



John Masterson

# A Celebration

## Don't Fence Me In...

A butterfly dampers a wing or two at the edge of Upper Cove Creek Meadow...

The woods' edge is bathed in a mist that muffles the youthful chatter of birds and children.

Family-hood of man, woman and child gathered in Peace for a few days...

Days filled with sunshine and warm rain...hikes and splashes and ballgames and balloon bombs...crafts and cooking...and summertime stories from earthworms to rocket-trips...filling voids from a year that's way downstream and dreaming of the bridges yet to be built...and when the day is done, no bugler calls...just the frogs and crickets as a crescent moon pushes the edge of the hardwoods into a cozy haze. Voices wane as the campfire gently crumbles...

Glowing embers house all the love that the day could bring and the soul of "forever" is carried through the night...

The morning fire is sparked from those same soul-embers and a new day is born...rope swings and rock slides, bee stings, dogs sniffing...babies laughing and youngsters in wonderment trying to figure it all out...

The meadow is alive once again and the creek flows smoothly over large gray rocks to a pool that catches dreams and smiles at least one more time...

John H. Masterson

## JOHN MASTERSON CELEBRATION

- Music -

Will the congregation please rise.

- Music -

Brothers and sisters we have come to praise God and celebrate the life of John Aaron Masterson. We will do this, to begin with, by turning in our hymnals and invite you to sing with us #62 "All creatures of Our God and King" verses 1, 2, 6 and 7.

- Song -

Inside your bulletin are a few announcements that I have been asked to make. This is a service of celebration and we invite you to participate, not only in the singing of the hymns, but also in sharing of memories and of good times with John. There will be a place in a few minutes where there will be reflection and sharing. The family will go first and then we will invite friends to follow. John-John will direct this time of the service for us. After the service you are invited to a time of refreshments and fellowship provided by our Searchers Sunday School class, that is Marge and John's class, in the Fellowship hall and the family will be joining you. In fact, we will let them lead you to our Fellowship Hall which is at the lower extreme of our building, but I will let them leave right as the postlude begins and then you may follow after the postlude ends. The family invites you, if you so choose, to make memorial gifts in John's honor, in memory to the Alabama Arise Foundation, and the address is there in your bulletin, or the Land Trust of Huntsville, again the address is there, or to Epworth United Methodist Church that they loved so much. We are pleased that you have come; we are pleased that you are participating and we invite your attention to the bulletins.

Dying, Christ destroyed our death. Rising, Christ restored our life. Christ will come again in glory. In baptism John put on Christ, so in Christ may John be clothed with glory. Hear now dear friends we are God's children. What we shall be has not yet been revealed but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Those who have this hope purify themselves, as Christ is pure. Jesus said; I am the resurrection and I am the light. Those who believe in me even though they die, yet shall they live; and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the

end, the first and the last. I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I hold the keys of hell and death. Because I live, you shall live also. And all the people said, Amen.

- Song - "Amazing Grace" - Singers: Alpha Ensemble - Dr. W M Clark, Mr. Charlie Briggins, Dr. Harold Dickerson, Mr. Tommy Lockhart

Marjorie (wife):

Now we are filled with grace. I just want to thank all of you for being here. A lot of what John meant to everybody here is in your reaction to him and your appreciating him and we appreciate that so very much. Some days I'll feel like wearing black but some day I will put on colors.

Don (son):

I am going to follow up what mom said and say some of the same things. Our family wants to thank all of you for the generous support that you have shown this family over the past several days. I found out at a very early age that my father and my mother like to be around interesting and fun people. Dad thought that the easiest job in the world should be talking to people and I want you to know that his memories of you truly helped in making his life worthwhile. I think that one of his gifts to all of us was his ability to listen to people. He was famous for saying both at home and at school, after some sort of discussion, "What have you heard here today?" I think that we have some very wonderful ideas and memories that John Masterson has given us to reflect on for a very long time. Thank you.

John (son):

Well first of all I wish Dad were here for he would say, "Man those guys can sing!" and I am sure that he has said it already. Mom, Ann and Mark, Don and Sarah, Jane and Stephen, Amy and Kevin and all your sweet children. Friends and relatives of my Dad. Let me first say that mom did threaten to bring a timer to keep this thing moving and that would certainly be in honor of John Aaron Masterson who was known for establishing some kind of progress in anything we do by avoiding distractions that waste time. His art was keeping on track, staying focused and taking different looks from different angles. To uncover the unknown, the unforeseen. And you see clearly, today for example, we learned from him in deciding not to line a bunch of cars up at that cemetery. There ain't nothing after this, okay. This is it. The goal today is definitely fellowship and celebration. I asked Dad in 1992, when he had his heart attack. I thought, well, he may not make it through the night and I said, "Well, Dad, what do you want

