

Treasures. . .
from the life and death of
J.C. Hibbard

A personal account by Darlene Hibbard Walker

Treasures. . .
from the life and death of
J.C. Hibbard

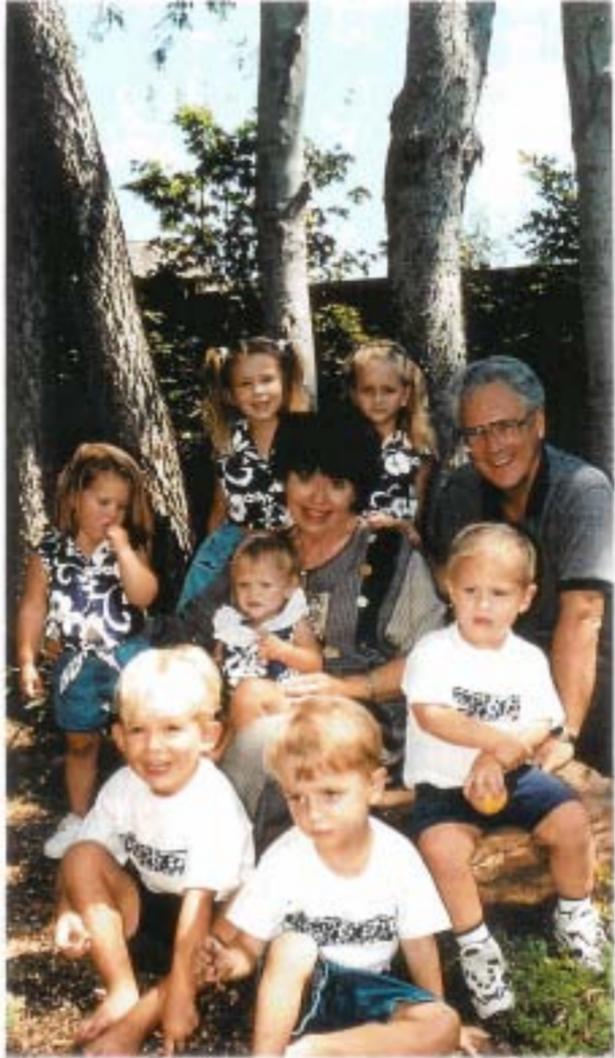
© Copyright 2000
Darlene Walker
P.O. Box 570 • Lawai, HI 96765

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my precious husband, Merv, who is my very dearest and closest friend. Mahalo for the many cherished "treasures" you daily give to me as you hold my hand while we walk together through "paradise!"

Also this is dedicated to our grandchildren: A.J., Victoria, Phillip, Jake, Brittany, Brennan, and Jaycie Ruth.

Just as Deut. 4:9 has become reality in my own life, I now pass this challenge on our children and grandchildren: *Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.*



And teach them to your children and your grandchildren...

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Taking Bad News the Good Way.....	2
Breakfast Treasures.....	7
‘A Givin’ While You’re A Livin’.....	9
Come Home, Honey, Daddy’s Dying.....	12
The Heartsick Shock of It All.....	16
The Rumbling of Chariots.....	21
Your “Opinion” Isn’t Good Enough.....	26
An Only Son’s Prayer Answered.....	31
The Awesome Power of Prayer.....	34
Now We Knew Why.....	39

INTRODUCTION

Whatever my Daddy did -- it was always first class! He found the "treasure of life" while living, and it was not in dollars and cents, but it was his attitude. He had a simple trust in God. Knowing the Lord was always in complete control of every aspect of his life seemed to give him the ability to take each day's present challenges and "make lemonade from the lemons."

The first obvious "lemonade" began in his life at the age of 12. He was born January 16, 1909 as Jesse Columbus Hibbard. Due to the many fights at school trying to defend such a name, he simply made the decision to change it to Jordan Carl Hibbard! So that is why his friends and family just called him J.C.

Not only did he teach me how to live but he also showed me how to die! As a child and teenager precious nuggets were "caught" from his daily life-style as well as "taught" from his preaching in the pulpit. No, he wasn't a "saint!" He was just my Daddy -- who happened to be a preacher!

Even death on June 12, 1980 could not steal the precious investments he deposited not only into my own life but also into the lives of so many other people. It's those "invested treasures" which make 1 Cor. 15:55 a little more meaningful to all of us: *O death where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?*

It is my desire to share some of the insights I learned from my father, J.C. Hibbard, Sr. along with my own personal account of his death. You will recognize many phrases from various songs he used to sing.

Chapter 1

TAKING BAD NEWS THE GOOD WAY

How do you take negative news in a positive way? Daddy showed me! The malignant melanoma was acknowledged, yet the simple truths he so loved, lived, and believed in became a reality before my very eyes!

Daddy was a pastor. He, along with the total support and active participation of my Mother had a thriving, growing church in Dallas, Texas called the Gospel Lighthouse Church. It didn't take too long to discover that there were both assets and liabilities to being a "PK" (preacher's kid).

In the forty years of pastoring Daddy just never seemed to miss the pulpit due to illness. God had gifted him with wonderful health. Even at 71 years of age his daily schedule would challenge any 30 year old!

Suddenly he became ill with what we thought was a very severe case of the flu. From the first day of illness until his death it was only six weeks!

The first three weeks we continued thinking he had the flu which had to be the "meanest, toughest case" ever! It was alarming not only to us but to everyone that he was absent from the pulpit for three weeks solid!

During that third week in the middle of the night as he was just turning over in the bed he cried out in pain grabbing his shoulder. The pain became so severe that we thought he had broken his shoulder just turning in the bed. But how could that happen? He was always such a healthy man!!!

Daddy was not against doctors or hospitals, but he just never needed them nor found time to go. We finally persuaded him to just go to the hospital and get a set of x rays to determine the cause of the severe pain. We all knew that it was abnormal to merely roll over in bed and experience such severe pain.

They not only took x rays but also obtained blood samples. Although they wanted to keep him to run more tests, he returned home. A fractured shoulder was already evident from the x rays.

The following day I was staying with Daddy at home to help. Mother was at the church office. We were alone. The phone rang and it was the doctor. He asked to speak to Daddy. I put the phone to his ear and sat on his bedside. As he listened to the doctor I saw his face turn ashen white. The expression told me the news was not good. His very hard grip on my hand only confirmed the seriousness of the phone call. I had never seen this expression before.

