

October 9, 2009

Dear Pastor Larry,

A few months ago you asked me to record some memories from Camden. I have pondered many thoughts over and over in my mind about Camden and here are some of those memories. (By the way, I also mentioned to my sister, Rachel Patton that she could remit some of her fond memories too. We often chat about them when we talk on the phone.)

I always remember Alberta Edwards leading the opening of Sunday school in the basement of the original sanctuary. She also told stories which I loved to hear. One I never forgot about a little boy and the rapture taking place and he was left behind. It was a vivid memory and one which made me thankful I was a Christian.

I looked forward to VBS every June. We had such a good time. It was a highlight of the summer. We'd line up outside on the steps...march in to Onward Christian Soldiers. We'd say the pledges, learn songs and verses, go off to our classes, have snacks, have a mission story, and play Red Rover during our "recess." When we got older, our class was upstairs in the balcony - that was special. (And the last day we always had a big picnic). There was always a closing program where we would share all we'd learned that week and show off our projects.

Christmas was always special with a program where each Sunday school class did something special. And at the end of the service there were gifts from the teachers...and a box of candy that had chocolate drops, hard candies, peanuts, and a candy cane. For many of us kids that was a really special treat.

Christmas was also a time of caroling. The young people and a few adults would go visit several from the church and the community and sing carols to them. Then we'd end up at the Edward's or somewhere for refreshments.

As a little kid, I remember I couldn't wait to get old enough to be in Jet Cadets. Marion L. was the leader. When I finally did get old enough, I think it was just called young peoples. We had wonderful times...my favorite leaders were David and Charlene Searles. We used to have "come as you are" breakfast. The leaders would drive to our house on a Saturday morning unannounced and pick us up...however we were dressed...even in Pj's. I cannot remember where we went to eat; I just remember how fun it was.

Once we had an old fashioned ice cream parlor set up where we had checkered table cloths and made ice cream sundaes, etc. Another time we had a Hawaiian Luau at the Dalton farm. The table was rolled out sod and we sat on the ground. We all dressed Hawaiian.

We had a lot of hay rides and wiener roasts out at the Bruner's farm or the Daltons. It was there we had our first S'mores. And we'd sit around the campfire and sing and give testimonies. Great memories!!

One party we had in the church basement we were given sayings to unscramble. I remember Dale Launer had "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride." But Dale said, "If beggars had their wishes, they'd ride horses." We all hooted with laughter so hard. He was funny.

We used to have singspiration some Sunday nights after church with a few other churches. I remember Rochester, New London, Wellington, Penfield and others. We'd sing lots of hymns and choruses, had lots of specials from each church, and then had refreshments. I remember once when Ron Edwards was leading the singspiration at Camden, he was explaining how to sing "Jesus Never Fails" as a round, He said it was to the tune of "Row, row, row your Boat." Then as the music intro began Ron directed us and sang as loud as could be "Row, row, row your Boat."

Pastor Nelson loved to sing a song called, "Don't, don't don't you get weary...working for the Lord." He'd use his hand and pause between each "don't" then speed up on "And I ain't got weary yet." I think he also taught us the second verse to "For God So Loved the World." If God so loved the world then we should love it too. And strive to be like Him. Lost sinners seek to win. So they'll be ready when my Savior comes again. Happy will that meeting be (for me), happy will that meeting be.

Once a month we would go to the Hebron youth rally in Elyria on a Saturday night. What a great time that was!! Hundreds of youth singing and challenged by special speakers or films. Afterwards we'd go

to Elyria Dairies and get ice cream or hamburgers. I remember Phil Jewett and Dave Searles always having jokes and Phil would often bow his head to say grace and get his nose right into the whipped cream on his sundae. Laughter was a constant with youth gatherings.

Then there was Camp Patmos. I only got to go a couple times. Once with Dave and Charlene as counselors, along with Pastor and Mrs. Barrett. And the other time was with Eddie Dalton as a counselor. I remember riding a bus to the beach and learning new songs like "Oh How I Love Jesus" and "I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever." It was at camp that I dedicated my life to serve the Lord. I was 10 years old. Someone had paid my way to go to camp.

My earliest memory of Camden is sitting on my mom's lap and not feeling well. As the service went on, I remember seeing spots on my arms...I broke out in the measles...right there in church. I was about 4 years old.

As a young person, I couldn't wait to be old enough to sing in the choir. And did I ever enjoy that! I remember Marian leading it and I'm sure there were others, but she's the one I remember. When church began we'd all file up from the back of the church and into the choir loft. We used to practice lots of specials. It was a real honor to sing in the choir.

A sad memory I have is when I was in junior high. Homer Edwards was our teacher. He did not relate so well with us kids and we thought he was kinda boring. I guess we complained so much that the deacons or someone asked him to resign from teaching our class. I'll never forget his last Sunday with us. He revealed to us that he guessed we were unhappy with him as a teacher and that was his last day...then he broke into tears and said he was sorry if he'd not done a good job. That's when we kids realized how much he loved us and we all felt really bratty for having gotten him dismissed. That was probably one of the greatest lessons in love we ever learned.

New Year's Eve was also a BIG youth even as we always stayed up all night. There was a service until midnight. We'd pray and then ring the church bell at midnight. Afterwards we'd go to the parsonage (Nelsons) and play games and make homemade ice cream and have snacks. I remember one time when the eggs curdled and the ice cream looked like it had peaches in it...it was just flecks of egg yolk...Yuk!!

Missionary conferences were also a big event...usually a week of meetings with slides and lots of stories from the visiting missionary. I always like to hear their work.

And how could I ever forget the Sunday School picnics we had in Ashland Park. We'd play games and there was so much food, but the highlight was the swimming pool. It was after one such picnic in 1962 that my nephew, Andy Patton, was born.

There are so many things I have forgotten...the outhouses for instance. I do not remember when we got an indoor bathroom at the church. (My sister remembers a carriage house there too). And Ken and I were married in that church. Can't forget that memory.

Well, there is a lot here...maybe you can get something from some of it. All I know is that Camden was an integral part of my growing up years and I am so thankful for all the people who had a part in teaching me about God and His Word...and music. We loved to be together as kids, youth, and a church. I am so thankful for the memories and enjoyed this little trip down memory lane.

Thankfully yours,

Linda (Betts) Duffield