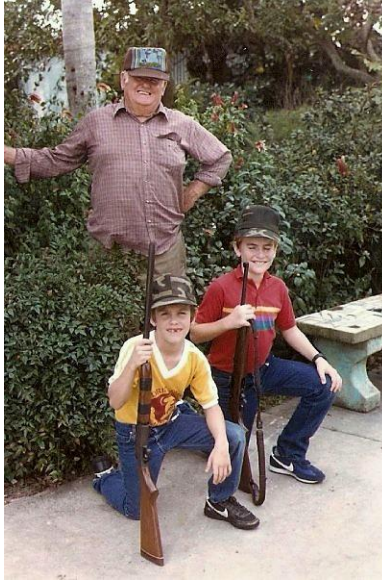


# Adolph Dawson (1913-1997)

## A Tribute to Papa!

By Bob and Martha 24 March 2023



**Matthew 7: 17,20** “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

### A Citrus Man—Dawson Groves

When I first met Adolph Dawson, it was probably March 28, 1970. I was a very YOUNG college professor, and I drove up to his house to take his daughter Martha out on our first date. At this time of year, he and Martha’s brother Kenneth were probably outside doing grove work, possibly washing fruit on their fruit washer. They were the rugged outdoor types, and by comparison I probably looked like a dude! Little did they know that in just a few months, they would be laughing their heads off watching me as I tried try to manage a ladder in the grove and pick oranges with them. Little did they know that in just a few years, I would be the father of two of his grandsons who played in his grove and adored him as “Papa.”

Adolph Dawson was quite a man, strong and self-made, active in his church, generous to a fault, willing to do anything for anybody. He and his wife Vergie and their families originally came from South Georgia, moving to Florida in about 1932 in the early years of the citrus industry. Adolph did not inherit his grove or his skills—he worked hard in the groves of Mr. Heist, developing his skills hoeing citrus

trees for pennies a tree. Gradually, he earned enough money to buy land and plant his OWN groves and his family home on a large piece of lakefront property on Lake Carlton.

By the time I arrived on the scene, Dawson Groves was well established. As for me, I didn't even like oranges—that is, until I tasted a Dawson navel orange!! Dawson navels were the BEST oranges ANYWHERE! It seems that Adolph had a special touch, perhaps it was a special gift, perhaps it was the many years of experience and hard work, but Dawson citrus was unusually sweet and delicious!

When Martha and I moved into our first home, I was removing a large tree from the back yard. While I was trying to dig the stump out of the ground, Adolph stopped by. "I'll get that for you!" he exclaimed! And with that, he jumped in the hole pushed that stump right out of the hole, an amazing show of strength!

It seems that for my entire life, I am the only person in the family who does not own a truck! "Any time you need a truck," he told me, "you can borrow MINE!" Of course, when I finished with the truck, it seemed fair for me to fill up the tank!" However, not for Adolph Dawson. From the first time I borrowed his truck I was told, "This is MY rule: You can borrow my truck, but I buy the gas for it!" On one occasion when Robby was a baby, we took a trip to visit relatives in New Jersey (mine!) and Georgia (Martha's!). Observing that their own car was better than our car, the Dawsons loaned us their car for the trip! In fact, they were SO generous with us, that helping them pick oranges in the grove was the least I could do to help them. Considering that I was born in New Jersey and in the last few years I had earned my doctorate, Adolph seemed amused to have a "Yankee doctor" working in his grove, especially when I had so much trouble handling that ladder and keeping it upright!!

## **A Godly Man, Role Model for My Children**

**Proverbs 22: 6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."**

If Adolph Dawson was excellent in his ability to raise citrus, he was even better at raising GRANDCHILDREN! While he was not a Christian in the early years of his marriage, he had allowed the Lord to change his heart long before I came on the scene, and his lifestyle as a man of God was exemplary, at one time being voted "Man of the Year" in his church. He was a man of faith who lived what he believed to be true and good. Young men and women, especially his grandchildren, looked

up to him and called him “**Papa.**” This included the young man who married his younger daughter--ME!!! Now, a few years later, now that I am also a grandfather, I am honored to be also called Papa.

To sum it up, Adolph Dawson was the ORIGINAL Papa! He LOVED his grandchildren, and that love was always demonstrated in his behavior. He was NEVER too busy to spend time with them, getting down on the floor to play with them, going outside, especially with the boys, to have fun with them and to teach them skills they needed to learn. You were a real hero to all your grandchildren and to so many more. You were MY hero too!

### **Adolph Stories**

Everyone’s favorite Adolph story involves a hive of bumblebees. Adolph was mowing with his riding mower one day when he accidentally disturbed a hive in the ground. With bumblebees swarming all around him, he jumped off the mower, leaving it running, and ran in the house screaming, “Vergie! Vergie! Go out there and turn off that mower! Maybe those bumblebees won’t recognize you!”

As many know, Adolph LOVED fried chicken, especially Kentucky Fried Chicken. In his later years, of course, the family was trying to avoid such foods for his health’s sake. One day, when Philip was a young man, Adolph tried to slip Philip a \$5 bill, asking Philip to get him some KFC—“. . . bring it to me, and hide it in the mailbox!” Poor Philip didn’t know what to do! I’ll bet thinking back on it, to this day, Philip wishes he had brought him some fried chicken!!

### **Conclusion**

In Matthew 7, the Bible says you can judge a tree by its FRUIT! This being the case, Adolph Dawson was a BIG tree. He produced some TERRIFIC citrus, and some EXCELLENT grandchildren! In both categories, he was the BEST!

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