The doctor was requesting that Daddy immediately come to the hospital because they had discovered malignant melanoma. It had spread throughout his entire body and had started from a mole on his shoulder. He neglected to have it removed until it was too late. They suspected that it had also gone into his bones and weakened them. That was why just a simple turn in the bed had caused a fracture to the shoulder.

As the phone conversation continued I heard Daddy saying to the doctor, "Yes, I understand. No, that will not be necessary. Yes, I do understand your concern, but no ..."

When he hung up the phone he said, "Well, the doctor has given me some bad news." That was already obvious to me.

He continued, "He says it's cancer and that it is throughout my entire body and in my bones ... Now that's the bad news. But let me tell you the good news."

I thought, "yea, please do give me the good news."

He continued, "The good news is Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. And one thing is certain *I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep me ... Behold I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?'*..."

The whole theme of his "good news" was God's Words of promises and reminiscing testimonies of healings. He just kept quoting one scripture after another about the power and might of God. Then he continued saying to me that "to God, cancer is no greater to heal than a simple headache."

He told me about the many miracles of healing he had witnessed when I was a very young child both at Will Rodgers Auditorium in Ft. Worth, Texas, at SMU and Gospel Lighthouse in Dallas. It was obvious that he was encouraging himself in the Lord, but at the same time, he sure was lifting my spirit as well!

It was exciting to hear him tell about the faithfulness of God and recite the various testimonies of healing.

Then he seemed to "shift gears" and move into an "instruction mode." He said, "I have lived 71 wonderful years. They have been filled with the fullness and the blessings of the Lord. I will ask the Lord to heal me and that is certainly no problem for Him! However, everyone must go some way or we would all live forever. I had never planned to go via cancer, but if this is the route I am to go then God will be with me every step of the way!"

"Promise me two things", he said: "Don't contend for my life. I'm in God's hands and I don't want you or anyone else to mess it up. So don't take me to the hospital. Even if I lose consciousness, I don't want to go. Leave me at home in my own bed. Whether I live or die, keep preaching that 'Jesus saves and Jesus heals!' I will be healed -- either at this time in this life or when Jesus comes -- but I will be healed! "

His concern always seemed to be for others and not for himself. His first thought was for my Mother. He was glad she was not at home when the call came and instructed me not to tell her of the call from the doctor. He assured me he would tell her at the right time. And he did. Then again, he asked me to confirm the two promises he had requested of me.

As I sat on his bedside holding his hands in my own, tears flooded my eyes and streamed down my face! I expressed my concern regarding taking him to the hospital should he become unconscious. I was not sure that I could keep my promise if that happened.

He replied to me that God's grace would be sufficient for every moment. Although he was very weak his voice was still strong. He had nothing against doctors or hospitals, but simply did not want any life support equipment prolonging his life.

I readily assured him of the second promise and told him I would do everything within my power to honor his wishes regarding the first promise. One thing was certain, God would not leave us nor forsake us and that was about the only thing I was sure about!

It was obvious that he recognized the possibility of our faith being shaken if he indeed did die of cancer and was not

healed. He believed in healing and had experienced it many times throughout his lifetime, but he also realized that some day, something must be the cause of the ending of his life here on earth -- if he did not go up in the rapture!

During the days ahead he saturated his mind with the Word of God. He had music playing much of the time in his room. He would mention certain scriptures each time I came into his room. Since he was too weak to preach at church he just preached to anyone who came into his room. "Keep your lamp trimmed and burning" (Mtt. 25) was the message he repeated over and over in those last days of his life.

When he had the strength, he would go downstairs and ask me to play the piano while he sang. He would sit in the big reclining chair in the den singing as only he could sing those precious old hymns and choruses, "Blessed Assurance" and "I Don't Need to Understand, I Just Need to Hold His Hand ..."

The one thing that was completely settled as far as he was concerned was that he was in God's hands and sure did not want us messing it up! Several times he repeated to us not to contend for his life, but to place him in God's hands and leave him there.

He knew there were no stronger or more capable hands than those of His loving heavenly Father! It was obvious that he felt the comfort and strength of those hands too!

Throughout his entire life -- and especially now -- he kept a good attitude even in negative circumstances. So many times in his sermons he would say "it's easier for a drunkard to get into heaven than a person with a bad attitude." That was not meant to be a theological statement. He was only trying to stress the importance of keeping a good attitude -- no matter what!

Chapter 2

BREAKFAST TREASURES

Little did we know there would be only three additional weeks remaining for Daddy's life here on earth after hearing from the doctor. Now the opportunity was before us. Apply one of "Daddy's treasures" during this very stressful time!

I remembered a highly valued "treasure" that was placed into my hand a few years back. It was a hand written note made while we waited for our breakfast one morning at Austin's Bar-B-Q. Pulling a pencil out of his pocket, grabbing a scrap piece of paper he began writing the following message to me:

*What we know about a thing gives us a right to believe about a thing.
So let what you know and believe about a thing
have more effect upon you than what you hear about a thing.*

That day I folded up the paper and put it in my wallet. The message was soooooo accurate! I had permitted my personal problems to have more effect on me than the facts that I knew -- which was Jesus is Lord and HE is in control. God is bigger than our greatest problem.

Now, several years later, I had the opportunity to once again apply this same truth. Yet this time it seemed so different.

I was only seeing his suffering -- the physical side. To benefit from this "treasure" I knew it was necessary to let "fact" and "knowledge" (which was that Daddy was in Jesus' hands) have more effect on me than what I was currently seeing (his dying of this terrible disease called cancer).

My mind reasoned, "What would be the greatest proof to Daddy that we as a family were permitting what we knew and believed to have more effect on us than what we saw?"

Another "treasure" from early morning breakfast was a vivid lesson on priorities.

Daddy was 65 years old and was just beginning to build the new Gospel Lighthouse Church in its current location. He had called me that morning with his usual "How are the kids ... how about meeting Mom and I at Austins?"

I readily responded and was on my 45 minute or more drive -- just for a quick breakfast with Mother and Daddy! These times were especially meaningful to me because as a young child Daddy was always busy with other people or projects. I saw very little of him. However, he changed.