me to say at your funeral?" and he said, "Well, keep it interesting and keep it short," so I am gonna maybe do one of those. Because of Dad's outlook on life we have had an awesome couple of days with him. He was as clearheaded as he has ever been, throwing one-liners from his deathbed and keeping the rest of us on track. He had cracked us up on Tuesday afternoon when he overheard some confusion on whether we could get Martha Beckett, an old friend. Everybody was saying well, is she on travel? Is she at work? and he popped up out of bed and said "Has anybody tried calling her at home?" I think that it is important for each of you guys to know that Dad knew up until the very end what he wanted. He knew where he had been, he knew what his next step was, and he knew that he had given a solid 8-year run to this heart thing, okay. Confusing the medical community, who kept extending his life expectancy. And when it came to the end he carried a warrior spirit to the next place. And with a clenched fist and a raised arm he said; "I am ready to go." That's Dad. Dad's sense of humor crossed social boundaries as you can imagine like no other. But he could do it in very good taste, and thinking about his life, he could do it without being real obvious. Quick story that typifies his humor happened in 1958 when his mother Molly Blair Masterson had passed away and Dad was in charge of picking out a casket and he walked around the parlor at the funeral home and the funeral director stepped over to one of the high end models as Dad would call it and said, "I think Mrs. Masterson would look fine in this casket here," and Dad said, "Why don't you hop up in there and let's see what you would look like in there." I do want to tell you another quick one that Dad would appreciate. I am standing in line at the wake last night and a little old lady, that I didn't recognize, came up and said, "I came to the wake because I wasn't gonna be able to make it to the funeral memorial. Aren't you John Aaron's boy?"; and I said, "Yes ma'am I am." And she said, "Are you Don Lawrence or are you John Hilliard?" And I said "I'm John Hilliard." And she said, "Well have you seen your father lately, I haven't seen him." I said, "Yes ma'am I have." "Well where is he?" I said, "He is right down there at the end." "Well I can't wait to talk to him." I just smiled and let her go saying, "That's going to be a good conversation with John Masterson." I think that was really the love that Dad gave to such a wide spectrum of people, as Mom and Don have said, that made Dad almost a main attraction. He was not noisy, not loud. Some would argue he was not a show off, just had a different angle to things and the respect was simply earned because he never said anything really that didn't make much sense. He was right on track. We would all be at the dinner table in typical Masterson style with, you know, high decibel levels, 5 conversations and a lot of story telling going on and Dad would barely move his lips and we would all fall quite. Everybody would look at Dad and then Dad would comment and then we would all think for a moment, laugh our guts out usually, and then jump back in the melee and start looking at it from a different angle, so, and that's what he did for us, right there. Contemplating this thing called death usually leads quickly to

the wonderful thought of everlasting life and it is a concept that we all certainly accept as a pretty decent alternative to the complete black finality of unspiritual death. I personally still like the United Methodist Sunday School version of Everlasting Life, that I learned right here in this building as a kid, that you go up in the clouds and there are lions and lambs draped all over each other in this luscious green setting and you walk around and see old friends and pets that died when you were a kid. Great philosophers debate the ultimate resting place and you hear views that range from reincarnation to sky castles and pearly gates but no one has ever really come back and given us any really good proof without the experience being somewhat hazy, dreamy or unclear. I say that it is surely God's way of giving us hope and if you mix just a bit of faith with hope then certainly you get peace of mind and more likely you get everlasting life, so that the death of a body, especially for the one that is dying, is really no big deal and for those of you who didn't know it Dad went into full cardiac arrest earlier this week and what he acknowledged about the experience was that he was completely blacked out and it was peaceful; but we didn't let that go, we had a guy beating on his chest and hitting with a hundred zigavolts of electricity to bring him back and said, "Hey don't leave us we want to say bye" and that is how it happened; and that was about us; and Mom, thank goodness it happened because I got to come down here and say bye and you know the treasure we all keep in our hearts in having gotten to see him and hug him and kiss him, and him seeing the grandchildren was incredible. Many of you were lucky enough to come up on the sixth floor and see him before he died and you can count yourself very lucky too. But I have to tell you we have to acknowledge the pain. We have to know that we want to see Dad sitting in the living room with his foot up on the ottoman reading the newspaper. We want to hear him in the kitchen cracking the ice trays, helping to put food on the table. We want to hear his Tarzan yells. We want to hear the foot shuffling dancing that happens every time he shakes up the orange juice. We want to see him looking skyward at Pisgah and making a final adjustment to the tarp right before an afternoon shower hits. We want to hear him yelling "10 minutes, 10 minutes" as he stands at the bottom of the stairs and remains the only one of seven that was really ready for church on Sundays. We want to see him flip his collar up on the red wool jacket and see him walk out towards the ash tree and pick up the newspaper and we want to hear him say "Hey Ope, you ole big headed rascal, how ya doing'?" as he pets the dog outside, and we want to see him decked out in some strange outfit or hat or maybe even a complete white suit made in Bangkok because that is Dad. He is out picking up pecans and stopping every now and then to crack one open and taste it and say, "Hey, the pecans are really good this year." Some of you may know the southern black poet Lawrence K. Dunbar who was a real artist in writing words exactly as they are spoken and he wrote a poem called "Death Song," which was really his attempt to understand death and in a sense put a request in to God that God take care of him in his next

