



The Eagle's Nest

By Philip J. Lawson, J.D.

A Day to Remember

“How much can a day hold? Enough to start the mind to thinking.” How true this statement is -- a statement written by my mother many years ago.

Mom had a special talent in memorializing in writing special events in her life as she traveled life's journey from youth to “wisdom” senior status.

Mom spent two years taking care of her grandmother for her father. Papa Fierbaugh took Mom down the Ohio River in a john boat to where her grandmother lived. It was at grandma's house that she found her love for books and the written word – where she learned about life beyond the hills of West Virginia.

Those of you familiar with this column know that occasionally I will go to my “treasure drawer” to find ideas and concepts written by my mother, father, and other influential people.

We all have special days we can remember – days sometimes blurred with tears and heartaches and others with victory in the face of sorrows.

A Day to Remember was just such a writing. Mom spent the day with dad who was asked to conduct a burial service by the wife and daughter of a personal friend. I believe Mom was writing about life's journey and those questions we ask ourselves during periods of grief and sorrow when someone we love has departed.

Dad was not a minister but agreed to conduct the service because of his close friendship with the departed.

My fondest hope is that by sharing treasures from “my treasure drawer” will also remind you of those heartfelt questions during difficult days in your journey from youth to wisdom.

A Day to Remember
How Much Can a Day Hold?
Enough to start the mind to
thinking.

What is important in life? How long is life? What do those who have lost a loved one long to hear? Where does giving begin? Where does receiving start? Why does love make the difference? Love is fulfilling another's need. Love is unspoken words pressing their way from the heart into tear-filled eyes. Love is the inner you reflecting all that is good.

Living today was like watching a film.

We drove 69 miles to Coeburn, Virginia, a small mountain town. Our purpose in going was that my husband was to conduct a burial service for Mr. Charles McCoy on request of his daughter and wife.

Mr. McCoy was born 65 years ago in these mountains. Through impossible odds, he secured an education and for his lifetime worked with boys and girls that they too might feel the importance of an education.

This same enthusiasm he instilled in his daughter and two sons. All became teachers.

Today, his friends and family paid their last respects. High on top of a mountain with fog filling each hollow, he was laid to rest. He had selected this spot. He felt a deep love for these mountains, and so today, he became a part of them.

The rain which had fallen all day refused to let up. From Coeburn we started the ten-mile ride to a cutoff to his mountain. We reached the cutoff. The sign read, "Three miles to Dead End." The road followed the terrain of the mountain in showing off its tall trees, its deep valleys, with its tall peaks only a gray shadow on the skyline.

Finally we reached the road to the cemetery. The casket was put on a four-wheel drive truck with the flowers on top to start the climb.

With the Bible, three sprays of flowers and our umbrellas, we started ahead of the truck. With our feet encrusted in mud, we reached the top of the mountain and saw the tent over the grave. My husband took his handkerchief and wiped the chair seats dry as he waited for the family.

It was a long hill for aching hearts, and they apologized for the rain, the mud, and the road. My Joe responded with praise for the mountains and their beauty. The family took their seats as lonely tombstones stood silent holding many secrets of long ago, while we waited for the body.

The road was too bad. They could not drive into the cemetery. Finally, the wire fence was taken down and loving hands lifted the casket across and rested it beneath the tent.

I recalled my thoughts and heard my husband repeating the 23rd Psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

My gaze rested on the little wife and mother, her tiny form shaking from the cold and rain, her new shoes showed about the coating of mud, holding her daughter's hand and her head resting on her son's shoulder. To myself, I thanked God for love.

The men of the family were asked to stay to help with the box. My husband, taking the arm of the little wife, started down the mountain.

I walked behind, pausing now and then to look at the mountains, to picture them in spring when life again would return to this part of the high country.

So, what appears now to be dead will in due time bring forth life, showing it was not dead but needed only this phase for awakening.

The words my husband had spoken in the Chapel are now returning to me:

*So many things I planned to do,
Ere the close of life's short day;
Some of them I would do now,
If I could find time to stay.
I'd walk in an April shower,
Feel the raindrops gently caress,
And wait for the sun to shine again,
To catch nature at her best.
I'd gather my loved ones around me,
And thank them for being mine;
Then quietly without a murmur,
I'd surrender myself to time.*

We drove back the 69 miles to home. Still the rain was falling. We thought of many things. We felt uplifted. We had seen love in action today. We went forth to give of ourselves and returned rewarded.

Marguerite F. Lawson

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to the Smoky Mountain Paralegal Association for allowing me to share personal thoughts and experiences from my journey.

A number of members of the association are personal friends and valued acquaintances from my years of practicing law. They participated greatly in my practice and help make difficult times in the practice of law much more pleasant.

Think on these things!

Sincerely,

Philip J. Lawson

***Philip J. Lawson, J.D.** was the founder of the Knoxville law firm of Wimberly & Lawson and retired from active practice on December 31, 2004. Phil has lectured and taught widely on a variety of aspects of labor, employment law, leadership, and personal growth.*