Now he called nearly every morning and we would meet for breakfast maybe two or three times a week -- as well as on Saturday for lunch with Merv and the children. Often we would go to a nearby pond and feed some ducks.

This morning we were just eating our breakfast having our usual "chit-chat" when Mother suddenly remembered that there were two sound technicians that had been flown in from New York just to make a bid and evaluate the new building project. They were to return that afternoon.

She had jumped up, left her breakfast and was ready to run to the church immediately. Daddy reached over, pulled her back down and said, "I know. I remember. But you've just got to keep your priorities in order." Then he turned to me and said, "That's what my secretary is for -- now what were you saying, Hon?" I cried all the way home!!!

Chapter 3

'''A GIVIN' WHILE 'A LIVIN'!''

So many times I heard both my Mom and Dad say, "You better be 'a givin' while you're 'a livin' -- so you'll be 'a knowin' where it's 'a goin'." They practiced it often!

There was a Convention in New Orleans, LA at Word of Faith (now called Faith Church) with Dr. Charles Green. We had saved \$300 to go to that conference.

Yes, Daddy was very ill but the doctor had said he would have such intense pain before he actually died that even morphine would not take it away. But there was no pain. So we felt there was plenty of time to make this trip.

We planned to leave after my husband, Merv, had preached at Gospel Lighthouse Church just filling in for Daddy. During that service, of all things to happen, a special offering was received for some missions project.

To my horror, Merv took our entire \$300 cash and put it into the offering -- then refused to accept the honorarium they had given to him for speaking! He told them it was his blessing to help out at such a time as this -- and he meant every single word of it!

It's good there was air conditioning in the car because there were billows of steam rolling off me! Guess I'll never get any credit whatsoever in heaven for that offering 'cause it sure was not my idea -- and not exactly the most successful way to begin our vacation either -- so I thought!

Just before leaving town, we decided to go by and see

how Daddy was doing and say good-bye to him and remind him that we would only be gone a very few days to this conference.

He was very weak but in good spirits. He had no idea that Merv had refused the honorarium which had been offered to him. Believe it or not, I never opened my mouth to tell him, but I sure wanted to!

As we walked into the bedroom Daddy said, "Hon, I'm too weak to get out of bed. Mom and I have had so many wonderful trips going to New Orleans. I want you to go over there by the dresser and count out \$300 for you and Merv to take on your trip. Now don't argue with me, just do what I'm asking you to do for me.

Indeed, anyone who knew Daddy knew what a giver he was! Once he had a dream and in the dream he saw a hollow pipe. He dreamed it two nights in a row and asked God what it meant. The Lord said his life was to be like that pipe or conduit. God would pour blessing in one end and Daddy was to let it flow out the other end to people. So long as he would continue to freely give, so God would likewise freely pour in! I had heard him say many times, "The day I can't be giving, is the day I don't care to live!"

Why I protested, I don't know because I wanted the money desperately. We needed it for the trip, yet I said, "No Daddy we ..." He held up his hand and motioned to get over there and to get over there now -- and to do what I was told! When he added, I'm really too weak to climb out of bed and get it, but I will if you don't" -- so that's all it took!

With grateful words of thanks and tear filled eyes I walked over to the beautiful dresser and there counted out for our trip three \$100s! Oooooohhhhhhhh, I wanted to tell him all about

that big-hearted, missionary-minded husband of mine and what he had done that morning! As I turned around and started back to the bed, to my surprise he had just flat "zzzzzz" out on me!

Because I didn't want to awaken him, I decided to tell him when we returned. Unfortunately I never had the chance. But somehow, I'm sure the Lord has told him by now! I just wonder if God also told him how mad I was before the miracle!

Like a broken record I heard Luke 6:37-38 *Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

It was my job to forgive Merv's generosity! Now, due to his obedience, not only were the missionaries blessed but so were we! And it was in such a very special way -- with God's very unique provision! It seems God reminds me of this over and over -- again and again.

And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isa. 65:24).

And so we left for New Orleans ... with \$300 very blessed dollars in our pocket!

Chapter 4

COME HOME, HONEY, DADDY'S DYING

We had driven all night Sunday arriving on Monday at about noon in New Orleans, Upon our arrival we found out that our hotel room had been prepaid by Faith Church -- as a "love gift" to various pastors -- and we just happened to be one of the "various pastors!" Was this the "good measure, pressed down and running over" part that God was showing us? I think so!

With a very heavy heart we went to be in the house of the Lord. After all, what greater place could one go for comfort? The solution for the stressful days ahead was given to me as I walked through the front door of Faith Church in New Orleans, LA. The challenge from my "nugget note" which I always carried in my wallet was on my mind.

We had arrived late due to a phone call from Mother saying Daddy was dying and to catch the first plane I could get. The last plane had already left for Dallas so I would have to wait until morning. My steps were indeed being "ordered" by the Lord -- but I was not aware of it at the time!

As she spoke on the phone I was hearing her words, yet I simply couldn't believe them! Daddy couldn't be dying! He was too healthy to die -- and too busy! He had entirely too many projects going to die! Surely they were mistaken!

As we entered the conference they were singing, "I Live, I Live, Because He is Risen ... thank you Jesus... because you're alive I live." Then Dottie Rambo began singing as well as signing with her hands, "I Will Glory in the Cross ... I will weep no more for the cross that he bore, but I will glory in the cross."

Although I knew the song was referring to the great pain and suffering of Jesus on the cross, I also thought of Daddy's suffering. Yes, he did have a cross to bear also. I knew my assignment! It was to focus on God's "eternal purposes and plans" rather than these current horrible circumstances. Never for a moment would I glory in the disease that seemed to be devouring his now-frail body, but I would let what I KNOW have more effect upon me than what I see or hear.

Yes, we would make an exchange -- our weakness for His glorious strength because He told us *My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* (2Cor. 12:9). I could literally feel my wounded heavy and distraught spirit being lifted and encouraged throughout the service.

What greater tribute or "going away gift" could a Father be given than to see and hear his family releasing him and rejoicing with him because they KNEW and BELIEVED in God's eternal truths -- and were permitting those truths to control the situation!

James 4:14 says, *For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.* Yes, this life is only the dressing room or preparation room for the real life -- our eternal one!