life and it goes like this. "Lay me down beneath the willows in the grass, where the branch will go a swinging as it pass; and when I was laying low I can hear it as it goes, singing 'Sleep honey, take your rest at last.' Lay me near to where it makes a little pool where the water stands so quiet-like and cool. Where the little birds in spring used to come and drink and sing and the children waded on their way to school. Let me settle when my shoulders drop their load; near enough to hear the noises in the road, because I think that last long breath going to soothe my spirit best if I'm laying amongst the things I always know. In a tribute to Dad I am going to make this quick. In a true Christian belief that God will take us home to a place that will feel like all the good things we have ever known or done, I would like Dad to do five things for me and the family.

1. Go fight the big fight. Cross the pacific, join Mac and the boys at Pusan and relive something he couldn't do in 1950 because medical science hadn't figured out how to make knees and in 1944 when he had his cartilage problem with his knee that kept him out of going with his buddies to Korea.
2. I want you to find a group of old Boy Scout friends to hang out with and go dive off some bridges over there. Find the best bridge you can that looks like something at Shoals Creek, dive in and y'all do some skinny-dippin'.
3. I want you to put a watchful eye, Dad, on the Ocoee River and lend fortitude and a rebel yell to all those folks over 50 who don't think they can shoot the rapids like you did.
4. I want you find a good campsite, one where the water will run off the tent just right and one that has four good trees from which you can tie the tarp. One where you can manicure the campfire into a kitchen and one that is far enough from the noisy creek so that you can hear the raccoons crackling around in the woods.
5. And finally Dad I want you to find a big willow tree, one that sways in the wind and sings soft songs as the summer breeze called forever lifts your fine hair. Dad, please make sure that it is one that provides you the same shade and comfort that you have gotten from Mom since she met you in 1954. And Dad, please know one thing, that as you sit chewing on that sassafras root that you know certainly that you stayed on course, that you saw the world, that you passed an appreciation for life down to many, many young people, but mostly to your children and your grandchildren and Dad when you hear that whippoorwill in the distance, know certainly that you have left this world a better place and we all do thank God for that. Sorry Mom that is way over ten minutes. Mom had asked me that while you guys are gathering your thoughts on what you might want to say about Dad, Mom had asked me to read a poem that I wrote back in 1994 called "The red wool jacket" and I know most of you guys have seen

that. A lot of folks at the wake last night were saying, "Hey what's up with the jacket?" and those are the people that were probably friends of friends, because the red wool jacket is simply an icon of Dad mainly because he never didn't wear it, I guess. It goes like this.

### The Red Wool Jacket

I can smell the past in the sleeves of the red wool jacket. Campfires and pine straw, and sausage cooking, and pine sap and tobacco, fall leaves and sunshine, motor oil and Budweiser, and the sweat of an explorer. So let's sew another bull on the red wool jacket. I can hear the past in the pockets right now, a deer walking through Virginia creeper, the buzz of a chainsaw, a whippoorwill in the distance, a tent stake clanking in a canvas bag. Let's sew another bull on the red wool jacket. I can see the years in the red wool jacket, the buttons resewn, the collar turned up, the once crisp edges frayed with life and yes in that jacket forever, I see my Father, John Aaron Masterson, and since life is just beginning, let's sew another bull on the red wool jacket.

At this time, and I am acknowledging that it is uncomfortable to stand up in front of people but what we would like to do is, if you have a quick word or you want to tell a quick story about John Aaron Masterson, we would like you to stand up and the ushers are going to have a mike, I believe that Byron and you can either step up to the podium here or they will hand you the mike or can stand right in place. There is no obligation, obviously, we don't care if there is one or twenty that want to talk and certainly if you are not comfortable in front of other people, share your story with somebody in the Fellowship Hall after the ceremony here, we would love to hear the story. So, I am going to have Uncle Sonny here and Stephen Hampton are going to help point the ushers to whoever wants to say a word about Dad and guys it doesn't have to be funny, it doesn't have to be neat, just something that you learned from Dad or something you want to share, okay. Alright, who is going to break the ice? Okay, we have one right here. You can come on up, sure. If you don't mind just stating your name when you say something, it would be nice.

