

DAD'S EULOGY

15 January 1992

I would like to tell you a few things about my father. I am not sure if I am doing this for him, or for myself, or for you. Perhaps I am doing it for the men he served with in the 533rd Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment during World War II.

Dad was a hero to me. That's a word that you don't hear much these days. It seems like there were a lot of heroes back in the 40's and 50's. It's a hard job being a hero. It's hard to keep up on that pedestal that heroes occupy. But Dad stayed up there my entire life. He never came down.

Perhaps I have had an experience that none of you have had. I can remember the first time I ever saw my father. I can remember the end of World War II. Mom gave me a small American flag on a stick and told me to go outside and wave it, and tell everybody that the war is over and that my daddy is coming home. And I did. I remember going out on the front porch, running up and down it, and yelling, "My daddy's coming home". I think that all of Gilbert Street in Syracuse heard me. The next memory that I have is being in the kitchen, and being called out to the living room. There were strange people there. Mom said, "There's your daddy! Go and give him a hug!" And across the room there was a big man with a uniform on, sitting in an over stuffed chair. From a 3 year old's point of view he was about the size of Lincoln sitting in his chair at the memorial in Washington, D.C. So I ran across the room and jumped up into his lap. And he gave me a big hug too.

From that time on, he was always a hero to me. He was a loving father, a mentor, and a teacher. I learned so much from him, by his example, that you really have a hard time getting from books and the class room. He would have a certain way of saying, "Come here. I want to show you something". And I would come to him, and he would show me something new in our world. I can remember the first thing he ever taught me, while building the garage on Gilbert Street, about how to get extra leverage pulling nails out of boards by putting a piece of wood under the hammer head. At the time, I thought, "How amazing". And I remember the last thing, when only a few weeks ago I was trying to find the meaning and correct usage for "messianic moment", and "oxymoron". As usual, I couldn't even spell them correctly. Of course, he had the answers.

When there were problems he always had the answers, or better still, he had a way of helping you to discover the answers, or alternative solutions for yourself. He taught me to think objectively. To respect authority, but at the same time to question it. That authority that could not be questioned was false. He taught me that

it was important to have faith, but that blind faith was false, and that God gave us a mind and an intellect to depend on first. And, he is probably at least indirectly responsible for a quality of "maddening togetherness" that I have been accused of from time to time as a constructive asset.

I was lucky. The older I get, and the more I look around, the more it seems that dysfunction and pathology in families is the norm. But, looking back, it seems that we had as close to a "Leave It To Beaver", "My Three Sons", or "The Nelson Family" type of environment as you can have in real life. When there were problems, Dad saw to it that they were dealt with fairly. He, along with Mom, gave us three boys the solid foundation to make it in life, so that when we got out on our own, we were accountable, and able to deal with becoming an adult.

But, even then, later on, when we lost our footing, or one of the cornerstones got loose from the foundation, he was still there to help us build again, He was a hero to me, and he taught by example.

Education was important to Dad. He saw it as the key to his future and to ours. I can remember him studying his Russian classes up stairs, and working at the post office full time so we could all have a better life. And he made college available to all of his sons if it was our choice.

He taught us that you don't get something for nothing. That everything had tradeoffs. And he taught us the work ethic. I think Roy and Erik and I still have calluses on our hands from that family project of digging out the basement at Arden Road.

He taught us what a loving relationship was about by example. And I can honestly say that I cannot recall him and Mom ever having an argument. There was always communication, compromise, and understanding. Rational assessment and evaluation of the situation always made resolution a team effort. And the facts lead the direction of action. And there was always love. You could see it. Like trying to describe a color, you had to see it to understand it.

The military was a big part of his life, and by association, Mom's too. Growing up, I remember him being in the Reserves, making Major and Lt. Colonel. And especially the relationship he seemed to have with his World War II buddies. There was a special bond there that I really didn't understand. But I had two experiences that gave me a special intimate understanding of this bond. And, that I wasn't the only one that put him up on a pedestal.

With 3 1/2 years to go in the Air Force, I was assigned to Clark AFB, 10,000 miles away for a two year tour. And for pragmatic reasons it was to be an unaccompanied tour. It was traumatic, and not something I looked forward to. Like being on another planet. And it was the one assignment, that for some reason ever since I

joined the Air Force back in 1963, that I never wanted to go to. I
had

little choice in the matter, so, to make it a positive experience, I resolved to make the situation an opportunity to visit the places that Dad had been to there in Luzon when he made the landing with the 533rd during World War II. As the saying goes, "When all you have is lemons, make lemonade".

The Philippines was not a safe place. Some degree of traveling was possible in between periods of lengthy base confinements due to Communist NPA activities, and the occasional killing of American GI's that hardly made the news back home. A very strong anti-American minority faction was always present. When base restrictions were lifted, we were advised, in military terms, to "be prudent". Being restricted to base for long periods of time was almost like "cabin fever". It seemed like everytime I had the time off and opportunity to make the trip to Northern Luzon, we would go on alert again. Also, the old Honda Civic I had brought with me was on its last legs, and it was not a good idea to break down any distance from base. I had been to Carigadore Island, and a few other places on USO tours, but this had to be on my own.

Finally, at an opportune time, one of the nurses I worked with heard me mention my pending trip, and volunteered to drive me if I paid for the gas. She had a fairly new and dependable car, a sense of adventure, and ready to make "lemonade" out of her South Pacific assignment. So we took off with Dad's copy of "Surf And Sand", (the history of the 533rd Engineer Boat & Shore Regiment during World War II), road map, sandwiches, base water, and a borrowed video camera, with specific objectives outlined. And, after some four hours driving we were there, at San Fabian.