Certainly it was obvious that Daddy understood this truth, so why shouldn't we? *Who through faith... out of weakness were made strong.* (Heb. 11:33-34)

That night at the close of the service, Dr. Charles Green put his arms around Merv and me. He prayed with us. He had the entire church to join in prayer for Daddy. Never had we felt such love and care -- such a true father's heart. We knew our

heavenly Father was ordering our steps in love and compassion. God's grace really was sufficient -- even while Daddy was dying!

Now as I look back, I know God's love and mercy was preparing my mind, my emotions and my spirit for what was ahead. I was challenged to get my eyes off the present cross (death) we were all experiencing and get my eyes on to the eternal (the accomplishments of the Cross).

Early the next morning I caught the first plane back to Dallas. As I sat on the plane tears streamed down my face just remembering ...

I remembered how Daddy had challenged me when we were on a trip in Japan at the age of 14. He wanted to sing and no one seemed to play the way he wanted. He turned to me and said, "Darlene, get on that piano and play for me." I protested and told him I only played the accordion. He continued the challenge in a bit stronger tone adding that he had not paid for those years of accordion lessons for nothing. He told me the only difference was one keyboard was vertical and the other horizontal! So I played for him on the piano!

He showed me how I really could *do all things through Christ who strengthens me*. So now, I would be able to face Daddy's dying because it is Christ's strength and not my own!

Then my mind wandered again to yet another trip two years later in Italy. Daddy had just completed a city-wide campaign in Rome, Italy in the Eliseo Opera House. Dr. John McTernan was the missionary in charge.

I had learned only one song in Italian. At the close of the meeting we marched down the street to the Coliseum. Due to a previously arranged "coffee break" for the guards that only John McTernan could arrange in his own unique way, we were able to climb down into the very pit where the Christians had been martyred. The blood stains were still there. Daddy and Mother sang, "Oh, How I Love Jesus" in English while I lead all the others in Italian. The accordion which I was playing was the only musical instrument -- thank God there was not a piano!

Although we were singing both in English and Italian we all had the same love for Jesus and were overwhelmed with gratefulness for the privilege to sing such a song where others had given their very lives for Christ.

It was an experience I will never forget! I knew the only true fulfillment for my life was that of being actively involved in the ministry.

And now, according to Mother, Daddy was about to take his last trip -- his final trip! I could just hear him singing that song, "That Will Be the Last Move for Me..." A smile, through the tears must have come across my face as I realized; yes, he's ready to go -- been washed in Calvary's precious blood. He's made his reservations and his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life! It will be the last move for him!

The plane landed and I was met at the airport. They rushed me home to be by Daddy's side. On the way home I discovered that not only was Daddy dying but that Mother was very sick with walking pneumonia.

Chapter 5

THE HEARTSICK SHOCK OF IT ALL

My heart ached, my mind swirled, my emotions were numbed as I entered the home I had known so well. The heat and stench of cancer hit me like a ton of bricks. At the bottom of the beautiful royal oak stair case as I started up the stairs the only sound to be heard was one of hard and laborious breathing. It was in the hot summer month of June. All air-conditioning had been turned off (because it bothered Daddy). He was cold.

When I entered the familiar master bedroom with it's elegant Austrian drapes with silk brocade cascades my heart pounded with grief. Cancer -- malignant melanoma -- what an ugly name and what an ugly sight! How could anything good come out of this?

There I saw Daddy struggling for every single breath. He was so thirsty, yet unable to drink any fluids we offered to him. So, drop by drop, we would give him water through an eye dropper.

How could this possibly be the same man who only six weeks before seemed as healthy and strong as anyone could be? He had looked the perfect specimen of health! And how could he deteriorate so quickly in just two days?

Thank God he had not lapsed into unconsciousness. However, due to his very weak condition, his eyes were closed most of the time.

Why wasn't he in pain? The doctors had told us that he would have unbearable pain in the last stages. He had even

prescribed morphine which was never opened. A nurses aid named Mary (who was a dedicated Christian that had attended the church for many years) was faithfully by his bedside.

She confirmed that he repeatedly said there was no pain, but only had difficulty with his breathing. I found that hard to comprehend so I sat on his bedside and asked him if he had pain. He opened his eyes, looked up with such a precious smile and shaking his head "no" said, "ugh uh, ugh uh." Then he closed his eyes again. The doctors were truly amazed at this.

I found out that previously some young man came and asked permission to fast and pray for three days on the covered porch just below the bedroom. He refused to come into the house and he refused even water -- in the hot Texas summer! No one told me his name and even today I still do not know who he was or anything about him. How I long to meet that young man!

There is no doubt whatsoever that the reason there was no pain was due to the fasting and prayer of a precious brother for his pastor! Why God spared Daddy of the pain but did not heal him, I do not know.

As I looked upon the dry parched lips of my precious Father and watched him struggle for every breath, we all became aware of a supernatural peace about him. Although each breath was labor for him, there was absolutely no "fighting" for his breathing --just labor.

I remembered the song he had sung so many times, "There is a River that Flows from God Above ... there came a thirsty woman who met Jesus at the well ... you'll never thirst

again." He must have already begun to experience a heavenly type thirst quencher because it was very obvious to all of us that he was more "heaven bound" than "earth bound."

I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.
(Rev. 21)

The words he had spoken to me just three weeks before were now clashing like huge loud gongs ... "Promise me, don't contend for my life ... I'm in God's hands ... leave me there and don't permit man's hands to try to change it ... even if I lapse into a coma..."

Although I had affirmed that I would honor his request to the best of my ability, yet today things seemed so different! Was this still what he wanted?

I leaned over very close to him and asked him once again, "Daddy, tell me honestly, I want to know the truth. Is there any pain -- any kind of pain -- anywhere?" He opened his eyes with peace saying "Huh uh, (no), huh uh." I never heard him cry out in pain at all. However, Marie (Jay's wife who was so sweet to help with "sitting duties") remembers one time toward the very end when they put him on the bedpan that he did cry out as they moved him.

Then I continued, "You seem so thirsty and it's so very difficult for you to breathe. Do you want some oxygen or maybe to go to the hospital where things might be a bit more comfortable for you?"

His eyes opened wide and he lifted his head as if to emphasize the point that he still had strength and very emphatically stated, "Huh uh, (no)!"

