

My earliest memories as a young boy at 6 were those of a loner, having neither functioning father nor anyone else to keep me company. I was drawn to the 1000 remote acres to the south of our small farm. The 5-year slice of time in roaming the woods gave me great insight into things, which serve me well unto this day. Around eleven that season ran its course, and I began to feel empty; the only avenue open to me was the father of some boys from my local rural grade school. Life in rural Kentucky in the 40s and 50s had its drawbacks.

So one day I got on my bicycle and went a couple of miles to see Ben, a scrawny, blue-eyed mountain man growing tobacco as a tenant farmer. I asked him for a job and he smiled, so much as to say I was not big enough to do anything. He asked me what I wanted for wages, and I replied, “Whatever you want to give me.” “Two dollars a day and your dinner”; and so the deal was done.

Except for a four-year interlude, I stayed with Ben off and on until I was 25. The first impression I had of Ben turned out to be correct, as he filled a void in my life that to this day brings me tears. I distinctly remember that I was awed by Ben knowing much more than I thought was ever possible for me. That was the Boy in me, awed by the Old Man. Ben taught me to be a man, a father, and a husband by example; I don’t recall Ben ever saying much at all-he just lived them. I learned patience, perseverance, a hard work ethic, and honesty.

And then Ben died....

I became a young man, trying to get through college. Near the end of squeezing a four-year plan into eight years, I met Dr. MacFarland, a 6’5” gruff Scotsman with a heavy white mustache and a booming voice to go with it. Feelings of inadequacy flooded me, and again I thought I would never be as he was, nor know what he knew. Worse yet, I thought I was but a name on the roster to him and that he would never even give me the time of day.

But again I was wrong; Dr. Mac Farland took me under his wings, just like Ben did, and taught me things about accuracy, excellence, education, Creation and insight that to this day serve me well. I remember writing in my diary how much I appreciated an old man caring about me.

At 25 the time had come to try my wings, and put into place all these two men had taught me. Full of strength, vigor and enthusiasm, the next 25 years was spent gaining knowledge about the realities of life, a roadmap, if you will. Those 25 years included children, social and “church” life, and a whole menu full of mistakes and bad judgment. The teachings of Ben and Dr. MacFarland had run their course; something deep inside was missing.

And then Dr. Mac died....

One summer I was sitting on the bank of Petit Jean Lake in Arkansas, working on a case of Budweiser, reading a little book by an Englishman by the name of Leonard Ravenhill. About halfway into the book, I realized I had just had an “encounter,” one of those rare electric moments when your deepest roots are jarred.

In chasing down where this man might be, I found out he was just down the road in Garden Valley, leading a meeting every Friday night. I wound up going there, utterly blown away by the little man’s fervor, corona and depth. Known worldwide, with an incredible vocabulary and literary acumen, I felt heavily ashamed, never ever expecting I could be as ‘holy’ as he was. He was 80, I was 45.

Here this Boy-Old Man thing was popping up again, just like the early days with Ben and with Dr. MacFarland. In the throes of a mid-life crisis, many a Friday night was spent with tears streaming down my face right in front of him as he spoke. I often wonder what he thought; but, as in the cases with Ben and Dr. MacFarland, I desperately wanted what he had, and in some measure to be what he was.

But no matter; one night he called me by name as we entered the building. I wept all the way home. Some months later, it was orchestrated that my wife and I were to drive him and his wife to Beaumont, a four-hour drive. Now one cannot get away from a passenger in your car for four hours. That period allowed us to know each other a little. The following years were to have been the twilight years for him. Nearly all of his closest friends eventually forsook him, and I wound up being the only company this great Man of God had.

Oh, the utter joy for the next couple of years being his *confidant* and friend! And to think I once thought with strong convictions that this man would never even give me the time of day!

And then Leonard died....