Brenda Jordan, Johnson High teacher:

My name is Brenda Jordan for those of you who don't know me and I am here to celebrate the life of John Masterson, my friend. To me the one word that best described John was love, because he was a lover of life. Even with all its complexities he seemed to relish his own existence and that of all with whom he came in contact. He was a lover of the written word, of nature, of lively conversations, of a good pipe, good food and drink and of dancing. I and many others present today had the privilege of sharing some or all of these things with



him. In fact, one of my fondest memories of John was this summer at my son's wedding reception. John, myself and Marjorie and a number of friends sang and danced to the Motown of our youth. We formed a large circle under the pavilion in plain sight of a large crowd, predominantly under 30. We were probably the only people dancing at the time and our performance was noted by all. We twisted and shouted to of course the song "Twist and Shout." We cut quite a rug and we tried to show generation X that old hippies still could move with sheer abandon. Later that night though, I heard one of my son's friends asking who were the old fossils having such a good time dancing. Knowing my son, I am not sure whether he admitted it was his Mom and some of her crazy friends or we were simply party crashers and he had never seen us before. To John life was a mystical journey. A long adventure. An interesting experiment and I think he savored, I know he did, every moment. Though he lived with great zest he still took time to listen. Above all to be non-judgmental and to be reassuring to those of us who have struggled to plot our own courses. John and his dancing shoes were a package deal. Along as an extra-added attraction was a large loving family full of bright, interesting and funny people and yes many, many weird friends. It has been my pleasure and delight to watch John and his family grow and blossom through the years. I had the pleasure to teach the last two Masterson girls, Amy and Jane. I grew to love them as my own and often wished they were mine. I feel that they are both a real reflection of both of their parents. In my educational career that spanned some thirty years I have had two mentors, one the first three years that I taught, thank God she is still alive, still kicking and still fighting and her name was Lela Washington. Her daughter, Evelyn Humphrey, is here today. The other was John Masterson. They will always be the wind beneath my wings. So to you the family, I say keep the circle intact and to John I say, you will always be in my heart and we will dance again. Thank you.

Gray Settle, Sunday School friend:

My name is Gray Settle. For a long time, twenty-five or thirty years, I don't want to count but I have been in the Sunday School class here at this church called the Searchers with John and Marge Masterson and oh the fun we've had discussing and arguing and sharing opinions. Tomorrow, we may have a good turnout for that class but the room will be empty. And I think that I can say that for everyone in the class. John Masterson was a facilitator and most of you know that. He was someone who brought people together for discussion and sharing opinions and that just fit our class. He might come in and move the chairs. He would normally try to do that, particularly when we were in a more temporary room and his purpose was to bring people together so they could talk to each other and of course we are going to miss him. He was a unique person. No point in saying that he was a great family man, but he was also an educator and I

think that there is where his legacy lies, outside of his family; in education and that he will have a legacy there throughout this city and throughout this state. If I may read a couple of quotes, which I think are applicable to John at the risk of not being extemporaneous, because I feel they were written by people that were thinking about people like John Masterson when they wrote it. Daniel Webster many generations ago wrote; "If we work upon marble it will perish. If we work upon brass time will efface it. If we rear temples they will crumble in the dust but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with principles and with just fear of God and love of our fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten through all eternity." And then, quickly, Jesse Stuart, who was a teacher and an educator, a generation ago, wrote in a preface to his book, The Thread That Runs So True; "I am firm in my belief that a teacher lives on and on through his students. I will live if my teaching is inspirational, good, and stands firm for good values and character training. Tell me how teaching can ever die. Good teaching is forever and the teacher is immortal." As Searchers through these many years, we may have been looking and searching for something but all that time I always felt John Masterson had already found it.

Bonnie Roberts, poet, friend, teacher:

I would like to read a poem written by Kenette Harrison Wilkes and I want to dedicate this poem to John Aaron Masterson and to all of you, his family and to all of us who have to learn to deal with and learn from both life and death and this is called "Multiple Epiphanies." "We swim at midnight, map the sea, beneath the sea, navigate with the sextant of life. Back on board we shake the depths from our flesh, know for sure we come from stars. The ape of history cannot haunt us here. We have the endurance of eagles. We are learning the natural history of wings. Nothing seems unnatural. The deck underfoot weathers pitch and roll as though such travel were ordinary for trees. Jumping land on the horizon grows smaller in its ecstasy dance and a riddle of hands coils the anchor rope. The flight before the wind must be like the silence after the big band, this going, this vocation of all our secret lives. We thumb through books, word-struck, knowing that there must be a sermon in each letter of exaltation. We are not afraid to arrive at the last star or to read the final moon like a compass. There is a heavy flowering of abandonment in our wake and we have developed the appetites of heretics, our debts paid in salt. We have passed through the danger zone of solitude and latent lunacy and we can read together from the book of earth exchanging death's rasp for the legacy of threshold. This is the day before creation and we are in the beginning, sharing epiphanies and wishing each other journey-mercies."

