

Friends

Memories of Boyhood and Graham Weathers (As Best An 83-Year Old Can Remember)

Graham grew up living in a home just outside the Stanley city limits on Highway 27 toward Mt. Holly. My home was in the city limits on South Main Street (Highway 275) toward Dallas. As the crow flies, they were probably about two-thirds of a mile apart. Both homes are still standing as this is being written.

I had an uncle named Bobby Hawley who lived just four houses up the street. Although he was my uncle, he was only two months older than me. He was my best friend and we were more like brothers. Graham was certainly my best friend other than Bobby.

Summers were the best time to play with friends. It was warm outside and there was no school. There was a phone at Graham's house but we did not have one so playing together was a hit or miss proposition. Usually about once per week, I would walk over to Graham's after lunch to see if he was home. Most of the time I found him playing the piano. He called it practicing. I suspect that Mrs. Weathers and Ruth Anne, his sister, were happy to see me come. The house would be quiet for a couple of hours.

Most of the time, we would play tennis for a while or at least until Graham tired of beating me. Then we would head for the creek. Graham's house sat on the top of a small rise which fell off in the back down to a small creek. This creek began at a spring which was about halfway between our two houses. The water was clear and at places formed pools knee deep or so. The pools were populated with minnows of various types. Occasionally, in the larger pools, you might get lucky and see a small sun perch. I usually carried a few fish hooks with some line and a can of worms with me to Graham's. I enjoyed fishing for minnows. Graham wasn't much for fishing but he would watch me for a while.

What Graham did like was going in the water. We found ways to dam up the larger pools to where the water was at least waist deep. That was fun on a hot day! The only problem was that each time there was a fairly heavy rain, we had to rebuild the dam. Keeping the pool banks clear of saw tooth briars and the like kept us busy too. I had to be home around 5 pm so when the sun started making shadows a little longer, I knew I had to go home. And Graham, well it was time to practice again. There was no tennis court, creek or piano at my house so I always went to Graham's.

As we grew older and were in high school, Graham had access to a car. Dr. Weathers had a car that would change gears without having to push in the clutch, the very latest engineering. A couple of nights each week, Graham would pick up me and Buddy Moore. We would sit in the car backed up almost to the railroad track access across Highway 27 from Poke and Pete's Cafe. We just sat there and talked. Other friends would stop by and chat. After about an hour and a half, it was time for Graham to go practice.

As we were finishing the tenth grade, Graham asked me if I would take Junior English with him over the summer. A certified teacher, Vic Sheppard, was willing to teach us. Graham had done some research and found that after our Junior year, both of us would have the credits we needed to graduate from Stanley High School except for English. He wanted us to get that English over the summer so we could graduate a year early to enroll at Wake Forest. I knew there was no way my parents could send me

away to college so I told Graham that I was going to stay in high school for all four years. Graham did take English that summer and graduated with the class of 1949. He did go to Wake Forest that Fall. Many years would pass before I was to see Graham again. The Korean War began only 2 weeks after I graduated from high school in 1950. After a semester at Belmont Abbey College, I was off to the Navy. Four years later, I returned home, resumed college and married Phyllis Helms. We settled down in Stanley and began a family.

Years later, Dr. Graham Weathers returned to Stanley to take over his father's practice. Sometime later, I received a call from Mrs. Weathers, Graham's mother. She told me that Graham and his wife had divorced and his former wife had custody of their sons. She told me that Graham was very lonely and needed his old friend to help cheer him up by calling Graham and asking him to play golf. I did call and Graham told me that right now he was extremely busy but he would call later if he could find the time. A month or two passed without a call from Graham. I received a second call from Mrs. Weathers asking me to contact Graham once more. This time, I went to see Graham rather than call. I repeated the offer to play golf and invited him to eat with Phyllis and me. Once again, he told me about how busy he was. This time I told him that his mother had now called me twice with concern about how lonesome she thought he was. I needed something to tell her! Graham looked at me for a few moments and then said" Bill, there's this nurse"!

Bill Hawley
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