

## GRANDPA PAYNE

Some of my earliest and sweetest memories are of this old man who graduated into glory the other night at 97 years of age. He always seemed old to me (he was 56 when I was born), although he would tell others that he and I "grew up together".

I can remember going to church with Grandpa and Grandma when I was a little boy and learning to sing with gusto by their example. I admired Grandpa's strong bass voice and tried to imitate it when my voice began to change.

It was June, 1957, when as a boy of ten I knelt at a big old chair in Grandpa and Grandma's living room in Florida and asked Jesus to come into my heart.

We fished together, had "shooting matches" together with his old 22-short rifle, went for rides in the country together, and, above all, walked on "Hog Branch" together.

Hog Branch is a little spot of land (about 100 acres I think) that Grandpa owned back in the mountains of E. Tennessee. It is covered with forest, has a small natural mountain spring and gurgling little mountain branches running through it. When we would tramp through it together in the fall of the year it seemed like paradise to me. The air felt so good. The wind blowing through the trees sounded so peaceful. And somehow, without many words, our spirits were knit together there on Hog Branch.

The other day, after I had said "good-bye" for the last time to this old man who "grew up" with me, I went back to Hog Branch before I left Tennessee to come back to Garland.

The little spring was half-filled with fallen leaves - as is common in the fall, but I cleaned it out and took a good drink of that delicious water. With tears filling my eyes I listened to the leaves crunch under my feet, the gurgle of the little mountain branches, the squirrels playing in the fallen leaves, and the wind sighing in the tops of the trees. I picked up an old "walking stick" (as Grandpa and I always did) and I walked. And I remembered. I would stop, and listen, and smell that delicious smell of the woods, - and remember.

Why do I share this with you? Partly because you're my family and I know you care. But also to encourage you to be a "Grandpa Payne" to somebody. Your children perhaps, or grandchildren, or a niece or nephew may need you to build some precious memories into their lives. Stored up memories.

Someday Grandpa Payne and I are going to tramp through a heavenly Hog Branch together. Until then, he left me with some mighty fine memories to draw joy from in the future.

I love you!

*Steve*