

REFLECTIONS

November 30, 2008

Each of us should please his neighbor for his good,
Romans 15:2

A Good Neighbor

Along the journey of our lives thousands of people pass through. All of them contribute to life's experience. They shape our perceptions of life and influence the ways we respond to it. In short, the people that enter our lives become a part of who we are. God uses people to shape our lives. During the Christmas season, I often reflect on the people that have influenced *my* life. So as we enter the season this year, I have chosen to share memories of a few of those whose mark I deeply feel. And I begin with John.

He talked with a west Texas drawl; he walked at an unhurried pace; and almost any day of the week, you could find him slowly driving his old dusty pickup down the highway looking at the land and the crops growing on it. There was no need to hurry. Haste wouldn't make the crops grow faster.

John Chenault was a farmer. He was short in stature with a ruddy complexion. You could almost always find him wearing a long sleeve shirt, khaki pants, and boots scuffed by hard work in dusty land. Even by west Texas standards, John was quite a character. His drawl may have been slow, but even in the living room quiet, John's voice resounded as if all in the world were in need of hearing aids. He was especially noted for his loudness at athletic events. His opinions of the officials' calls boomed above the crowds, sometimes causing brief halts in the action for the officials to admonish him. His opinions were sometime wrong, but never in doubt.

While growing up, I sometimes had meals with John and his family. When Mom and Dad were out of town, I would walk across the street to a warm welcome. At every meal, John gave thanks for the food. And I remember John standing at the church door each Sunday handing the worship bulletin to everyone as they arrived. But perhaps the thing that revealed John's person to me the most was the attention he gave when we came home for the holidays. There was never a time that John did not make his way across the street for a visit. He would sit with us and watch ball games, tell stories, and share his views of the world. He was not short on those. But his views did not make the mark.

Neither did I learn from John how to live an unhurried life. But I did learn a little about being a good neighbor. John always had time for his neighbor. I remember him for that. But I also remember him most for something else. Disguised behind his strong views and loud voice was one of the warmest hearts you'll ever find. It is John's mark on my life. John Chenault was a good neighbor with a warm heart—that's how God used his life to him to shape mine. And for that I will be forever grateful.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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