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Let Me Hold You Just One More Time

By Chuck Hinson

Let Me Hold You Just One More Time by Chuck Hinson

AUGUST 23, 1990

My sons — Tim and Mike — were ecstatic; they'd finally reached the final stage of Super Mario 2 and was now fighting the evil Koopa when they were interrupted by a long, almost urgent, knock on the front door. Pausing the game, Tim, the oldest at 11, got up and opened it.

My older sister, Mary, looked rushed as she stood in the doorway. "Quick — where's your daddy?" Tim told Mike to run to the back porch, where I was working, and get me. Hearing the commotion, I was already heading back into the house, but Mike met me in the kitchen and walked with me into the living room.

"What's wrong, sis?" I asked hesitantly, not wanting to know the answer. Since we'd moved next door to my parents, dad had contracted lung cancer — and it was terminal. We feared any knock on the door, thinking that, at any time, it could be news of his death.

"Come with me," she said. "We need help getting Daddy back to bed." On the way over to the house, not much was actually said between us — we both knew it was just a matter of time now, and all mama and the rest of us were doing was trying to make him as comfortable as possible.

As I entered the house and made my way toward the den in the back — a small, sunny room that daddy had built himself back in '78 — I could still smell the disinfectant we used to clean the house a week earlier, before he'd been released from the hospital.

Entering the den, I saw mama, who'd already been up for forty-eight hours straight, trying to help daddy to his feet; Susan, the wonderful hospice worker who also doubled as Hinson family barber and hairdresser over the previous weeks, getting his oxygen tank ready, and, of course, daddy himself, clad in his favorite blue pajamas.

"Okay, Chuck," Mary directed, "you get daddy under the arms and walk him backward toward the bedroom. Mama, you stay in the back and guide him there, and Susan and I will be on either side."

"No," Mama corrected, "you let me be by his side. I've been there for forty-five years, and I ain't budging now!" We grinned at that as I gently lifted him up. I was surprised at how light he was — this once-strong bull of a man who could pull a 200-foot-deep well with just his bare strength and two 18-inch wrenches — was now just eighty-five pounds. He also looked confused and scared. This man who, years before, had talked a mentally-ill woman out of stabbing him; who'd counseled so many just

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on the basis of his moral standing, was now looking as around helplessly as if to say, "Wha ... what's happening to me?"

I back-walked him to the side of his bed and sat him down very delicately -- all the while, talking to him. After I was sure he was all right -- and knowing I had to get back to fix supper for the boys -- I had started to tell him "I love you, dad"! But, for a reason I'll never understand, "I'll miss you, dad" came out instead. He responded, ever so weakly, "I'll miss you too, son." I corrected myself and said, "Daddy, I love you." It was the last time he would ever hear me say that.

AUGUST 24, 1990

It had been an unbelievably tense day -- I had gone on to my job at a local do-it-yourself store after leaving word with my sister to call if there was any change in daddy's condition. Actually, I was saying,

in a roundabout way, to call me if he passed away. Mama had begun her sixtieth hour awake, hovering over daddy and making sure he had everything he needed. She'd do everything from fluff his pillows, bring him water to sip lightly, read the get-well cards he'd gotten in the mail that day, and talk about the days when they'd first started courting. All the while, she fought back tears and a tremendous lump in her throat, for she knew she was quickly losing the man she loved so dearly since those days forty-five years earlier.

Suddenly, sometime after two in the afternoon, as the hospice worker was changing his bedclothes, she saw daddy look at mama and motion to her to come closer. Then he whispered in a barely-audible voice, "Irene!" Mama rushed to his side and looked at him, lovingly but obviously worried. "What is it, Eola?" She came closer, to where he could say something to her without straining. He looked at her and whispered, with tears in his voice and his frail arms outstretched, "Let me hold you just one more time!"

Mama stopped everything and gently put her arms up and slightly around his frail body, as he barely moved his near-skeletal arms around her as best he could. Tears flowed from both of them and intermingled on the pillow underneath his head. Then she gently kissed him and brushed what little hair he had from his eyes. It seemed like they had entwined themselves for an eternity, though it was but for a few minutes only.

Yet, it was good they did, for about two hours later, daddy lapsed into his final coma -- the one from which he wouldn't recover.