Pat Miller, teacher, Johnson High School:

In 1985 I was interviewed by John Masterson and he recommended that they hire me at Johnson High School and I am still there. I often tell people that one of my favorite memories of John was a faculty meeting, John-John has alluded to this. John started it and said, "Okay, everybody, we got a guy here, Jimmy somebody of Prudential Mutual somebody says that he wants 5 minutes of your time before we start the faculty meeting." So he pulled out the timer and cranked it to 5 and said, "go". That guy tried. He got pretty well into it when, ding, and John said, "Thank you. Okay, first thing on the agenda." I made a New Year's resolution like lots of people but I have changed it, Marge. I want to be an educator like John, a father like John and a friend like John.

James Edmond Cobb, boyhood friend:

I would like to say a few things on behalf of old friends from way back there in Florence. I am one of the Florence homeboys that were fortunate to know John for about 60 years; actually he has been a big part of my life in so many ways. Actually, John and Margie introduced me to my wife for which I will always be grateful. I am not sure if she would use those exact words, but still; I thought that one aspect of John's life I will mention. I will just say again that nobody has ever had a better friend and I think all of us old timers can say that for sure and no one has ever known anybody that was a more stalwart companion for a good adventure and I will comment on that thing John loved adventure of any kind. When we were young he was off on all kinds of excursions. Bill Scarborough and Don Smith out on the plains harvesting wheat and hitchhiking to the camporees, hitchhiking around the country and I was fortunate enough back in 1951 to spend the summer with John. We left off from Florence and hitchhiked to Detroit. We worked in the automobile plants and the factories in Detroit for most of the summer and then we decided, we had a little money in our pockets, we would take off. We hitchhiked on to Chicago and visited friends there and hitchhiked on to Denver. All kinds of things happened, I don't have the time to tell you all of them but anyhow, we got to Rocky Mountain Park and we worked in Rocky Mountain Park for awhile and on our first off day, people had been talking about Long's Peak, one of the highest peaks in the whole country, and how everyone wanted to climb it. So 5 of us got together and we left early in the morning, went over and hiked up the trail to where you really start getting into the mountain and actually you climb, I guess, 4000-5000 feet and it's a 16 mile round trip and we got up to that real mountain massif where it really goes straight up, almost. We wondered about John, we knew his leg wasn't all that great, but he was the type you never thought about John having a handicap because he always did almost everything that anybody else could do. So we were a little concerned about John, but we started up the trail and before long we got to a place where we were looking over the edge and you could look straight down 2000 feet and well one guy actually got so upset, sick at his stomach,

actually, at that sight that he had to go back and I was trembling, holding on to the edge of a crack there in the rock and John, of course, he wasn't bothered at all and so he was from there on, the hard part, he was the spiritual leader of our group and we crept up that crack and came to a ledge and worked our way up the ledge and then came to a cable. It was called the cable route. Snow and sleet and rain and all and finally up on top, one of the greatest days of our lives, I guess, all of us and I just wanted to show again the kind of courage that John had. A great friend, loyalty was one of his great words but courage though is one thing that always comes to me when I think about John. I have been through it with him in a good many situations and I have never known anybody in all kinds of ways, and not just physical courage, but also moral and other kinds of courage. John had it to the utmost and we will all miss him and again no finer person.

John Allen:

Three brief comments.

1. I thought the newspaper article about John was exactly correct.
2. I am the training manager of a large U.S. corporation and my very first training mentor was John Masterson at Johnson High School in 1977 and he did make a difference in my life.
3. I was not a boy scout like John was but I have been a scout master for 9 years and one of the things a scout master has to do is teach young men to become responsible adults and also to make them decent people. In order to do that you have to have barometers for decency. John Masterson was such a person.

Ron Harris, teacher:

Mr. Willie Shakespeare said that "All the world is a stage" and if that is true we all need stage managers. Mr. John Masterson was and still is my stage manager. Stage manager is a person that before you go on stage he encourages you and helps to get rid of those butterflies. He gives you words of encouragement and says that you can do it. You go on stage and you perform and then you come off it. You might have screwed up a couple of things but he pats you on the back. John was that, and still is to me. It's the reason I am still in the trenches at Lee High School. It's a great battle and we are winning, thanks to that man and his incredible integrity and encouragement and great listening power. One of my favorite passage from all of theatre is from "Our Town" by Thornton Wilder. It is the part of the stage manager and it is the beginning of act III and he is standing on a hilltop. It is a cemetery, it is not a graveyard, there is nothing grave about it and he says these words; "This time nine years have gone by, friends-summer, 1913. Gradual changes in Grover's Corners. Horses are getting

