

REFLECTIONS

June 14, 2009

**It has given me great joy to find some of
your children walking in the truth, just as
the Father commanded us.**

2 John 4

Dear Hearts and Gentle People

Someone wrote a song once about a place like this one and the words sound a lot like the place I grew up. It's a place where smiles beamed from people's faces and frowns were few. Doors were left unlocked so friends could come and go at will and caring for one another was a routine part of daily life. It was a place where one could always find a friend when trouble struck, where worship on Sundays was as natural as the sunrise each day. The place and the time are important in my memory, but joy comes to my heart when I remember the people that made the town what it was. They were the ones that gave the song its name—*Dear Hearts and Gentle People*.

Reunion events take me back sometimes to that place that used to be and so it was that I recently found myself walking the streets of memories and recalling old times with friends and classmates that shared those days with me. We talked about the old times, laughed at the stories about one another, looked at pictures, and remembered the dear hearts and gentle people that lived in our hometown. Those people were our parents.

This time the memories came easily. The faces of my schoolmates wore the same smiles their parents wore. The men donned the images of their dads, and the women looked and acted just like their moms. Behind every smile were shadows of smiles that brightened the days I remember so fondly. And deep within every kind remark was the familiar beat of the dear hearts that shaped our lives.

Small farms that once served as life blood to the place we lived are near extinction and with it small towns like this one go in search of a new reason for being. But as I looked around I found more than remnants of the dear hearts and gentle people that gave roots and wings to our lives. Some still live there, but for most, the legacy of the dear hearts and gentle people have moved to new communities and built new homes. These are the places where they reared their children and nurtured their children's children and where they carry on the precious legacy their parents left them.

One day when our lives are but footprints left to our children, they too will gather with their schoolmates to recall their formative years. As they tell their stories and view old pictures, let's pray that high among their memories will be dear hearts and gentle people, and that those people will be you and me. That's what God has called us to be.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.