I clasp his hand and told him, "Then Daddy, with God's help you will stay right here in this bed." He smiled and kept his eyes closed, but squeezed my hand twice as if to say, "Good girl -- keep your promise!"

My mind drifted off to his statement made the day the doctor told him he had cancer, "I can think of no better way and no better place to go to meet the Lord than in my own bed in my own home with my family." Yes, it looked as if that was exactly the way it would be -- and soon -- yet none of us knew when!

The day was now gone and it was a little past 10:00 PM. I told Mary that I was going down the hallway to another bedroom and suggested she join me since a young man was there to sit with Daddy throughout the night. Because of the walking pneumonia Mother had moved down the hallway even farther away. She had also gone to sleep for the night.

Mary was such a beautiful Christian woman who was a true "Godsend" to us during this time. Because she was a nurses aid she could give shots if needed, had a stethoscope to hear his heartbeat, would take his pulse and blood pressure from time to time as well as other duties.

When I first arrived I noticed a large machine in the corner of the bedroom. I asked what in the world that big thing was doing there. She said that just in case Daddy started choking this was a tube which she could put down his throat to assist him. She cautioned that if it was used, it would make a very loud noise.

Immediately I remembered that Daddy had said he did not want to be put on any machines. Reminding her of his

request, she confirmed that she would only use it if absolutely necessary.

We had both just crawled into bed when the young man came and knocked on our door, He said Daddy was trying to say something and that he kept pointing up and seemed kind of anxious about something. He asked if one of us would please come and see if we could understand what he wanted or was trying to say.

Mary insisted that she go. How could all these things actually be happening? As she was leaving, again I reminded her about Daddy's dislike for equipment such as that noisy machine!

I rolled over and sleep quickly overpowered my weary disturbed mind.

Chapter 6

THE RUMBLING OF CHARIOTS

"That noise! That rumbling noise! What is it? What is that noise and where is it coming from? It sounds like a rumble, like thunder in the distance but it's not stopping -- it's getting louder and louder -- this room -- this house -- it feels like it is being shaken as though an earthquake with a thunderous rumble is upon us!"

My eyes were wide opened. I was sitting up in bed. My heart was throbbing in my throat! What was happening? Surely it wasn't that horrid machine! Could it have such an effect all the way down the hallway?

At exactly the same moment Mother had leaped out of her bed and had run to the window to identify the noise -- the rumble -- the thunderous shaking which was in her part of the house also! She couldn't see anything outside and since she was so weak, just turned around and went back to bed.

I jumped out of bed not even stopping to take the time to get into my robe. No! Daddy did not want any equipment put on him! As I dashed into the bedroom, there was the machine all rolled up in the corner of the room with the cord still wrapped around the stand. It was not in use at all!

Daddy's face was aglow, absolutely electrified! There was an excitement and anticipation plastered all over his face from ear to ear! His hands were pointing upward as he was saying something which we couldn't understand because of his very frail and weak voice.

Mary was on her knees beside the bed. She looked just as radiant as Daddy! As I entered the room she jumped to her feet and came running to meet me. We were both speaking at the same time!

She was saying, "Did you hear them, did you hear them?" At the same moment I was saying, "That noise, that noise! What was that rumbling and shaking noise?"

We quickly went into the upstairs foyer and she began to answer my question first. She said, "Yes, yes, I heard the rumble. But did you hear the music?" I said, "What music? Do you mean the cassette tape?"

"No!" she exclaimed! "That was turned off two hours ago! It was heavenly music! I've never heard music like that in my entire life! It was not an earthly type music and it seemed to be coming from Bro. Hibbard's head or bones or something like that!"

Mary had been kneeling beside Daddy leaning close to him in order to hear him better. Her ear was against his head. She continued, "He was trying to tell me something and kept pointing up. His face had begun to light up and then we heard the rumble. It got louder and louder and then the music -- oh, the music!"

I said, "Mary, I'm not sure, but I believe that rumble was the sound of chariots and they are coming for my Daddy! And I'm not about to miss one single thing! I missed the music, but I don't plan to miss out on anything else!"

With that said, I turned and jumped right in the middle of the bed with Daddy and said, "Daddy, I'm not real sure of

what's happening right now, but I just want to stay here with you tonight."

Without even realizing it, while I was talking to him I had grabbed his hand. He squeezed my hand once, then again as if letting me know, "that's fine!"

Old hymns were Daddy's favorite type of songs so I decided to provide him with them -- not via tape, but via daughter to father! Well, it wasn't exactly that heavenly music, but it was the best I could do!

I sang "Amazing Grace", "Blessed Assurance", etc. The words to "Blessed Assurance" were so appropriate for that particular moment:

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine..."

I sang every old hymn I could think of! Then, I began reading from Daddy's Bible which was beside his bed and started reading from his favorite portion of scripture, Revelation 21 and 22 -- which I had heard him read so many times.

As I was reading that particular part of the scripture which describes heaven I saw what looked like a tear drop from the corner of his eye and some dry sobs. A flood of tears started blurring my vision as I realized, "... and Daddy is about to go there and actually walk on those streets of gold!"

At various times while I was reading or singing he would squeeze my hand again and again. I think he was letting me know he was in agreement with it -- or maybe he was trying to tell me "enough already -- hush up and go to sleep!" I really don't know! But this I do know, I just kept going -- the whole night long!

Probably the greatest honor I have ever experienced on this earth regarding my earthly father was the privilege of just "being there" and being able to minister to him when he was in need! It had always been the other way around!

As the long hours continued, the difficulty in breathing and the odor only increased. Since I had the entire night I called to remembrance so many things. At one point I remembered how he would tell my sister, Jaynell, and me some great "makeup" stories! How we loved his story time -- which was not too often! Well, I decided to sing to him some "make up songs!"

The song started by just making up a tune and telling Daddy what a wonderful Daddy he was to me -- how he had given me the greatest gift a child could ever have which was a Godly father who lead me to Jesus!

Then I continued to sing to him of the love and comfort he had given to me in the many times of need, He had taught me how to pray and how to trust God. He showed me how to apply the Word of God and helped my understanding of God's love just by his daily lifestyle.

No, the words did not rhyme but they came straight from my heart. The tune was probably a "not-so-good" melody but it didn't matter to me! He was my Daddy and he was dying! I wanted him to know what a wonderful Daddy he was to me.

