

My Hero

by Hugh Barlow

I only had one hero when I was a kid. My hero was a member of the local Baptist church who always went out of his way to show the nature of Christ to me and my family when no-one else in the neighbourhood would. When my father was arrested and imprisoned, this man would get a crew of men from the church together and they would help us cut firewood for the winter. Firewood was crucial for our survival, since we heated our house and cooked our food solely with wood. Since my father was not around to be "responsible" for that task, it was left up to ME, and I was only about 14 at the time. Even before he went to prison, my father was rarely actually "responsible" for that task. When I was ten years old my father gave me the keys to the family van, the chainsaw, the gas, the oil, the splitting maul, and the wedges and said, "Go cut some wood." **I was the person "responsible" for making sure that we had enough fire wood to last out the long Upstate New York Winters. We had a large home with three wood burning stoves. The house was 60 feet long by 30 feet wide, and was two stories tall with a full basement to make three stories of space that needed heating. We had a 55 gallon drum turned into a wood burning furnace in the basement with another 55 gallon drum as a heat trap in the second story. We had a cast iron parlour stove in the living room and an antique cook stove from 1801 in the kitchen. We actually did cook on the cook stove. I even modified it to create hot water for the house when the burn grates burned out from the heat of the fires that we were using. To cook food, we usually used maple, cherry, apple or some other hardwood. This wood would burn hotter than much of the other hardwoods such as sycamore, cottonwood, or elm that we used to heat the house. I ran copper tubing inside the stove and ran cold water through the pipes from an artesian well. The cold water was then sent to the electric water**

heater that was not hooked up to the electric power. We did not have enough money for electricity. The fires would get that water so hot that sometimes we would have to turn the hot water faucet on to relieve the pressure on the hot water tank so that we did not blow the pressure relief valve! It happened often enough that we learned how to relieve the pressure before it happened. We would turn on the water when the hot water heater would start rumbling like a pot of boiling water on the stove. The cold water running through the pipes kept the pipes we were using as grates from melting like the cast iron grates before them.

Anyway, without Mr. Little my life would have been much more difficult after my father was arrested. It was difficult enough as it was. Mr. Little was my personal hero at a time in my life when I had very few people that I could look up to. The funny thing was, I once tried to speak of my admiration for Mr. Little to one of his adult children. The person that I spoke to was much less impressed with his father's generosity and Christ like spirit than I was. He informed me that what the public sees and what the family sees are not always the same thing. I know that this is true, but I suspect that the family judges a good man much more harshly than the public does. Usually the opposite is true for a bad man. The public judges the bad man more harshly than his own family, who often make excuses for him. One would think that the reverse would be true. I lived with *evil* every day. I *know* what a bad man is, I lived with one. I am certain that Mr. Little was not a bad man, yet his family seemed to fail to recognise this. They lived with a man that they may have considered "harsh" but whom I am sure loved them. I doubt that he ever laid a hand on them when he did not have the best intention for whomever he was disciplining in mind. My father, on the other hand, was simply *evil*. He rarely thought about anyone other than himself! He would lash out violently at anyone that annoyed him in the least bit, and apologise for it later, if at all.

If Mr. Laurence Little were still alive, I would write an ODE to him. Unfortunately, he is no longer with us. I cannot wait to meet him in Heaven and thank him again for all the things that he had done for my family and me. I would gladly explain to his children how short sighted they were for not appreciating what they had when they had it. I would *gladly* have had that man as a father instead of my own!