We spent some time just surveying the general area, and then started matching the old photos and drawings in "Surf And Sand" with the surroundings. We found the beach area, got out, and walked along "White 1" and "White 2" where the LST's and other boats had made the landing on the 9th of January, 1945. It was strange. You could almost see the troops coming in, wading ashore from the South China Sea waters. Farther around San Fabian, past "White 3", we found large rusted metal piles and fragments of what must have been part of the landing effort. An Australian walking the beach, directed us to a statue of General Douglas McArthur further on down. We found it, weather worn, and in considerable disrepair and desecration, as if the memory and the effort of another time had lost some of it's value. But the warm salty breeze coming in off the Lingayen Gulf felt like the ghosts of the 533rd were still there, still coming ashore.

Just inland we found the small brick railroad station. It looked just like the picture in the book that Dad had pointed out to me ever since I can remember. Again, it felt strange, that I was actually here, half way around the world. That it was real. A Philippino family was occupying one part of it. And dozens of children followed us around as we inspected the area. It was like being the "Pied Piper Of San Fabian". Americans were rare in this part of the Philippines now. We found the cathedral at San Fabian not far away, which the 533rd had occupied. Tropical birds flew in and out the open windows and doors, and perched on high wall

and ceiling spaces. And, again, whether it was imaginary, metaphysical, or spiritual, they were there. Those men from long ago, from so very far away. Dad had once told me that, "When you go to war you have to figure that you're not going to come back. And if you do come out alive you're one of the lucky ones". Being there made me understand. It wasn't like Vietnam, or Korea. There were no helicopters, or C-141s, or other relatively modern means as we know them to facilitate communication or transportation to the "real world", It really was like being on a different planet. And you were there. Going home was like a dream, and far from anything like a 20 hour flight on a 747, or a medical airevac. They were all there, for the duration. And that made the bond. And there was the nature of the overall mission - the war to end all wars.

We took video of the things we saw, to make copies for the next 533rd reunion, and for Dad to keep. The trip had been a success. We elected not to try to find "Pistol Pete", the 320mm houitzer up in the hills around San Fabian, which the enemy used nightly on the San Fabian area. Our luck had held out so far, and we headed home. And I had come to a special understanding of part of Dad's life.

About a year later, after I was transfered back to the States, I attended the 533rd reunion with Mom and Dad. At that time they honored him, and Mom, with a special recognition for their years of hard work in being the cornerstone of reunion secretary and coordinator. A lot of nice things were said about Dad. But far more profound was that, throughout the evening, men would pull me aside and tell me things of what happened during the war where "Captain Andy" was the one who was there for them. Not only how much they appreciated him, but really loved him. Tex Scales called the other night reminiscing about Dad. He said that Dad was "the rock" of the 533rd. That he didn't know how they would have succeeded so well without him. I think that he was a hero to them too.

Dad's academic avocation and expertise in history, philosophy and theology was well respected, and brought standing room only to his bible class and comparative religion studies at the little Methodist church we went to in Cabin John. He started out with just a few attendees, and in no time the class was over booked. He would give them homework, and some who had not seen the inside of a library in years, couldn't wait to get into the research. He made them think for themselves. Sunday School would be over, but Mr. Anderson's class would still be going on hot and heavy. Finally, they would come out, still discussing and debating issues, oblivious to those who were waiting.

He helped me to discover what God was all about for myself. That God was beyond churches, and temples, and denominations, and various bibles and authority figures. That God was in Bertrand Russell as well as Ingersal and Christ, and the great philosophers. And

simply that God was love, and caring, and communication. That we are here for each other. And without that love and commitment, nothing else can define the true spirit of God. On a very personal note, when I had totally given up on what I perceived to be gross shortcomings, contradictions, and a controlling nature of the traditional organized denominations, he suggested I look at the Unitarians. I did, and, for me, it fit. He always had the answers.

He had some "standards to live by" too, that we were frequently reminded of. He said that, "A gentleman should always carry a handkerchief and a pocket knife". I could always be caught on the handkerchief part of this rule. He always wore a "flat top" or "crew cut" haircut, and felt that, "If a man's hair was long enough that you could grab on to it, it was too long." He was somewhat tolerant of our adolescent dress standard, but did not hesitate to remind us that, "If you dress like a bum, and act like a bum, and look like a bum, you're a bum." And all the women in his life, at all ages, knew that (with tongue in cheek) "Girls are good for kiss'n and cook'n.", which allegedly is an old Pennsylvania saying.

Dad did not ramble. He spoke with content. He could tell a carefully chosen off color joke with so much class in almost any situation that it was always appropriate. And, although his skill at cutting hair on his three boys, and a few of his close church friends was, as he put it, "good enough", he did take a quality of pride in it. The price was always right, and, there was a special compensation knowing that you probably had the only barber in the Washington D.C. area who was Phi Beta Kappa.

His favorite quotation was, I believe by H. L. Menkin, who requested that, something like, "If you wish to do something in remembrance of me when I am gone, wink at a homely girl". When I first heard this, long ago, I really didn't understand it. But later I did. And, by example, he would frequently say something to a waitress, or clerk, in his very special way, that would bring out a smile and/or unexpected similar reaction to a genuine complement. What he was really saying was, "I see something very special in you as a human being". And it would be real, and not superficial. And she would know it. I think the true spirit of God was in the iconoclast of H. L. Menken. Perhaps he was one of Dad's heroes.

I am going to miss him dearly. He was truly an uncommon man. I do not know what I am going to do the next time I need to look up another "messianic moment" or "oxymoron". Somehow a dictionary or computer just doesn't seem like the answer. But, his spirit is with me. And it is with my brothers and mother, and all the rest, of us who he touched in his life. And, after using all my resources, I think he will still be there for me, and I will find the answer.