rarer. Farmers coming into town in Fords. Everybody locks their house door at night. Ain't been any burglars in town yet, but everybody's heard about 'em. You'd be surprised, though-on the whole, things don't change much around here. This is certainly an important part of Grover's Corners. It's on a hilltop - a windy hilltop-lots of sky, lots of clouds, - often lots of sun and moon and stars. You come up here, on a fine afternoon and you can see on range of hills - awful blue they are - up there by Lake Sunapee and Lake Winnepesaukee... and way up, if you've got a glass, you can see the White Mountains and Mt. Washington - where North Conway and Conway is. And, of course, our favorite mountain, Mt. Monadnock, 's right here-and all these towns that lie around it: Jaffrey, 'n East Jaffrey, 'n Peterborough, 'n Dublin; and there, quite a ways down, is Grover's Corners. Yes, beautiful spot up here. Mountain laurel and lilacs. I often wonder why people like to be buried in Woodlawn and Brooklyn when they might pass the same time up here in New Hampshire. Over there - are the old stone, - 1670, 1680. Strong-minded people that come a long way to be independent. Summer people walk around there laughing at the funny words on the tombstones... it don't do any harm. And genealogists come up from Boston - get paid by city people for looking up their ancestors. Thy want to make sure they're Daughters of the American Revolution and of the Mayflower... Well, I guess that don't do any harm, either. Wherever you come near the human race, there's layers and layers of nonsense... This here the new part of the cemetery. 'N let me see - Here's Mr. Stimson, organist at the Congregational Church. And Mrs. Soames who enjoyed the wedding so - you remember? Oh, and a lot of others. And Editor Webb's boy, Wallace, whose appendix burst while he was on a Boy Scout trip to Crawford Notch. Yes, an awful lot of sorrow has sort of quieted down up here. People just wild with grief have brought their relatives up to this hill. We all know how it is... and then time... and sunny days... and rainy days... 'n snow... We're all glad they're in a beautiful place and we're coming up here ourselves when our fit's over. Now there are some things we all know, but we don't taken 'm out and look at 'm very often. We all know that something is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars... everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and the something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being.

*Pause.* You know as well as I do that the dead don't stay interested in us living people for very long. Gradually, gradually, they lose hold of the earth... and the ambitions they had... and the pleasures they had... and the things they suffered... and the people they loved. They get weaned away from the earth - that's the way I put it, - weaned away. And they stay here while the earth part of 'em burns away, burns out; and all that time they slowly get indifferent to what's goin' on in Grovers Corners. They're waitin'. They're waiting' for something

that they feel is comin'. Something important, and great. Aren't they waitin' for the eternal part in them to come our clear?"

Thank you, Mr. Masterson.

Tommy Lockhart, Johnson parent, on behalf of Dr. Clark:

I am Tommy Lockhart. I would like to speak just a word about John on behalf of Alpha Quartet, and one of his good friends and former co-workers in there, Mingo Clark. There are a lot of things that happened between and with the two of them as they worked together at Johnson High School that we are aware of. Some of you may not be aware of the depth and breadth of their camaraderie back there but John was a man who made you laugh. A lot of times just to see him coming and you knew there was going to be something that he had that would cheer you up but you could get a story from that and be better for it. The time that I had the privilege of going to Johnson to volunteer for various things with the Choir, Mrs. Nation and some of the talent programs that they would put on there to raise funds for the Choir and the music department and other things but even on a more serious note he was always willing to take the extra step and sometimes it wasn't a popular step, especially when it crossed racial lines or social lines for students and faculty. He stood up and he spoke of a true word on behalf of people that he thought would perhaps, for one reason or another, would become disenfranchised by the system. He always took a stand. There are many other things that I could go on and elaborate on but want to say to those of you who knew him in more than a superficial way. John not only did the right thing, he did the right things, right.

James B. Condra, teacher, University of Alabama:

My Name is Jim Condra. I didn't know John long enough. I called him my friend for 39 years and what some of his children probably don't know, John let me wear his red wool jacket one time. In 1962, I was teaching Spanish in Selma, Alabama; John was my supervisor. The girls in my Spanish club challenged the girls of the French club in a basketball game and I was to be the coach and to have a secret weapon, John let me borrow his red wool jacket to wear at that game. John was made up of equal parts of humility, courage, grace, truth and just down right devilment. My world has been diminished because of his passing and like many others I respected him and I loved him.

