

# The Last Leaf

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“...then was he off and free, like a dry leaf from  
the tree, floating down and away.”

--Helen Nearing (1904-1995). Recalling the  
death of her husband

## THE FORSAKEN BOUGH

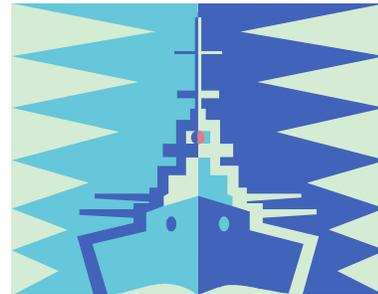
**I** THINK OF my existence as being one bough  
on the Tree of Life. Each leaf on my bough  
represents another life that has touched mine  
and has left a part of itself to become a part of  
me. In the bloom of youth, many leaves may form  
on the bough, but as the cycle of life wears on,  
fewer new leaves appear and those that remain  
become even more precious. Inevitably, the  
leaves will begin to fall and the loss of each one  
takes something irreplaceable from me. In time I  
know that my life can be completely stripped of  
all who have added to its quality; this is a fate  
that I hope never to suffer.

In my contemplation of what effect the passing  
of friends and relatives will have on me, there is  
another thought to consider. Just as those I love  
affect my life, I also affect the lives of those who  
love me. What does this mean? It means that  
*whatever I expect from my loved ones, I should  
give that same measure to them.* All too often I'm  
guilty of violating that “golden rule.”

I am ashamed to admit that once-dear friends  
have passed on without my having expressed to  
them personally that my life is enriched by their  
being a part of it. Such an easy thing to do! And  
what a blessing for anyone to hear! Certainly  
there were times in my youth when I felt the  
surge of affection—but had not the wisdom to  
express it freely. Such wisdom often comes late;  
*sometimes too late.* There is no bad time to tell a  
friend that you appreciate him; there is no bad  
time to tell a relative that he is an important part  
of your family. Respect and affection should not  
be accumulated as is money ... to be used only  
on a rainy day; they should be spent lavishly and  
without reservation. In these late autumn days of  
my existence, I am finding it very easy to express  
my feelings to those whose lives have touched  
my own. I only regret that such was not the case  
many years earlier. Perhaps another opportunity  
will arise somewhere in the future. #

## Captain Vic Weighs Anchor...

Amateur Journalism is diminished because the  
bell has tolled for Victor Moitoret. It was not for  
me to know him as a close friend, but only by his  
reputation, which will stand for years in places of  
honor; a legacy to inspire new generations that  
will find his example difficult to match. In the  
brief time that I knew him, he commanded great  
respect; he exhibited great dignity; and few of us  
can claim the powerful presence that was his. I  
salute Captain Vic for his many contributions to  
amateur journalism and for his dedicated service  
to his country. From one sailor to another, I wish  
him a happy voyage home. #



## CELEBRATE THE SEASONS

**F**OR THE first twenty-five years of my life, my  
home was in southwestern Georgia where  
seasons were predictable. Spring arrived in  
March, summer in June, autumn in September  
and winter in December. It always happened that  
way; it was how the year naturally spent itself. I  
loved and enjoyed each season in turn. Then I  
moved to central Florida.

Orlando has been my home for forty-nine years  
and I don't believe that any of those years were  
exactly alike where weather is concerned. There  
is always a similarity, but never an exact match  
in what happens from year to year. I recall a few  
winters when I chased from one place to another  
in search of kerosene for my wall heater; it ran  
almost continuously for weeks. Other years saw  
the air conditioner running for eleven months  
and two weeks of the year.

In recent years, Florida has experienced only  
one of the four traditional seasons: summer.  
There may be two weeks of spring and a week of  
autumn, plus four or five days of winter, but most  
of the year is decidedly summer. I'm not as quick  
to tire of warm weather now as I was thirty years  
ago, and there are arthritic days when I would be  
happy to have summer weather every day. After  
all, if I feel a need to see what autumn and winter  
are like, I can jump in the car and find out in just  
a few hours. For most of the time, I'm home! #