

# The Old Farmhouse

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September 1997

We spent Labor Day with our friends, Sammy and Nancy King, at their home in Athens, AL. In the afternoon we visited Sammy's parents on the family farm.

H.L. and Betty Jean King live on a spread of several hundred acres which has been in the family for quite a long time. They live in a modest brick home across the corn field from the original farmhouse in which H.L. grew up.

Several years ago, after H.L.'s mother died, Sammy and Nancy renovated the farmhouse and made it their first home. The uneven, aged floors and creaky, tired stairs gave the house a rustic charm. But Sammy and Nancy eventually moved into a home of their own, hastening the inevitable deterioration of the old homestead.

As we drove up to H.L. and Betty Jean's, we looked across the corn field to where grandma's house used to be. The stately oaks which once shaded the tin roof now guarded a bare patch of earth. The farm house, a rotting, tottering haven for snakes and mice, had been bulldozed and burned.

*One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.*  
[Ecclesiastes 1:4]

The earth is like an anvil that wears out hammer after hammer of human generation. Those who fret so over the durability of the planet have overlooked a deeper, more immediate concern. Theories and assumptions over what may or may not happen to the earth pale in comparison to the undeniable fact that each generation exists for the mere blink of an eye. While we should not be careless stewards of the earth, we need to keep things in proper balance. The earth will be here as long as it suits God's purposes, but our time here is swiftly running out.

Down by the creek at the lower end of the King farm, Sammy's sister Eva is building her own home. It is a stately structure in a pastoral setting. She has taken some of the salvageable woodwork from the old farm house and made a "Grandma's room" in the attic. Thus another generation whiles away the days dreaming, planning, building. Boards are cut, nails are driven, bricks are laid, and each present moment seems to belong exclusively to us.

But who built the farmhouse? Was it not constructed with the same sense of hope, pride and permanency? Did its paint not smell fresh? Were its timbers not full of sap?

*That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done,  
And there is nothing new under the sun.* (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

I remember the farmhouse, but memories fade. And what of ten or twenty years from now? When a developer buys the farm and a shopping center or restaurant is built, who will remember the farmhouse?

*There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after.* (Ecclesiastes 1:11)

May we invest our lives in the things that are eternal.