Then I would start singing the hymns again such as "The Old Rugged Cross." How I thank God that I was able to return to him some of the "treasures" he had given to me!

Several times throughout the night I would stop the singing and just say, "Daddy, we have placed you in Jesus' hands.

We release you into His loving care." But the long hours just kept approaching one after the other and nothing else happened.

The hot sun broke the horizon. I didn't understand why Daddy was still on this earth! If that noise really was chariots, then why didn't they come and take him? And why hadn't that heavenly choir that Mary heard usher him into the portals of heaven?

Certainly anyone who knew him would say that he reminded them of one of the Old Testament prophets. He had such a simple trust in God. He wasn't the least bit afraid to stand up for righteousness. He lived a Godly lifestyle -- no, not a perfect lifestyle -- but a Godly lifestyle! He practiced in the home on Monday what he had preached on Sunday!

We were doing exactly as he had instructed us. We were placing him continually in the hands of Jesus and we weren't contending for his life. His heart just kept pounding away and his breathing just continued to labor!

But now we see through a glass darkly ... (I Cor. 13:12)

Chapter 7

YOUR "OPINION" ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH I WANT TO KNOW

I was still in bed beside Daddy reading, singing, talking, and praying as the sun came shining through the window. The day was hot and still. The previous endless night melted away but daybreak seemed to only amplify the odor of cancer. Every breath seemingly was harder than the previous one -- for all of us!

The day was June 12, 1980. It was around 8:00 AM when I left Daddy's bedside to go check on Mother. She had been at the far end of the hallway with a high fever from the pneumonia.

Just as I opened her door her first comment was, "Did you hear that noise -- that rumble last night? Did you feel the house just seem to shake as that rumble grew louder?"

I commented, "Yes, Mother, I did.

She continued, "When I heard that noise I jumped out of bed and ran into the adjacent room to look out the window. As I stood there hearing and feeling the rumble I wondered if it could be chariots coming for my Darling."

I said, "Oh Mother, you not only heard and felt that rumble, but I did too -- and so did Mary! And I could see that Daddy was super excited about something! Mary also heard music because she had her head right next to Daddy's head when it all happened."

As I sat on the edge of her bed telling her all about the "happenings" of the night, she agreed that she felt the rumble must have been chariots. But she had exactly the same questions that we had. Why didn't they take him? If they were so close that we not only heard but also felt their presence, then how is it that Daddy did not go? That puzzled all of us!

Because of her weak condition from the pneumonia she had not come out in the middle of the night to talk with us about it. Anyway, she never realized others in the household had heard and felt the same thing that she had experienced.

As the morning slowly dragged on, Jaynell came to the house. As she was coming up the staircase I went out to meet her in the foyer. Once again the events of the previous night were poured out to her.

I explained that Mother, myself and Mary had all heard and felt the rumble. Then I told her about Mary and the music. I continued, "We really do think that chariots were coming for Daddy last night, but we don't know why they didn't take him."

Jaynell just interrupted me as a big sister can do saying, "You think ... you think chariots were coming for Daddy. Well, that's just not good enough for me. I want to know!"

With that, she turned and quickly walked into the bedroom, crawled right up into the big bed with Daddy and began her interrogation.

There wasn't much of a "good morning or what a fine day." She just got straight to the point! She said, "Hi Daddy, did you hear a noise last night?"

Immediately, through the struggles of breathing, the bad odor of cancer, and the heavy stillness of intense summer heat he began to get all excited again. His face started to radiate that same joyful excitement we had seen during the night.

He began pointing upward then opened his eyes and raised his head as if to emphasize his point. Then he continued by saying, "Uh huh, (yes), uh huh!" Then fell back onto his pillow exhausted.

She continued, "Daddy, was that noise chariots and were they coming for you?" Again he raised his head and opened his eyes looking straight at her and said, "Uh huh, (yes), uh huh!"

She said, "Daddy, if they come again, can I just go along with you?" He said, "ugh uh" (which meant "no way -- they're mine -- you just get your own!")

In all my lifetime I had never seen him so excited. He was even anxious and rather impatient! Our eyes were filled with tears of joy. It had been confirmed! The noise we heard really were chariots! The music that had been heard really was the heavenly choir!

Wow! My Dad, the preacher, prophet, and pastor of 40 years in the city of Dallas was being ushered into those streets of gold and through the gates of pearl -- and he was going there "first class" -- via chariots!

My mind raced back to the account in 2 Kings of the prophet Elijah, going up in the chariot of fire. *Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we...* Yes, Daddy was just a man. But a very dedicated and Godly man who had given his entire life into the service of God -- preaching, teaching, living the Gospel and even dying by the Gospel -- like O.T. prophets!

Jaynell broke into my thoughts as she cried out to me, "I've just got to be here when Daddy finally goes!" I missed the chariots. Oh, I just must be here when he finally goes to forever be with Jesus."

We all assured her that she would -- and the very hot sweltering day continued to drag on and on and on!

The questions continued to pound our minds and hearts which were being torn by every struggle of breath Daddy took. Although he was in no physical pain, it was so obvious to all of us that this old earth had absolutely no attraction to him anymore.

He earnestly desired to be released from his present body. This delay was frustrating to him and he expressed it by asking at one point, "When is He coming?" Because it was difficult to understand him due to the extreme dryness and swelling of his mouth now and the weakness in the volume of his voice, we would often repeat what we thought he had said just to make sure it was accurate.

His "uh huh's" (yes) and "ugh uh's" (no) were always quite clear. However, we repeated the question back by saying, "Daddy, did you say when is He coming?"

He nodded "Yes."

So we continued, "Who, Daddy? Do you mean Jesus? When is Jesus coming for you?"

He nodded his head very firmly, "Yes."

Our response was, "Soon Daddy, very soon ... it can't be too much longer." But every minute seemed like an eternity!

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing ... (Rom. 8:18-19)

Chapter 8

AN ONLY SON'S PRAYER ANSWERED

Jay, my brother, was Daddy's only son. There were four daughters: June Marie, Dolores, Jaynell and myself. I was the youngest. Jay had been asking the Lord for a special request, "Please God, let Dad give me something very special -- just especially to me." He had not mentioned this to any of us at that time nor had he said anything to Daddy.

