

A FRIEND IN NEED

*J. W. "Bill" Firey, Jr.
Written in 1995*

One winter day in 1957 I was driving home while there was about six inches of snow on the ground. About five miles from home over on the left-hand side of the road, I saw someone digging around in the snow. But at that distance, I couldn't make out for certain who he was because his back was to me.

I stopped my vehicle and just a little later, he turned around facing me. He looked like my friend, Sam Hall. I called him over to where I was. It was a cold, cloudy day and a north wind was coming across the prairie at a good 25 miles per hour. The bitter cold wind cut to the bone so I'm sure the mercury was hanging down around zero that day.

As he came closer, I could see that it was Sam just as I had thought. He only had on a thin jacket much too small for him with no undershirt. His pants were thin and too short for him in length. His slipper-type shoes were worn out and he had on no socks. His shoes were packed full of snow. I felt sorry for poor Sam. He was very cold and the clothes he was wearing were hand-me downs. As he was crossing over the fence, I could see that he was almost frozen. He was about a mile from where he lived.

I said, "Sam, get in this pickup with me where it's nice and warm." Then I asked, "What in the world are you doing out digging around in the snow on a day like this?" He said, "A friend of mine left some scrap iron around one of those trees over there last summer. He told me I could have the scrap to sell for junk." I replied, "But Sam, this is a bad day to be out gathering up scrap iron to sell, don't you think?" Sam

said, "But you don't understand, my wife, Rose and two kids ate the last bit of oatmeal this morning. We don't have any food in the house to eat. I don't have a dime to my name and my credit is shot." I said, "Sam, you seem to be in bad shape. Looks like what you need is some help." Sam went on to say how the battery was down in his car and he was also out of gas.

I said, "I can take care of all of this for you today." I took him home. He and his family lived in an old run-down mobile home. They had a wood burning stove in it and a good supply of wood so at least they were able to keep warm. I said, "Sam, I'm going to give you some money for groceries."

I siphoned out five gallons of gas from my pickup and put the gas in Sam's car. I then got out my jumper cables and jump-started Sam's car and got it running. While the car was warming up, Sam went inside the house and got his wife, Rose, and two kids. The little girl was six and the little boy was eight. They all got in the car. I had given Sam \$80 and told him to buy themselves a good supply of groceries in case they were snowed-in a while.

Rose and the two kids thanked me a number of times. Then Sam said, "I don't know when I can ever pay you back this money." I said to Sam, "This is not a loan. This is a gift." Sam grasped my hand and said, "You will never know how much this means to me." There were tears of joy and gratitude in his eyes.

I watched them as they drove away. This gave me a warm feeling to know that I had brightened up their world a little on a cold cloudy day. I

had also helped my fellow man, a friend of mine in time of need.

Sam was my second cousin on my mother's side of the house. Years later at our family gatherings and reunions, I would see Sam talking to a group of men. He would always call me over and say to the men, "Now here is the guy that helped me and my family on that cold winter day back in 1957. He will never know how grateful I am - he is a true friend!" Well, that made me feel good all over again to know that Sam really did appreciate my kindness in helping him that day of long ago.

Now the years have come and gone since then. My friend, Sam, has passed on from this walk of life now, but I will keep his memory alive in my heart. I am thankful I was able to help my friend in need that day. God has paid me back many times over in different ways down through my years of life.

Now this is how it happened in the year of 1957 long ago out here in these rolling hills of Oklahoma where a little act of kindness can still warm the heart on a cold winter day.