So now the years have come and gone. By virtue of Ben, I who once was a physical boy am now a man. By virtue of Dr. MacFarland, I who once was a mindless young man now am older and somewhat wiser. By virtue of Leonard Ravenhill, I who once was spiritually empty am now being filled.

When the window of time was closing with Leonard, a second crisis arose in my life. What he had instilled in me was about to be tested. He had introduced me to the final leg of my journey, of knowing and learning the Most High for myself. Ben’s teaching was overlapped by Dr. Mac; Dr. Mac’s was overlapped by Leonard’s. Now Leonard’s is to be overlapped by the Source of all things in these three men.

The next 17 years were largely spent alone in the woods,
listening.

My seed are grown now, and my cup indeed runneth over. I have three sons and three daughters now, with a fourth son added just recently. They are no longer considered children, but indeed adult brothers and sisters with whom I have constant and deep fellowship. All seven give me extreme joy when we talk about any issue on the burner at the time, some everyday-short term, some deeper-longer term. My Father has indeed honored His promise that my seed would be taught by Him. I am so, so, so proud of my sons and daughters, so very proud. My day is made when I talk to them as peers and equals. They are true men in their own right.

The fourth “son” I met at a Chinese buffet some 13-14 years ago. The meeting was one of those very special encounters whereby the Spirit bonds two men instantaneously, permanently, inexplicably, on a plane not understood by either. For whatever reason, I never heard from him for ten years. When he did contact me in 11/2008, I told him I had been waiting for him to call. Now? –the last two years have been as full with him as when I talk to my other three sons.

Another encounter like the above occurred in 2009 at a four-month gathering of ex-convicts at a halfway house. Of the twelve, there were encounters with three men, all 37-39 years old, whereby there was this incredible bonding of our spirits. Of the three, the first man cut out the next week, back on the streets selling. The other two moved on, working around the area. None have contacted me; I miss them.

The last special encounter was a year ago at a drilling rig, when the pusher came in the door of our trailer. Immediately there was this Third Realm thing, a bonding that needed no words, followed by a phenomenal few hours. I miss him very much.

I believe I am just beginning to understand the heart of the Father when any of His sons “grow up” and become stalwart young men, and eventually fathers in their own right. By the same token, I also understand His heart when his sons do not give Him the time of day, for various reasons. The Prodigal Son takes on new meaning...

At what point do young men become my “sons”? Is the birthing by the Spirit any less genuine than by natural conception? Some are aware, some not. In fact, many a young man has gone right past me, some which are friends of my three sons above. Most have no clue as to how much I think of them.

But as wonderful as the seven who are close might be, there is an inner gnawing as to the others. This feeling grows commensurately with a sense that:

**the day before yesterday I was born,
yesterday I started my career and family;
today my purpose is changing, I still have virility and a few threads of
wisdom garnered from 35 years of making bad judgments.
tomorrow night I will be an old doddering shell; my sons will be fathers...**

Will the scarlet threads woven into me by Ben, Dr. Mac Farland and Leonard run their course in me, these seven plus and no more?

What a curiosity that at 68 I have all three feelings of awe, inadequacy and shame towards my heavenly Father! Towards Him I feel as a child, an aborigine banging on a hollow log trying to make communication. Ah, but I am finally grasping how much my Father thinks of me! –they are the same feelings I have towards these young men, regardless of whether they are far away or near. As God missed me all these years, so I miss terribly these young men....

I sense my Father has set me off from a boat in His stream at a landing, given an order to improve the little area with the few talents and experience given me. That slice of time and space is now. The time with Ben lasted in all around 8 years; with Dr. Mac less than two; with Leonard around three. Soon the boat will return to pick me up, probably sometime tomorrow afternoon...

As Brutus told Marc Anthony,

“There is a tide in the affairs of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyages of life are bound up in the shallows, and in miseries.

“On such a full sea we now find ourselves afloat; we must take the current when it serves, or forever lose our ventures.”

One-Eye March 20, 2011