Jan Hudson:

I am surprised many of the neighbors haven't gotten up. We lived across the street from the Masterson's in 1966 and I would see the Masterson's there in the park and Mr. Masterson never failed to hug me. I thought of him as a Dad and I

never doubted that. He was an inspiration to me. I could see God in him. I could see Jesus, I could see the love of Jesus in him. I appreciated him opening his door to me many times. I got to baby sit for him, as a matter of fact; I wish ya'll had gone out more. I loved going to their house. I just walked across the street. You walked in their door and you felt the love of God, always. It didn't matter whether there was a conflict going on or not. It was always the love of God. Always wished that I had a home like that. The kids you knew what to expect. The kids like to play jokes on babysitters. I really don't remember you doing anything like that. Ya'll were mischievous. Not enough for me to remember and I babysat enough for your parents. John never would shut the door to you. I could go over anytime and talk with him. I could ask him any questions. I could ask Marge any questions. My Mom moved away from the neighborhood, what, maybe 5-6 years ago. When I would go over to Mom and Dad's house whenever possible I went inside the Masterson's. I only live a mile from them and I don't see them like I should and now I know Margie where you have all been in my mind. Where I have had ya'll in my prayers and I am sorry I didn't get to say bye to him but he will always have a place in my heart and I really think he was part of the reason why I got to work for the school board at one time under Ms. Castelli and I really appreciate that and I am sorry that I haven't gotten to see the kids more but I am going to say this publicly and I have told ya'll personally in the past, anytime you need a babysitter, you know where I live, right there down the street. I love you and I loved John and I miss seeing ya'll together at the park and I am sorry I didn't get to the park this summer to say hi to you, and I guess that's it.

Jane Masterson Hampton:

I'm going to represent the girls (We've been whispering, "Are you gonna get up?" "Are you?") I will make it very brief. First for all you teachers out there the greatest comment I ever heard my Dad make was "Putting man on the moon is nothing compared to teaching" that is quite a statement to say in Huntsville, Alabama; and the other thing was as a child I will always, the most often repeated the comment to all of us was "Love one another."

Kelly Cain Bochuss, niece:

I am going to do the best I can as quickly as possible. My name is Kelly Cain Bachuss and I had the privilege of being John's niece -hiccup-, "What was that?", sorry! And the cousin to all of the wonderful people down here. The struggle for me is not actually what to say but whether or not to say it because for me to open my mouth in front of all of you is to acknowledge what I have been selfishly denying over the last few days, much like many of you, I'm sure. The fact that Uncle John is no longer at the corner of Brett and Searcy. But now that I

have made this step I want to say this. I want to thank you Aunt Marjorie for marrying him because by doing that you set into motion a chain of events that forever changes my life and the lives of everybody here and countless others, I dare say thousands. After you have 5 kids, I mean, you are going to touch a lot of people. You and Uncle John created a family that has been adored and envied, I mean how many of you today have wished at one point in your life that you were a Masterson, if you don't raise your hand you are lying. The family has been adored and envied and admired and respected not only by me but also by everybody here, everybody who has ever known them. I will forever be grateful for being a part of this family. For being partially raised by you and Uncle John over the summers while momma was in school over at A&M, for being raised by you and Uncle John and Ann Blair and Don Lawrence and John-John and for growing up with Amy and Janie. You are all part of who I am. Uncle John was all about family and I consider myself extraordinarily blessed to have been a part of that. To have learned from him to appreciate the little things, the fun stuff, the silliness that life can bring, the excitement of travel, the peaceful moments you can share in nature and the value of a really good hug. I want to share a really quick story with ya'll that to me I know he was smiling. Night before last we were at the house and as we were there Ann had gone back to Mississippi to collect her family and the phone rang about 10 or so I guess and everybody was trying to make plans and make preparations for last night and today, the phone rang, a scream comes out across the house, its Ann, it's the lunar eclipse. It's freezing cold outside but nobody said a word, everybody jumped up from wherever they were and ran outside and as a family we stood there huddled up and staring skyward and I thought to myself how proud he must be to have raised a family that is so willing to walk outside in the middle of the freezing cold and stand there together to appreciate what God has given us.

Martha Beckett, teacher, counselor, friend:

I remember some times when John wasn't that good. Some times he might try just to gig you a little bit or you know, let you know how it really was. PTA meetings, everything wasn't exactly right so of course the parents decided to remedy the situation so at the PTA meeting one said, "Well I have called the legislator and I know that something can be done." John said, "We are trying to get a committee to work together on that." Another person rose and said, "I have contacted my representative and I think we can get something done." So John said, "Has anybody contacted the President of the United States?" He took a tent, he and Margie took a tent, I took a camper. We went to Ford Payne and it was just a wonderful time, it was just when the leaves were golden and it was a time you remembered because the sun reflected on the leaves and the leaves in the trees reflected the light on the leaves on the ground and so you walked in a golden way. One time it was so wet there was no way we could build a fire.



John said, "Oh we need to build a fire." We cannot build a fire, I said. Well it is pretty wet you just have to get the small branches. I brought some branches, have to use small branches. I brought some branches, need some twigs. In 5 minutes we had a fire he believed in possibilities. You would say to John, "Well we are trying to look ahead and make some plans;" "Well, that's good, now where are we now?" He saw possibilities in us as friends and those he didn't even know. We will not grieve for John Masterson. His life was a happy one and how can we grieve for him now. It is a feeling we cannot know. He was happy. He is a part of us and we will think of him and when we speak we will speak softer and when we smile we will smile deeper and when the incomprehensibility of it all is overwhelming we will try to believe but we will not grieve for John Masterson.