Jay, June, Dee and Jaynell (along with their families) were such a strength to me -- especially on this last day of Daddy's life. We all worked together trying to help one another -- and it has only increased over the years. I missed Merv so much that day. He was driving our car back to Dallas from New Orleans.

On this final day of Daddy's life, Jay was sitting on the bedside. Daddy kept motioning with his hand for Jay to come to the other side of the bed and was saying something to him. Because of his weakness and difficulty in breathing it was hard to both hear and understand him.

Finally, in desperation, Jay got off the bed and went around to the other side so he could kneel down directly beside Daddy to hear what he was trying to say to him. That was just exactly what Daddy wanted him to do!

As Jay knelt down beside the bedside, Daddy did something that he had not been able to do -- but for his only son -- he did it! Due to the right shoulder being fractured he could not raise that arm at all -- only his hand and wrist.

However, as soon as Jay had knelt down Daddy took his left hand and lifted his right arm in order to place it upon Jay's head. He bowed his head and prayed a prayer of blessing upon Jay. Placement was very important to Daddy -- again an O.T. principle. When a father was dying he pronounced a special blessing upon his first-born son with his right hand.

After the prayer of blessing, Daddy fell back exhausted and never even attempted to move that arm again.

What love! And what a special gift to Jay. Matthew 7:9-11 tells us *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him.*

This very special love gift -- to Jay was even greater than any chariots, any music, anything! And since that day, there has been an even greater anointing upon Jay personally as well as upon his ministry and his church.

We had to take turns staying in the room with Daddy. The unbearable heat and odor would just overwhelm us at times and we would go outside to get a breath of hot fresh air.

Daddy was an avid lover of music! Every morning as a child I was awakened by bright cheery music. It was never the sound of a shrill alarm clock or even a loving voice -- but music! At every meal, music was played! Anytime you came to the home, music was in the background filling every corner.

During the six weeks of his illness we had been playing music most of the time. You would often walk into the room

and hear him singing with the music in the first few weeks of his illness.

Today we decided the cassette music was just not enough. Daddy needed live music "trio style" sung to him at the foot of his bed. All of us took turns and sang like mockingbirds on and on. Then he kind of waved his hand signaling "that's enough."

It was clear that our singing just wasn't the same as that heavenly choir. And it was more obvious with each passing moment that the heavenly sounds seemed to be closer to him than our earthly music.

Chapter 9

THE AWESOME POWER OF PRAYER

Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me ... (2Tim. 4:17) We all received strength that was not our own.

Throughout the day Jaynell kept repeating, "I've just got to be here when Daddy finally takes his last breath!" We assured her she would be.

All five of us "Hibbard kids" were puzzled as to why our Daddy was still alive. We went downstairs and stood in the main entrance forer joining hands in a circle. There we all prayed together as a family. We released Daddy in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We did as he had instructed us. We place him in God's sovereign hands and did not contend for his life. Jay led us in that prayer of release while we all agreed with him.

At times it seemed absolutely unbearable just watching him labor so hard for every breath. We only wanted release for him. We knew he wanted to be released from this old earth. None of us wanted to lose him, yet we wanted to honor him and abide by his instructions. We weren't sure which was more painful -- seeing him struggle with life or seeing death overtake him!

Actually we did not find out until after he died just why his homegoing was delayed and why the chariot was stopped.

It was late in the afternoon and close to evening. June had gone to the airport to pick up Aunt Doris (Daddy's sister). She had always been the closest of his family members to him.

Jaynell offered to go to the store and get us some ice since we had run out. Mother was feeling a bit stronger now. So we all decided to go out onto the patio just outside the bedroom and sit under the huge oak tree. Marie remained in the bedroom with Daddy. His breathing just became lighter and lighter -- then stopped.

I remembered thinking as we sat there quietly talking together as a family, "now wouldn't this be a great sight for a father to see as he went to be with the Lord!"

The next moment my name was being called. I could tell by the tone and the volume that something was wrong. I ran up the stairs, two at a time aware the loud breathing of Daddy was no longer being heard.

The split second I entered the room I knew, "Daddy's not here! He's finally gone home -- really home! He's probably dancing all over those streets of gold, shouting, and praising God! Surely by now he has had a big drink from that river of life which flows from the throne of God! He will never thirst again!"

Quickly I looked up and asked them to call the rest of the family who were still down on the patio.

All I could do was fall down on my knees at the foot of the bed and grab both of Daddy's feet (why, I don't know) and just start thanking God that at that very moment I knew exactly where he was! He was in heaven with the Lord ... *absent from the body and present with the Lord.* (2Cor. 5:8)

All those messages he had preached, he now was truly experiencing! He probably had come face to face with Jesus by

now and was hearing the *well done, good and faithful servant. You fought a good fight, you finished the course ...*

Tears flooded my face. Praises to God overpowered the deep feeling of loss. English words just simply were not enough! As the other family members came in, they all had exactly the same reaction. You couldn't help but burst into praises to God! The presence of Jesus was so powerful! We all knew -- He was now where he wanted to be -- with Jesus!

I looked around through my tears, still holding Daddy's feet tight. I didn't see Jaynell anywhere. Neither had I heard her. I asked, "Where is Jaynell?" They told me, she is not back from the store yet. My heart sank down to my toes! Oh no, I can't believe she missed it.

But the reality of God's presence was so strong that we all just continued praising God and rejoicing because Daddy had completed his journey. He had "made his last move to the sky, up to heaven so high, and what a wonderful trip that must have been ... yes, he was ready to go ..." We had heard him sing that song so many times and now he was experiencing it!

We all seemed to be letting "what we knew about a thing and what we believed about a thing have more effect upon us than what we saw ... a lifeless dead body!" Daddy had done a good job of teaching us.

About five minutes or so later, our praises were interrupted with Jaynell's entrance. She jumped onto the bed just beside Daddy and started banging her fists into the pillow beside him. She cried out to God in a prayer of desperation, "Oh God, all I ever wanted was just to be here when Daddy took his

last breath! Oh Daddy! Oh Daddy! God, please, that's all I asked for! She just kept repeating it with heartfelt sobs over and over!

I was still on my knees at the foot of the bed -- still holding on to Daddy's feet. But now my praises to God changed and joined in with her petitions! Jaynell was praying, "Oh God, please!" I think we all were agreed with her joining her cry: "oh no! Please God, oh please!"

