

A Tribute to my Father

My Dad may not have been the best-educated, wealthiest, or most popular dad in the world. But like many others who lived through the Great Depression, WW I and WW II, he knew how to make ends meet when there didn't seem to be any ends there to meet.

He did work hard himself, and expected that of his children. While it is true that as the last of four children, I did not truly experience the hardest of times our family endured in the wilds of the Red River bottomland, as did my brother and two sisters, I was born while the family lived there. My Dad homesteaded property in a wilderness area, was stung by bees and almost died, had to co-exist with moon-shiners, but maintained a Christian home, and made sure his children were brought up respecting their elders, and having basic Christian values.

Because his father was a music teacher, he knew how to sing, and enjoyed all kinds of music, especially the hymns that we sang at church. When we moved back to Louisiana, across from his parents' home place, we acquired a piano which was constantly in use. Both my sisters played the piano, and we frequently gathered around it as a family to sing hymns and what other music we chose to harmonize on. Our church sponsored a music "school" every summer, so all of us learned how to read music, lead singing, etc. at an early age. So my love of music was sparked at an early age and kept alive by a family that sang together

My father set an example of what it means to be a church-going believer. The question was not "are we going to church?" but "What time does church start?" In good times and not-so-good times, we went to Sunday School and church on Sunday morning, Training Union (earlier it was BYPU) and worship in the evening, as well as Prayer Meeting on Wednesday evening. I cannot remember ever missing one of these meetings when I was at home. We were expected to attend unless we were seriously ill. Although my father rarely had a leadership position in the church, that did not discourage him from participating and supporting the church. Even when the church experienced some times of strife, and many fell away, we continued to attend and participate in all the activities. I recall one occasion when my parents and I went to the church on as Wednesday evening, turned on the lights and waited for what seemed like an eternity, then went home. It was the only time when we were the only ones at church. So as a son of a rather strict, but loving and supportive father, developed a love for music and the church which has never wavered.

I must also mention my father's influence in my love of sports. He taught me how to pitch, and organized baseball and basketball teams in the neighborhood which provided excellent experience for a growing youngster, and helped prepare me for high school sports.

During my high school years, my father worked away from home in order to support the family, so much of the work on our farm fell on my shoulders. My siblings had already moved on to college, or were starting their own families, so much of the time it was my mother and me at home. But I knew why my Dad was away from home, and appreciated his providing food, shelter and clothing for Mother and me. I accepted the challenges of the demands of our small farm, and enjoyed doing all the daily chores, some before I left for school each day. I never thought of our family as being poor (though according to today's standards, I suppose we were) because we always had plenty to eat and clothes to wear.

If I have been able to share with my children the values I learned from my father, then I can celebrate this Father's Day with joy and gratitude. Thanks Daddy for the example you set.