APRIL 16, 1999

It was around four in the afternoon when I got the call from my brother, Steve: We were all being called to mama's bedside as she only had hours to live; lung cancer had taken its toll on her, as it did with daddy almost nine years earlier. Although living in Ashland, Kentucky (eight hours away), I promised him I'd be there - my son, Tim, was shipping out for Navy basic, but, after seeing him off, I'd be coming down.

Unfortunately, I was an hour late. Mama was probably already hugging Daddy again by the time I made it into Pineville. As I stood outside my sister's house, thinking about all the years I'd spent apart from the family and living on my own with my two sons, I couldn't help remembering how, on my last visit in 1995, I went over to mama's house on Park Avenue and, just before leaving to return to Kentucky, reminding her of what daddy said years before. "Mama, let me hold you just one more time."

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How could I have known I'd never have that opportunity again?

Today, I wonder: How can any of us know when, where or even if we'll see each other again? Maybe it's time we took a closer look at what our spouses, our children, our friends, neighbors - our country - mean to us. In light of today's turbulent political and socioeconomic climate - at a time when we're faced with so many uncertainties - isn't NOW a good time to hold those we hold dear just "one more time" ... just in case?

Because how do we know ... we may never see them again, except on the other side of forever. We may never taste the goodness we have right now ... it could be taken away in an instant.

So, with that in mind, let me say: Tim and Mike, though one of you is in Iraq, the other just returned and you're still some distance away, in my heart and through email let your dad "hold you just one more time"; brothers and sister, it's the same thing, for you're still "down home". In my thoughts, "let me hold you just one more time." Friends, readers, acquaintances from Ashland and around the world; though I may have never met you in person, "let me hold you just one more time."

AMERICA - LAND OF THE FREE AND OF OPPORTUNITY - MY HOME - "LET ME HOLD YOU JUST ONE MORE TIME."

... just in case ...

Chuck Hinson was born in Charlotte, NC and raised in nearby Pineville. His greatest life-lessons were taught by two endearing saints, his parents (Eola and Irene). For his biography, go to the "FAMILY" section and click on "Lessons From An Old Guitar."

Now You Can Play Texas Hold 'em At An Online Casino

By Kevin Rose

Looking to play an action-packed game of Texas Hold Em anytime day or night? Keep your car in the garage and hop on the Internet for a quick trip to an online casino.

Texas Hold Em is sweeping the world and you can find thousands of games going on at nearly any online casino. Playing Texas Hold Em online is actually better than playing at a physical casino. Not only do you avoid the expense of travelling to a casino, but you avoid the crowds, the distractions, and the cigarette smoke in your eyes from the player sitting next to you.

But that's all you'll avoid because playing Texas Hold Em at an online casino comes with all of the thrills and some pretty big pots.

Not only can you find an open seat anytime that you want one, but many of the top online casinos sponsor Texas Hold Em tournaments where the prize money can get pretty big.

The rules for playing Texas Hold Em online are pretty much the same as they are in physical casinos, but you should always check for casino-specific variations just to be safe.

If you are not an experienced Texas Hold Em player, you can get wiped out pretty quickly if you're seated at an online casino table with the "big boys". That's why many online casinos offer \$.50-\$1.00

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Low Limit Texas Hold Em online poker games. With stakes that low you can afford to make mistakes while you hone your strategy without losing a bundle.

Once your skill levels improve you can move on to \$10 limit games where you'll be matched against more skilled players but you won't have to be worried about being clobbered by the high rollers who are playing online No-Limit Texas Hold Em.

Just because your bankroll isn't as big as you wish it was, you can still take advantage on the online casino Texas Hold Em tournament action by looking for \$10 Limit Sit-n-Go Tournaments which are limited to 10 players at a time.

Once you are confident of your abilities to play Texas Hold Em at the smaller online casino games, you can try your luck sitting down to play at the No Limit Texas Hold Em table with a buy-in as low as \$50. And when you really reach the top you can even play at multiple Texas Hold Em tables at the same time. That's something that you can only do at an online casino!

With many online casinos offering first-time Texas Hold Em players financial incentives like new player bonus dollars and match-play credits, it just makes sense to treat yourself to an online game of Texas Hold Em instead of packing up the family and heading out to some resort casino where you'll spend hundreds of dollars just on room and meals. Texas Hold Em and online casinos --- it's a sure thing.

Kevin Rose is an author and consultant for The 10 Best Online Casinos

, and has many years of experience in online gambling.

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