Candler Cain:

I am Candler Cain. I am Marjorie's brother and she has asked Stephen and myself, since we were kind of the available ministers of the family, to bring this to a close. I know that there are so many stories that many of you would like to share about John that we will be sharing stories as long as we live and I hope that you will share some of those when we have the time together in the Fellowship Hall a little bit later but Marjorie had asked us to read a couple of scriptures and then I do have a word I want to say, I promised her I would be brief though. I think that Stephen is going to share something from the writings of the apostle Paul but I wanted to share from the prophet Isaiah. "Have you not known, have you not heard, the Lord is an everlasting God. The creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youth will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted but those that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." I wanted to share one very short verse, half a verse actually. Proverbs 17 and the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> verse of that chapter. "A friend loves at all times" and to me that describes John Masterson. That unconditional love that he had for all people regardless of who you were. It is the same kind of love that God has for us, unconditional. John didn't put any conditions, you could be anybody, you know, John loved you anyway and about 45 years ago I was at Camp Westmoreland, Boy Scout camp over towards Florence, Alabama, and that was the first time I met John. He was dating my sister Marjorie and I was anxious to meet this fellow who might marry my sister and well you know he was anxious to meet me just because he cared about every scout there and probably a little bit more because I was Marjorie's brother. As they dated and as the time for the wedding got closer I began to wonder how is John going to kneel when it comes time to kneel at the wedding and you know we have heard from several people here today, John

could do anything, anything he set his mind to. It wasn't any problem for him to kneel; somehow he could put that leg out, straight out behind while he knelt on the other one. I never could really figure out how he did it. He swam better than a fish, everything he did he did well but never boasted about any of it. He taught me some things that I needed to know about faith. I guess I grew up where the prayers offered by the Pastors back in those days when I was a kid, and by the Lay people who were called to pray, they all seemed to have stained glass voices and spoke in thee's and thou's and I thought that was the way it was supposed to be and when you addressed God you were addressing the Almighty and you should say Almighty God or you should use something that sounds very reverent but John always started his prayer, it seem to me, "Lord Jesus..." See he was a friend and that is something I needed to know so I have him to thank for that. I wanted to share one quick thing that has already been shared. John-John mentioned it actually; my wife couldn't be here today. We all came up and now she has some sort of a bug, I hope it is not the Y2k bug but she could not come and she was recalling our visits in the Masterson home over the years and my daughter Laura sitting here will remember this too of how Sunday mornings when it was time for church and John-John said it, 10 minutes and he kept you on track, he kept moving and he can still keep us moving. Thank you.

Stephen Hampton, son-in-law:

It is a privilege to close this special time of sharing and reflection and as we have heard over and over again John was a man who loved life, he loved his family, he loved his wife and his kids, he was a lover of friends and as his son-in-law I can tell you that it is a privilege to be a part of his family. I want to read I Corinthians 13 the love chapter in his honor.

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love I am only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. If I have the gift of prophecy I can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge. If I have a faith that can move mountains but have not love I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love I gain nothing. Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast. It is not proud, it is not rude, and it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in the evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, love never fails, and now these three remain faith, hope, and love but the greatest of these is love."

You know I used to think that only one word could be substituted for love and that was Jesus. I want to read a part of this again with John's name.

John was patient. John was kind. He did not envy, he did not boast. He was not proud. He was not rude. John was not self-seeking. He was not easily angered. He kept no record of wrongs. John did not delight in evil but rejoiced with the truth. He always protected, always trusted, always hoped and always persevered and my prayer and my hope is that one-day people might place my name with his. Thank for being here.

- Song - "If I can help somebody." - Singers: Alpha Ensemble - Dr. W M Clark, Mr. Charlie Briggins, Dr. Harold Dickerson, Mr. Tommy Lockhart

This is the song that W. Mingo Clark thought of as John's song

Let us have this prayer. God of all, your love never ends. When all else fails you still are God. We pray for you for one another in our need and for all anywhere who mourn with us this day. For those who doubt give light. To those who are weak, strength. To all who have sinned, mercy. To all who have sorrow, your peace. Keep true in us the law of which we hold one another in all our ways we trust you and you with your church on earth and in heaven we offer honor and glory now and forever, amen.

Let us join and sing together Hymn #89, "Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee."

- Song -

I want to remind you about our Fellowship time and when Mr. Turvey begins the postlude I am going to ask the family to lead the way to the Fellowship Hall. Just follow them down the hall to the right to the bottom level of those stairs and you will find the Fellowship Hall. And now my friends, may God go with you and you go with God, and if we do this then John will be pleased with all of us.

- Music -

AMEN.

"And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."  
- Geoffrey Chaucer