

Harry's Box

By Donna Bishop

Harry fumbled for his glasses on the nightstand. Slivers of early morning light filter through the plantation shutters. Sighing, Harry Sidebar prepared to face another lonely day. Where had that early morning "go getter" spirit gone? Lately a lot of other spirits were hanging around. Mostly memories of Lucy, his loving wife, departed nearly five years and his two sons, Thomas and Joe. Both grown men with their own families including grandchildren. Yes, that made him a proud great-grandfather. He imagined the sparkle in Lucy's eyes holding one of those newest Sidebars! For a moment Harry regretted turning down the invitation to spend his birthday weekend with his family.

The ring of the phone forced his rapid exit from the bed. Birthday wishes started arriving from family members scattered throughout the country. It was mid-morning before Harry headed towards the front porch to retrieve the morning paper. He was momentarily surprised to see the paper almost at eyelevel atop a huge box blocking the doorway. Pushing the door open Harry managed to bring the box into the living room. He was certain the box was not intended for him. He eyed the outside of the box from all angles but could not find any address labels.

With some hesitation Harry opened the box finding crumpled up papers. He took one of the paper balls out of the box. Unfolded he could see it was a sheet from yesterday's local newspaper. He relaxed a little assuming the mysterious box at least was packed here in town and delivered locally.

He took each paper ball out of the box carefully to be sure it didn't contain some hidden item. He spotted an item wrapped in plain white paper. He pulled it out of the box, carefully unwrapping the rather heavy object. There was a plumber wrench. Harry turned it over in his hands with a puzzled look on his face. I already have one of these, he thought. Then he remembered his neighbor Sam across the street had borrowed it! Next out of the box wrapped in red paper a package that looked like a stack of books. Sure enough it was his favorite series of western history he had loaned to Dave across the back fence ages ago. Package after package revealed items he had shared with his neighbors over the years. Many of them long forgotten. Out of the box also came homemade baked goods and sweets from ladies in the neighborhood. He smiled with memories of those treats being served at neighborhood gatherings.

Out of the bottom of the box Harry retrieved an oversized envelope addressed to him. Inside were birthday wishes from all his neighbors along with the following invitation: Come Celebrate Harry's Birthday. Cake and Ice Cream will be served at 7:00 p.m. tonight at the Johnson's home. Please bring any borrowed items you left out of the box!