

Tribute to our Dad... by Jerry

When my brothers and I think of our dad, a line from C. S. Lewis' classic children's story *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* comes to mind. The characters are discussing Aslan, the great lion who is a picture of Christ. Lucy asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan is "safe". Mr. Beaver replies...

"Safe? Who said anything about **safe?** 'Course he **isn't safe**. But he's **good**."

That could easily describe our dad... a man's man... independent, tough, and hard working. Someone who would have your back and who would stand up for what was right even if he was the only man on earth who would. He was also good... probably the most generous man I've ever known. I've often thought that if John Wayne was a Christian, that would be our dad. After all, his middle name was Marshall, and he was from Texas.

That amazing balance of strength and goodness in his character taught us to appreciate, rather than fear the discipline of God. If my brothers or I got in trouble or disobeyed him, our dad would sit us down, tell us he loved us, give us a hug, and then proceed to in his words... "light the seat of our pants on fire." Afterward, he would once again hug us, tell us he loved us and pray with us. He never yelled. Once when staying at a friend's house when I was 10 years old, I heard his parents yell at him. The first thought that crossed my mind was...

"I'm so glad that my parents spank me instead of yelling at me. I would hate that."

The result of my dad's discipline is the knowledge that when I face hard things in life or feel God's correction, I know that He loves me and cares about me. I can take it in stride and be thankful in adversity because of my dad.

Our dad also gave us the core belief that we could do just about anything. That came from both prayer and a lot of hard work. Dad grew up on a 160 acre Texas cotton farm. He was doing a man's work at 7 years old... picking and loading 100 lb. bags of cotton while barefoot, then standing with his feet in the shade of the plants when the ground got too hot. Because of that background, he thought nothing of asking his boys, who were 6, 8, and 10 at the time, to pick all the dandelions on 2 and ½ acres of land by hand, a seemingly impossible job. To him, mowing that same 2 and ½ acres with a push mower, helping him for hours as he sewed humungous gymnasium tarps, digging septic tanks 10 feet deep by hand in October after football practice, or of digging up 25 foot tall Pin Oak trees on Thanksgiving day were all just a part of "normal" life. Later on, we realized that it was anything but normal. Yet our dad's expectations about work instilled a confidence in his sons we could accomplish things that were way beyond "normal" too.

If I listed things my dad taught us, they would include...

- 1- You can make it through tornados with both prayer and funny stories.
- 2-Faithfulness is more important than Flash.
- 3-Telling a good story is better than TV.

4-It takes a lot of courage to publicly admit that you're wrong.

5-Sometimes kids need to be rewarded for a hard day's work with "all the ice cream you can eat."

6-Even if money is tight, it's important to take your sons to see the Cubs at Wrigley Field.

7-If you almost cut your fingers off with a chainsaw, Vaseline and soap are better than stitches.

AND...

8- What God thinks is more important than what people think.

That leads us to one last thought... our dad lived his faith. It wasn't just words or being religious. Every single day when we got up, he would be sitting in his big rocking chair, reading his Bible, surrounded by commentaries and concordances. When God convinced him that he should quit smoking, Dad gave it up cold turkey, and fought through it with a lot of prayer. We saw him give to those who were hurting, share his faith, grow in patience, and stand against evil. When a gang of young men attacked one of his sons, he took them to court, saw them convicted, and then paid for their fines and told them that Jesus had paid for his crimes. In a world of unfaithfulness, he modeled 60 years of love and loyalty in marriage with our mother. He showed her the utmost respect, appreciation, and thoughtfulness. We never saw them argue. His love for Jesus grew stronger through the years. His face and eyes would simply light up when talking or singing about his Lord and Savior. He touched both young people and adults in ways that changed their lives. Our dad simply never got over the fact, that the Lord of glory had given His life to save his soul. We often saw tears run down his cheeks as he talked about all that Christ had done for him. We saw the character of our Father in heaven modeled in our dad, every day of his life. The word "holy" means different, unique, extraordinary, one of a kind, larger than life, and special. That was our dad. He was Big Al. He was Tex... and like John Wayne, he was our "hero".



We love you and miss you dad, and look forward to the day when we will see you again before our Heavenly Father's throne.

I know that you hear me talk about my dad a lot. My brother put together a video clip of a lot of my dad's pictures for the reception afterward. This picture was in it, and it made me pretty nostalgic. Thought maybe you wouldn't mind if I shared with you a story and the reason why it is my favorite picture of my dad and me...plus I had hair. :)

This was taken after our homecoming game, my junior year in college. We had played Olivet University, which is where the Chicago Bears hold their training camp. They were actually making fun of our facilities before the game. You can also see by all the padding on my right arm, that I was playing with a broken upper right arm. Earlier in the game, our kicker, Steve Dalby, who later had a tryout with the Detroit Lions, kicked a 51 yard field goal to give us a 3-0 lead. That was the score on the final play of the game when the other team's 6'4" All Conference tight end caught a pass on an out pattern on the left side of the field. He had beaten our DBs, and I came all the way from the other side of the field plus 5 yards further back, ran him down (I was pretty fast back then), and made the tackle on our 15 yard line that saved the homecoming game, gave us the win, made us 6-0 on the season, and was sweet payback by shutting out and shutting up mouthy opponents.

My dad had fans from their school sitting behind him in the stands, who also made fun of our school and team the whole game long. When I made that play, which gave us the win and shut them out, I had never seen my dad so excited at a sporting event or so proud of me. In this picture, he's bragging about my play to everyone walking by, especially the opposing fans. It's the most proud of me I'd ever seen him. That's why it's my favorite picture. Hope you don't mind me sharing it with you. It's nice to be able to talk about him.

You are great friends. Thank you so much for letting me share some of my memories with you. That means a lot to me, and so do you.

Jerry