

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the famous song writer Stuart Hamblen. Stuart was once a womanizer, gambler and drunk. He was also a cowboy actor and radio star in Los Angeles. When he gave himself to Christ, however, his life immediately changed. He stopped his wild ways and was even fired from his popular radio show for refusing to run a beer commercial. John Wayne was his drinking buddy and asked how it was so easy for him to give up drinking? Stuart replied: "It's no secret what God can do". Wayne said that was a catchy phrase and suggested that he write a song about it. He did! Hamblen sat down at the piano and composed the entire song in only 17 minutes. It was the first song to be number one in all three categories of Gospel, Country, and Pop Ballad.

His song "This Ole House" was inspired while on a hunting trip in the High Sierras. He and a friend came upon what looked like an abandoned shack. In the shack they found the body of an elderly man who had apparently died of natural causes. Hamblen was moved by the experience and came up with the lyrics to the song while riding horseback back down the mountain. He composed the melody within a week.

In 1955, Hamblen composed the hit single "Open Up Your Heart And Let the Sunshine In." Hamblen was accompanied by wife Suzy, his daughters Suzanne and Lisa, and two of the girls' friends. It was first recorded under the name "Cowboy Church Sunday School". The tune hit No. 8 on the Billboard Hot 100 pop charts in 1955 and was also sung on the TV cartoon series *The Flintstones*.

Hamblen was born Oct. 20, 1908 in Kellyville, Texas. He passed away March 8, 1989. His father was an itinerant Methodist minister who founded the Evangelical Methodist Church in Abilene, Texas in 1946. Stuart married Suzy Daniels and they had two children.

In 1931 his career blossomed and he began hosting the popular radio show *Family Album* in California. He also performed in the movies with such celebrities as Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and John Wayne. In 1934 he became the first artist signed by the American Subsidiary of *Decca Records*. Unfortunately, Stuart did not cope well with fame and became an alcoholic. Many times he was put in jail for drinking and public brawling. Because of his popularity, however, his sponsors regularly bailed him out. Once in rehab he described himself as the "original juvenile delinquent".

Proverbs 22:6 states: **"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it"**. Note the promise was not that a properly trained child will "never" depart. The promise is that "when he is old" he will not turn from it. The godly lessons of his faithful father were planted like seeds in the young mind of Stuart Hamblen. In 1963 those Gospel seeds finally began to grow. Stuart went to a Billy Graham crusade and gave his heart to Christ. As we mentioned, his conversion to Christ was so genuine that he chose to be fired rather than read a beer commercial.

The story of the famous contest between Elijah and the priests of Baal is one of the best known stories in the Bible (See 1 Kings 17:16-46). Elijah won the contest because God did something that hundreds of pagan priests could not do. **THIS SAME KIND OF CONTEST COULD EASILY BE HELD TODAY!** It can take place in any community or even on a college campus. First, invite everyone to show up, just like Elijah did. Then ask how many have had their lives transformed by atheism and unbelief. No matter how many unbelieving professors are present their track record of

success will not be inspiring. How many alcoholics do you know who been transformed by atheism and unbelief? Then ask how many, like Stuart Hamblen, have had their lives transformed by Christ. The difference will be obvious. IT IS NO SECRET WHAT GOD CAN DO!

The Bible states: **“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”** (Gal. 5:19-25).

Sinful acts are obvious! No matter how hard he tried, Stuart Hamblen could not hide who he was and what he was doing! His conversion was also obvious! It is easy to tell a caterpillar from a butterfly. It is also important to note that man cannot produce fruit. We can concoct something that looks like an apple, and may even taste like an apple, but it is still not an apple. Nothing will grow when you plant an artificial apple. The conversion of Stuart Hamblen was not artificial, it was the real thing!

Remember! Jesus said that we will know a true teacher by their fruit (Matt. 7:15-20). Karl Marx produced Joe Stalin, and Jesus produces Stuart Hamblen. The difference is obvious! “It is no secret what God can do, what he’s done for others, He’ll do for you!”

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce