

*If only it were possible
If only it were true*



An hour to chat

By Stephen Rusiniak

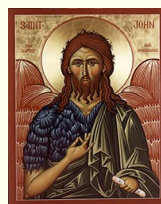
“Immediately a plethora of possibilities began flooding my thoughts. As an unabashed history buff, my mind immediately went into overdrive....”

Can you imagine? If only it were possible; if only it were true? A photo of a bench on a grassy hill overlooking a place where an ocean’s waves are succumbing to some distant sandy shoreline showed up today in my email inbox with a simple and yet thought-provoking question: If you could sit here and chat for one hour with anyone, past or present, who would it be?

Immediately a plethora of possibilities began flooding my thoughts. As an unabashed history buff, my mind immediately went into overdrive as the faces of countless historical figures suddenly appeared in my mind’s eye, all of them vying for what I selfishly saw as a coveted chance for someone of historical significance to spend an hour sitting on this bench and chatting with me!

I imagined questioning any one of them about their life; about their successes and failures, and about the choices they had made that ultimately led to their fame, their fortune, or in some cases, their downfall.

I considered briefly the potential picks that others might have chosen as well, and I suspect their answers certainly would have included the rich and the famous—actors, rock stars, revered religious icons, presidents or famous sports heroes—perhaps the likes of John Wayne, John Lennon, John the Baptist, John Adams, or maybe even pitching great, Tommy John—each of



whom a worthy selection in their own right, but in the end, none of them would have been my choice.

If the idea posed by this question were truly plausible, and if, by chance, it was offered me, admittedly, I'd have the audacity to request a small caveat before making my selection. I'd immediately request permission to double my allowed allotment. I'd ask a waiver to be granted permitting me two choices as opposed to the originally offered one. I'd defend my request by noting that my two choices had been one half of a team for more years than I've even existed and that together and forever, they are, in fact, one.

If only it were possible; if only it were true. If offered the opportunity to sit on this bench and chat for one hour with anyone, I would choose my parents.

It's been far too long and I miss them.

We lost Dad unexpectedly one-night several years ago, and twelve years later, Mom joined him after doing battle with a foe for which, try as she did, she simply couldn't defeat.

If I were granted this hour, I'd probably ask permission for some time to prepare. There are a few things that I'd need to know like when would we be having our chat, or where exactly is this bench anyway? Would I be allowed to bring my parents a gift—maybe some current family photos, or could we share a couple cups of coffee, just like we used to?

I'm sure that they'd like that!

One hour would clearly not be enough time to catch the folks up on all our recent family doings and so maybe it would be prudent of me to prepare in advance a list of topics for us to discuss thereby initiating a strategy to best utilize the limited amount of time allotted our chat.

Or, then again, maybe not.

Perhaps it'd be best to forgo the preparation and planning and simply arrive at the bench at the appointed hour without my photos and without my preplanned questions—bringing with me nothing more than my love and my gratitude for being gifted with one more hour to spend with Mom and Dad.

If I were granted this time to chat, chances are that as our bench reunion commenced, I'd probably just hug them; just hold them close—incredibly thankful for the opportunity to once again do so. Of course, I'd tell them how much I love and how much I miss them, but beyond that, I'm don't know what else I would say. I do know that if nothing more was said, that would be okay too as I'd be perfectly content for having been blessed with our extra time together.

If offered the opportunity to sit on this bench and chat for one hour with anyone, I'd choose my parents, but to be honest, I suspect such a reunion will never take place.

My faith, however, reassures me that one day we will indeed be reunited—maybe not on this bench, but instead, when I too have been called home to heaven.



It's going to be a joyous reunion, of this I'm sure, and who knows, maybe we will share a couple cups of coffee together, just as we used to do. I'm sure that they'd like that!

I know I will.

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the backstory:

This is the actual photo that ultimately inspired me to write my piece, ***An Hour To Chat***.

A “*plethora of possibilities began flooding my thoughts.*” I imagined my Mom and Dad sitting there, waiting for me. Their angelic-like appearance—at least as I envisioned it, would have required them to be dressed in brilliant white attire—maybe even surrounded by the slightest subtle glow—some soft ambient white light.

(As long as I was imagining angelic, I slipped full throttle into heavenly visitation mode!)

Of course, reality for me dictated that my angel-parents would be hard-pressed to wear anything but what they wore routinely in life, or as I would call it, their daily uniforms: Dad in work pants and an old flannel shirt, and Mom in her “Nana” sweatshirt, pants and sneakers, (my nonstop mom was always on the move—sneakers, fitting footwear)! But, when I imagined them sitting on that bench, waiting for me, the location just didn't work. The photo of the grassy bluff overlooking the ocean, while thought-provoking, wasn't a good fit for my visiting parents. The one I included at the beginning of this piece—much more so. I could picture Mom and Dad sitting there, in uniform, sipping a *couple cups of coffee* on that slightly foggy, ever so raw February afternoon.



I miss you guys...

They wouldn't have minded the bleakness *or* the conditions, and given my reason for being there, I wouldn't have either!

If you could sit here and chat for one hour with anyone, past or present, who would it be? For me, it would absolutely be my Mom and Dad. If only it were possible, if only it were true...

the photo:

My more fitting bench photo was taken one February afternoon at Thompson Point, on the peninsula at Packanack Lake in Wayne, NJ (my neighborhood)!

about the location:

Dedicated to former Packanack Lake resident, Sgt. Daniel Thompson, who gave his life for his country on May 25, 1968, killed by enemy fire in Viet Nam.

Thank you, sir.

