us is a large storehouse of memories that can be accessed at our choosing to re-live specific dates and events that were so special in our lives. Faces have grown wrinkled, eyes grown dim and hearing dulled, but our minds, for the most part will forever remain young. Although Judy and I were not “*an item*” romantically in those days, we were great friends and we both hold a great commonality of memories of friends and places. Mix that together with unfettered love of the Lord and each other and you’ve got fantastic glue with which to hold together a relationship.

Well, thanks for joining me on a trip back home. I appreciate your indulgence.

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Tom Holbrook
601 Shalimar Street
The Villages, FL 32162
750-3339
Judyandtom@comcast.net