

## ***Monsoons, Magnolias and Memories***

My brother Jack and I spent the first two days this week going through personal belongings at my parent's house in Vivian, Louisiana. The work was both physical and stressful, and in the end, I discovered two truths I probably should already have known, but did not.

Growing up with Brother Jack was also stressful. Being two years older than I am he lauded his superiority over me until I was old enough to, well to "whip his ass." Once that happened – and it finally did – he became much easier to live with.

Even though we have lived less than twenty-five miles apart for the past thirty years, we rarely saw each other. This changed when my parents moved to town. Jack and I converse on a weekly basis now, but I still dreaded spending two days with him. My dread proved unfounded.

What we found at the house in Vivian was years of memories, some already packed in boxes, others still residing on dusty shelves. Sweet magnolias bloomed across the street as Ronnie and Debbie, the two buying the house, told us they would get rid of anything we left, and advised us not to worry too much about removing all the miscellaneous items.

"We'll give the old clothes and things you don't want to the Church, or Goodwill," Ronnie, my longtime neighbor and friend said.

"Better not offer unless you mean it," Jack said. "We may just take you up on it."

There were still mattresses and sheets in the house and Jack and I spent the night there. I am happy to report I observed no ghosts, or spirits, benign, evil or otherwise. I awoke refreshed after a night's sleep I haven't enjoyed in some time. After buying water and coffee at Tom's Market (a grocery store immortalized in the Steven King movie *The Mist*), we whipped up a pot and began searching through the boxes.

Hours passed and we soon had more than a truck bed loaded with memories we realized we could not take the chance of leaving behind. The items we packed were not all our parents either. Some were boxes of this and that from our grandparents.

Monsoon rain followed us all the way to Oklahoma and somewhere along the way, the truths I had learned on the trip manifested themselves like the sudden bolt of lightning that lit the sky through the wonderful Ouachita Mountains penetrated by the Indian Nation Turnpike.

Jack and I took boxes of memorabilia, from both our parents and grandparents, which will probably reside in our garages until we die. Then our children will have the same task as we had, and probably make similar decisions. If so, our remaining earthly

possessions will probably be located in in their respective garages until they die and the process repeats with their children. The next truth was more satisfying.

I learned that there is no one on the face of the earth as close to me as my brother. Not a single person has as many - or will ever have as many, mutual memories - as Jack and I. As we returned home through the thunderous storm, I cringed at his driving ability, or lack thereof, but suddenly knew that there would never be another living soul that I would trust as completely and totally as he.