

## Blessed is the Man who Fears the Lord

I cannot remember when I first met Dennis and Jenny Bryant. I'm sure it wasn't too long after we began attending Cane Creek in 1992, but when we started renovating the Manley Snipes house, Bryant Heating & Air was my first choice for the HVAC system. A few years later, Dennis helped me upgrade it to incorporate our Taylor wood stove. My Bryant-based HVAC education didn't stop when Dennis retired either – Richard assumed the burden of rescuing me from my DIY overreach as recently as last year. For my part, Dennis came to me when it came to felling trees, tractor work, sinking or pulling fence posts, and of course, computer work. I envied Dennis' woodworking skills - which he needed with Jenny constantly redecorating. I've enjoyed working with Dennis on all sorts of things for the better part of 30 years. Ps. 128:2 - Dennis truly ate the labor of his own hands.

It goes without saying that if you became friends with Dennis, you become friends with Jenny. More important than the time we spent working on various "man jobs" was the time Dennis and I tagged along while Jenny and Chris collaborated on almost anything growing. Cane Creek old-timers will remember Jenny's expeditions to the mountains. I think Dennis, Joe Kenyon, and I were on hand to drive, change tires, pump gas, and carry bags of fruit while our wives and friends shopped and toured. Jenny and Dennis also helped Chris and I with our NC acclimitization with tours to the Flat Rock Playhouse, Roanoke Rapids, and Murfreesboro, Dennis' birthplace. If you've never been to the Jefcoat museum in Murfreesboro, you're missing something! Dennis and I are just a year apart, old enough to remember most of the Americana housed there. Around home, Dennis spent a lot of time building gardens for Jenny's flowers, which she was justifiably famous for. Jenny's floral arrangements won prizes at the State Fair, and graced our altars here at Cane Creek for years. Surely, Jenny was a fruitful vine.

By the time Chris and I came to know them, Robin and Richard were already long past the "olive shoot" around the table stage, but both were certainly growing up in the family tradition. Robin carried on her mother's floral artistry by becoming a NC recognized pottery artist who opened her own studio in Saluda, and is now a member of the Southern Highlands Craft Guild. Richard worked with his dad in the family business, at one point crawling under and through what is now Dan's farmhouse upgrading our ductwork. Richard eventually launched his own HVAC company in the family tradition, and All Weather HVAC has since come to my rescue more than once. Dennis could take pride in the olive trees his children have become.

For several years before their move out to Hendersonville, Jenny and Dennis, Chris and I, our daughter Diana, and our good friends Ed and Cindy Suffern would meet weekly at the Bryants or Diana's home for a bible study taught by Ed. It was good fun, good eating, and we all enjoyed Ed's lessons. Dennis wasn't the most vocal participant, but he opened his home and table, and showed up every week. Dennis' faith and scriptural roots were deep, tested and tried. Thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

The 5<sup>th</sup> verse of Ps. 128 says, "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shall see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life." In the Bible, Zion is the city of David, the place where God's children can live in safety, with God in their midst. It seems very real to me, living here on Dairyland Road, that this was God's promise to Dennis too. It is the place where he loved Jenny, watched his children grow up, where he built his company, did his woodworking, attended church, and as happens to all of us, grew old. I believe he saw the good of Jerusalem, which is still the heart of Israel, and the Heavenly city we all will dwell in, all the days of his life.

The last verse of this psalm makes a promise that means more to me with every passing year. "You will see your children's children." Proverbs 17.6 says, "Children's children are the crown of old men." Every grandfather here today knows the truth of this. Amelia, Macie, Aliza, Hannah, and Haddie – you are the stars in your Grandpa's crown, the crown of life he is wearing right now. Children may be our inheritance from God, but our grandchildren are our crowns.

So, Dennis my friend, I have to say "Goodbye." Saying Goodbye when you and Jenny moved out to the mountains was hard, and even harder that I had to start saying "Goodbye" to you over the last few years as you drifted into the shadows. But we will meet again for sure in Glory, where everything that has been lost will be found, and we will know as we are known.

Psalm 128

1 Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Jenny Herring Bryant

Robin and Todd Kirby Hannah Haddie

Richard and Amy Bryant Aliza Macie Amelia