At that very moment I thought I saw Daddy's chest raise up and fall back down, but I didn't hear any labored breathing as it had been. Mary grabbed her stethoscope and put it to Daddy's heart. She grabbed his wrist and felt his pulse. She said, "He has a heartbeat! He has a pulse!"

At that same moment Jaynell also grabbed his pulse and felt it while Dee reached over and touched him also. It was obvious that something was happening!

Yes, there was healthy and totally controlled heartbeats, a pulse, and breathing! He took only a few very deep and long breaths. It was not through his mouth with the harsh labored type of breathing that we had become so acquainted with, but it was through his nose! After those few breaths he just simply never took another one. That was it!

Once again, what overwhelming love! The fact that he had been dead for probably about 10 minutes or more, and came back to this 'ole world and into that earthly body only in answer to the heart cry of his precious daughter's prayer was awesome!

Will we ever comprehend the unconditional love of our precious heavenly Father? It will probably take all of eternity to even begin the process!

I believe God responded to Jaynell's desperate prayer by allowing Daddy to hear her cry. He responded -- even if only for a minute or so! No matter how much holding on to his feet I did, it would not keep him here! He was heaven bound!

Call unto Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know. (Jer. 33:3) It's so interesting that the word "call" really means "cry out, shout, call out loudly in an attempt to get someone's attention."

That's what she did and indeed God did answer and show all of us "great and mighty things which we had not known!" Does God always do things like this? No! Yet, He is God! He holds the master plan! We just need to hold His hand ...

When my precious Mother died eleven years later I was unable to be with her. And I had just been in Dallas for six weeks and had returned home to Kauai for only two days! A phone call informed me that she was dying! When I left I had honestly thought she would probably outlive me! Why didn't God take her while I was there? It would have meant so much to me to have also been by her bedside when she made her final trip! Thank God that June Marie and her family were there! But that's another story.

Within just minutes after Daddy died, even before they were able to come and get his body the radio stations were making the announcement of his homegoing and were dedicating beautiful songs to the family.

The entire rest of the evening and into the very late hours they were giving honor to Daddy and his life here on earth. People were calling into the stations from everywhere! They even played many of his songs from his album, "Who Put the Color in the Rose?" with songs composed by Boyd McSpadden.

Chapter 10

NOW WE KNEW WHY

Later that evening Aunt Doris arrived. She was one of his sisters, but was the one closest to him throughout his entire lifetime. She KNEW the power of prayer! When Aunt Doris prayed, God and anyone else within the block also heard!

Upon her arrival she told us how that she had her prayer group from her church praying around the clock for Daddy. Their prayer was, "God, he can't go! You can't take him. He's got more to do."

She had no idea that Daddy had said "Do not contend for my life -- and that was exactly what they were doing!" Then she continued telling us that a small group of folk were praying very late last night and while in prayer she saw some kind of "cloud like thing" coming over the house.

I believe it was a vision that God was showing her. She did not know what it was, but felt it was "death" and so she immediately began countering it with "No! ... you can't ..."

I cried out, "Oh, Aunt Doris, your prayer stopped the chariots! Then I told her about the previous night's adventure. We were all reminded in a far greater dimension just how very powerful "the fervent effective prayer of a righteous person" really is!

I'm so glad it happened just exactly the way it did! Lam. 3:26 says, *It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.* And because of the "delay" God answered others prayers in such more meaningful ways. Had the chariots actually taken Daddy the previous night, Jay would

not have received his blessing. I believe God was also honoring his heartcry and prayer. Jaynell would not have received the "miracle" of being with Daddy when he took his final last breath here on earth. She not only got to be with him, but was by his side on his bed when he made that final last trip to the sky up to heaven so high!

We know we will see Daddy again! That is such a comfort! Why? Because we also made our individual reservations for that same destination! Jesus paid the fare for us through his death on the cross. It's now our job to "keep our lamps trimmed and burning" so that we'll be ready to get on board when our precious heavenly Father says "Child, it's time now, come on home."

Isaiah 55:6-13 Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near... For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts ... For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace ... Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, And it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign ...

For every trial and problem we know God has just the answer! His ways are far above our limited understanding. He knows things we do not know! He sees things we do not see!

For every "thorn" in our life (those problems which stab us and tear our very heart out) God will make it into a "cypress tree" (a beam of support). For every "brier" (an irritation) God will replace it with a "myrtle tree" (known for its beauty and color). God delights in creating beauty -- even from ashes!

What if the Apostle Paul had not gone to prison? Would

we have the Epistles today? He did not get bitter over unfair circumstances. Instead he focused on what was possible to do while in prison -- write letters! His "thorn" of being imprisoned became a powerful "beam of support" with which we construct our lives today.

We simply do not know all the eternal purposes for our "prisons." However, if we will do as the Apostle Paul did and keep our focus on Christ, we can say with him that we too are *more than conquerors through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Through the "prison of cancer" we learned the awesome power of prayer! No, we didn't get what we wanted. But maybe we got what we needed -- and even more!

There are so many questions I want to ask my precious heavenly Father when I too make that "last move to the sky..."

In the meantime with God as the source of our strength, let's remember the song that Daddy sang so often, "I don't need to understand, I just need to hold His hand ..."

In both his life and his death indeed we witnessed the firm grip he had -- of holding on to God's hand. So that's why I can say today, "I'm sure He got the best of the trade!"



DADDY
singing:
(probably)
"I'm sure
I got the
best of
the Trade."



DADDY'S LAST CHRISTMAS ON EARTH

Daddy, Darlene, Jaynell, Mother

What We know about a thing give us a right
to believe about a thing, so let what you
know and believe about a thing have more
"Effect" on you than what you hear about —
a thing.

Treasured note Daddy wrote to me at Austin's Bar-B-Q

1.
Patio
where
family
was
sitting

2.
Covered
porch
where
young
man
fasted &
prayed

3.
Parent's
bedroom
where
Daddy
died



4.
Bedroom
where
Darlene
&
Mary
were
sleeping

5.
Bedroom
and
sitting
room
where
Mother
was
sleeping

HIBBARD HOME



DADDY'S 70th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

L to R: Jay, Dee, June Marie, Mother, Daddy, Jaynell and Darlene