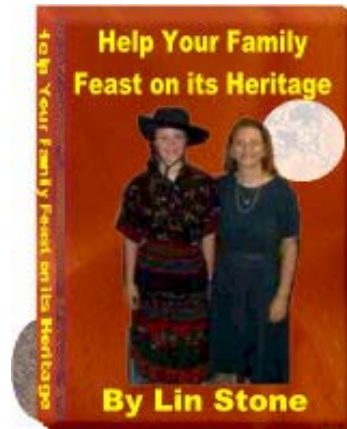


Help Your Family Feast On Its Heritage

Written by Lin Stone



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its greatness would improve forever.**

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Some of J. T. Hale's ancestors signed the Declaration of Independence. Nathan Hale is counted as one of his relatives. (They come from the same Hale family) These are parts of his own personal heritage but ALL the signers of the Declaration are part of every American's heritage. That means Nathan Hale can also be a hero to all of us.



After all, if you go back far enough all of us are related to kings, queens, and all the other rascallions too.

"The most important part of heritage isn't where your roots were. The most important part is what your children and grandchildren want to nourish and keep and do better at.

"Yes. Heritage is where you come from. Heritage is also the kind of example you are today, and heritage is what the next generation picks up to carry on into all the tomorrows we have for the human race."

The Hale ancestral home in Herefordshire England had Hale family members living there for 290 years. That's a lot of history, a lot of genealogy. J. T.'s wife (Betty) keeps up with the genealogy in a very neat folder that is organized to encompass the centuries. She is also an artist, though it is often hard to judge the quality because her best work is always enhanced by frames J. T.'s best woodwork decorates.





On the outside wall of his Smithville Oklahoma home he keeps the carpenter tools of his grandfather on display to remind himself of his heritage.

"But heritage can't be left hanging on the wall" J.T. insists. "My children and grandchildren have learned the quality craftsmanship those tools represent by using similar hand tools to create their own work."



The heritage of craftsmanship glows in everything J. T. builds.



The table top shown above this is all one solid piece.
The beauty will last forever.

Heirloom quality furniture decorates every room in the Hale home.

Having a wife so artistically inclined makes it easier to keep children and grandchildren delighted to be part of the family, a vital link in the Hale heritage. For example, J. T. will cut out lifelike figures and then his wife paints them.



J. T. has made furniture, built houses, and performs engineering feats with ease. His garden is entirely organic and the corn is often tall enough that a step ladder is needed to get at the top. While I was there his daughter and wife were working as a team to harvest the okra. One would hold a stalk over and the other would pick it. In just one every-day picking from the small garden they both brought out a shopping bag full of produce no supermarket can touch for quality.

He taught himself how to do stained glass, but that isn't all, he also makes the glass that is going to be stained. He is so good at making glass that some of it he showed me had THREE curves in it. That's the kind of heritage J. T. wants to pass on. When one of his children found an eagle painting she loved she sent a copy home. Within a few days J. T. had reproduced it as a stained glass portrait in the window of the door that goes to her room.



For the birthday of one of his grandchildren J. T. crafted a bed that went from wall to wall and then made the entrance a fairy tale enclave no child can resist.

"Children are a heritage from the Lord," J. T. insists in the reverent tones spiritual souls among us use to quote scripture. Then he adds: "There are two evils in this world that can destroy our heritage. One is television. And the other is public schooling."

J. T. illustrates the proof of his words by telling the story of a college graduate that came to work with him to help build furniture. "The poor kid couldn't even read a ruler! How in the world was I ever going to trust him with a saw?"

He shakes his head in sorrow. "Kids today just don't stand a chance in the public school system.



They are either being held back by slow learners, or being jostled forward by teachers constantly harried by the responsibility of watching too many children. Combine that with the use of baby-sitting cartoon shows at home and it is little wonder our nation's high schools are turning out graduates who can do little more than fill in an application for welfare assistance."

By way of contrast J. T.'s grandchildren that I met are happy, healthy, EDUCATED individuals with firm, individual characters in place. These grandkids are what normal children should be; the others have been molded by television at home -- or worse yet at the babysitter's -- and the public school system.

When I first met some of his grandchildren at a County Fair in Arkansas they were galloping around with quivering curiosity about anything and everything. They had no hesitation about stopping me (an absolute stranger at that time) in my tracks to demand an answer about something they had just seen.

Side by side with other children their age these kids are like college graduates consorting with kindergarten students. They haven't been hammered into some pupilistic mold either. It isn't that Hale's children and grandchildren are better than anyone else, it's that other kids aren't as good as they could be if they just lived up to their heritage.

There are three different sets of encyclopedias in the Hale home and visiting grandchildren are more likely to pore over them than to go fishing or hunting. "It isn't that hard to teach children at home when your students have attitudes like that."

Hands-on-experience in real life is great, but it is secondary to direct book learning. For example, when the grandchildren wanted to take an oak tree and turn it into twin supporting columns in their living room.

J. T. would only let them work on the project AFTER their homework was finished. Starting with hand tools known to their ancestors the kids brought the tree down crafting it into a work of art. They learned first hand every phase of creating a work of art their grandchildren can admire. One of the most important parts of heritage

J. T. strives to provide is the idea that FUN is a great part of life. This water slide is 45 feet long and as you can see, users splash out into a body of clear water. So great is the attraction of this slide that during the good old summertime the water is often filled with lively children standing elbow to elbow in the water, waiting their turns.



Another part of the heritage at the Hale's home is the convenient access to the hunting and the fishing that McCurtain County is famous for. The water that the slide splashes into is part and parcel of a creek 18 miles long where the fishing is legendary. During just one recent night J. T. and two neighbors caught over 80 pounds of catfish.

The most important part of your heritage isn't where your roots sprang from. The most important part is what your children and grandchildren want to nourish and keep alive and do better at.



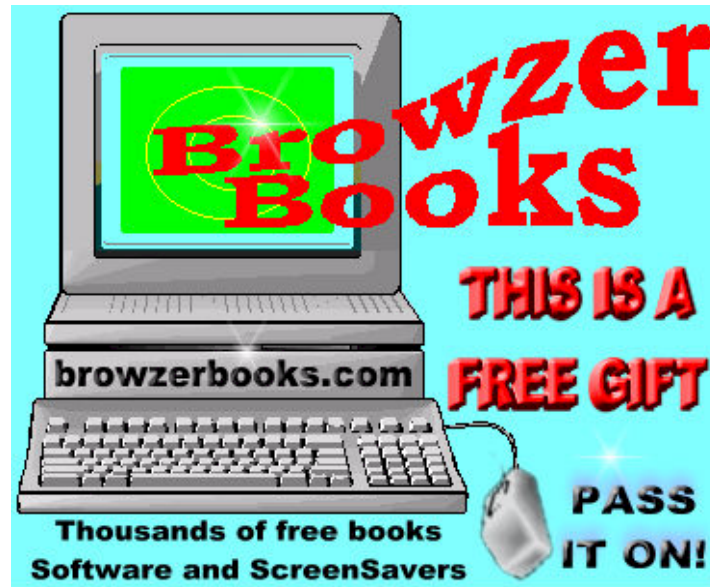
HERITAGE IS: Where You Came From Where You are Now, and Who You are Going to Be

If you have enough will power,
turn off the television one night this month,
gather your children around you, and tell them
what kind of heritage you and your country offer them.

the end.

Lin Stone is an author, writer and photographer living in Mena Arkansas among the gentle mountains known as Ouachita. He writes about adventures and he writes about the peaceable things of this world for Share Your State Dot Com. In his spare time Lin writes copy for American Insurance Depot Dot Com.

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