

Darkness Shared With Brother

Lights Pathway To Memories

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

It was good to sleep in the same room with him again. In trying to recollect I counted 19 years since I had shared a bedroom with my younger brother. But it happened last week when I dropped in on him in a Baltimore town.

His wife is something of a sentimentalist, I think, and bedded us down together while she slept on a couch downstairs.

A MILLION MEMORIES of childhood flashed by that night. The sound of whippoorwills and bob whites — the smell of jasmine and orange blossoms — the steady “tick-tick” of the old grandfather clock echoing through the silent house — and the soft sound of Daddy’s voice from the next room: “You boys be sure and say your prayers.”

The traffic sound of the busy street outside the townhouse interrupted my reverie as I lay atop the sheet waiting for him to snap out the light. I glanced at his bare torso as he climbed into the other bed and tried to remember how that same body looked 30 years ago. The memory was too hazy to recall.

MEMORY IS OFTEN this way. Dimmed by time and crowded aside by cares.

We lay in the darkened room and talked softly. My mind raced through the activities of the day. No not this time, I thought. One day I’ll share them. Tonight I’ll listen.

“I’m afraid of becoming affluent,” he said in a half whisper through the dark. “Money is no longer a problem after Mayo and Johns Hopkins. I want to use it for God’s glory and stay poor — especially in spirit.”

A long period of silence in the darkened room followed my sleepy reply. His voice was slow—remembering. “I remember hitchhiking home from college. The Cadillacs always passed us by. It was the pickup trucks and dirty old sedans that stopped to help.

Perspective

I want to be that way in my practice . . .”

“You couldn’t do otherwise if you tried,” I answered with closed eyes. “God is too much with you.”

The sound of his breathing across the strange room reminded me that 19 years is too long a time for brothers to stay apart at night.

Sleep came gently, like sinking into the pillowed arms of yesteryear. Outside the sounds of the city — still busy even at midnight. But all I could hear was the soothing roar of the sulphur well running to irrigate the grove — the smell of the river across the salt marsh wafting through my upstairs window — the cry of the hoot owls in the hammock — and mother’s voice drifting in from the other room, “Stop talking boys, and go to sleep.”