

Mrs. Bryan

“with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”

Philippians 1:27b

When I was a youth I became very interested in music and wanted to learn how to play the guitar. Naturally, becoming a rock star was a real possibility, so I needed to buy an electric guitar. What I lacked most besides talent, though, was money. I had an allowance, of course, but at a dollar a week it would take quite a while to save up enough to buy something decent.

During a visit to an aunt in Douglasville, Georgia, the subject happened to come up. My aunt said that she had bought one for a son who never used it and she would be glad to sell it to me for half of what she had paid for it: \$150! Well, this was a lot of money to me; my previous record for spending was probably ten dollars. My parents, bless their hearts, decided to come to my rescue but made it very clear that I would have to get some kind of job to work out this purchase.

The standard means of employment for young men at this time was mowing other people's yards. I remember being so proud when I first got to mow our yard, but it was a lot different when it became a duty. I had a goal now which made the burden lighter. It was such a good experience for me, as I had to learn how to deal with people. My neighbor, for instance, screamed at me for chopping down her 'prize shrub'. I was honest like George Washington: I told her I never saw it. It seemed to me that a prize shrub should have a sign up or a rock barricade declaring its presence to unwary young lawn care specialists.

I was dismissed from that particular job, but I developed some long-term relationships with other clients, some of whom were very appreciative of my work. And work it was! One yard took 5 hours the first time I mowed it, and I was using a self-propelled mower. But it took half the time once I got used to it. I was too young to drive the first year, so my Dad helped cart me around to my different jobs.

The first summer I made twice as much as I needed for my guitar. I also met a lot of interesting people doing it. One of my favorites was Mrs. Bryan. She was an elderly lady who called in response to my ad and I went several miles out in the country to make an estimate on her yard. Making estimates was another thing that I had to learn in this business, and after considering the distance I would have to travel, the size of the yard, the outbuildings that I had to mow around (at least five), I gave her my price. Her face fell in disappointment as she told me that she couldn't pay that much because she was living on Social Security.

Well, this was my first encounter with a hardship case. The most she claimed she could pay was only about half of my estimate. But somehow she convinced me to take the job. It proved to be the most memorable job of all.

What made it so was the way Mrs. Bryan treated me. Old as she was, she never failed to get out in the yard and pick up sticks for me. I'll never forget the time that she walked behind one of the outbuildings for sticks and the lawnmower picked up a rock the size of a fist and launched it over the roof of that house. I just knew that I had killed her! I ran around to see, but she hadn't even noticed.

And she always brought me a refreshing glass of tea to drink. I can't remember anyone else ever doing that. We were sort of a team. I felt more like I was helping her than being her employee. It was as if we were struggling together for the common cause. But really she served me more than I served her.

Mrs. Bryan was an outstanding example of Christian service without preaching a sermon about it. When I went to college, I had to quit all of my mowing work. But I never went out Asbury road what I didn't look at the farm where Mrs. Bryan lived and think about the times we had working together. I was truly saddened when I heard that she had died, but I knew that she wouldn't have to pick up sticks anymore. But knowing her, she has found her own way to serve.