

## JUST AN HOUR WOULD DO

"I'd like to live my life over again," some assert, "if I could just know what I know now." Not me!

Nevertheless, I've purposely relived a few brief hours this past week through a number of old video tapes I'm trying to convert to more durable DVD.

We loved our Jenny intensely in life, but the films reveal more vividly than we could see at the time the incredible difficulty and pain that she endured (and we with her).

Pleasures abounded also.

In varied attempts to learn to edit the tapes, I replayed about six minutes of Barrett's first T-ball game repeatedly, trying to get it right. Here's what I saw: even his too-large bat and tiny legs didn't discourage him from swinging and churning toward first with Mickey Mantle chutzpah.

He relished every millisecond--and we with him. Youth endowed us with energy and enthusiasm that time has since eroded.

We spent this New Year's Day at the Daniel ranch near Bearhouse Creek, our first visit there in at least a dozen or more years. It was there, probably in 1966, that I exercised my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to favorably impress my fiancée and her Aunt Fran and Uncle James. I chose drama: yelling like Tarzan while swinging on a grapevine across a small creek, I promptly fell flat on my back into the frigid water. Some impression.

Videos from that place and time reveal a home populated by friendships and faces now gone: Thurston and Gladys Daniel. Bill and Charlotte Stover. Mama Ann. The oldsters understood the transience of health and life, but we youngsters embraced the idealism that we'd somehow escape the curse. We haven't.

In Christmas programs we enjoyed two decades ago with the Browns, Bakers and Chathams, adults and children alike acted out parts in what we called "The Herod Play," an account (written by Mary) of King Herod's ancient encounter with the wise men. Portraying King Herod, a youngish Gilbert Baker's impromptu demand of "Who put the seeds in these grapes!" aptly portended his current career as a leader in the state senate.

And with his elegant white beard, who could have looked a more splendid wise man than Foy Brown? Foy died in December 2004. Roy and Jimmie Chatham animate the film with their own unique rendition of "Walking in a Winter Wonderland." Jimmie died in December 2005. Jenny delighted in violin duets by sisters Susan Baker and April Chatham (now Carpenter). Jenny died in 1995.

Despite the increasing reality of my own mortality, I wouldn't for a minute want to live the past over again. But I confess an occasional secret desire to spend just an hour with a precious few I'll never see again this side of heaven... Mother and Jenny for starters. And I'd expect those 60 minutes to affirm the truth already ringing in my heart: life is short, pain is temporal, death is certain, God is good.

Yes, just an hour would do.

### JUST AN HOUR WOULD DO

Today I've missed some loved ones  
Whom I'd like to see again,  
To fix each face that time's erased,  
And just an hour would do.

Friendships knitted through the years  
Unraveled by death's touch,  
I'd treasure time to recombine,  
And just an hour would do.

I'd settle for a moment,  
A bubble in the stream  
Of flowing days and severed ways,  
And just an hour would do.

Tomorrow clothes the promise  
That separations end,  
And holds today in hope's delay.  
Yes, just an hour would do.

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