



The year was 1946 when Ray and Belle Hartman moved into their new home in north Davidson County, NC. They were fortunate that Ray's father deeded them land that had been in the Hartman family for many years. They set about making their small house a home by adding landscaping to beautify the cleared land. One of the trees they first planted was a Weeping Cherry tree pictured here. The tree became a source of great beauty in the spring as it filled with blossoms. In summer it became a cool spot to rest as the layers of leaves provided much needed shade in our backyard. I can remember Daddy pulling out a couple of webbed lawn chairs and he and Mama sitting out there under the swaying branches on summer evenings while the three children played. I can remember Mama taking one of her old quilts out to spread under it and one or all of us running to her with whatever "finds" we had made in the yard. Later, Daddy placed a table he made from some scrap lumber under the Weeping Cherry tree where we would see him potting plants, or working on some project.

The Weeping Cherry tree is now over 60 years old, and time began to take its toll. In 2007 when Mama passed away, following Daddy, who died in 1997 my husband Tim and I bought the house and land where my brothers Ronnie, Tommy and I had grown up. We noticed this year that a portion of the tree appeared to have died, and with great hope that we could save it, we had a large section cut away.

Some months before Tim and I had wandered over to the Greensboro Farmers Market and met a wood artist, Harold Jones of Creative Woodturning. We liked his work and felt a connection, so we saved his card.

Seeing the large pieces of the Weeping Cherry tree lying on the ground my husband thought of an idea for a gift for me for our anniversary. He contacted Harold, who came to take a look at the wood and struck a deal! Harold would make some pieces out of the beloved tree and Tim could choose one for my gift. Nothing Tim could have done would have been more meaningful and Harold made a number of special pieces. Of course, I had to have almost every one of them. It seemed appropriate to share Tim's wonderful idea by buying pieces for each of my brothers, my nephew and two nieces. We gave them to them as a Christmas gift when we all gathered the weekend before Thanksgiving. My heart is full of Thanksgiving for my wonderful parents who planted the tree and nurtured it as they did their children. I am thankful for my caring, thoughtful husband and delighted to share with my family. Equally, I am thankful to Harold for creating such joy with his artistry. His warm spirit can be felt in each piece he conceived and executed. The property has been named Raybelle Branches and a sign I had made in 1997 bears a tree with three branches, one for each child. I like to think it symbolizes the beautiful Weeping Cherry Tree. Harold was gracious enough to write on the bottom of each piece-Weeping Cherry Tree, planted 1946, Ray and Belle Hartman.

We thank you, Harold. You have given us something that will be treasured by generations of our family. Following are photos of some of the beautiful pieces you made for us.



