

Death of the Patriarch

We all knew it was coming, like the cold of winter follows the warm summer. The fall brings changing winds, cooler, less strong. Winter brings the harshness of cold, bitter days. Life does progress around the circle. Death comes to us all eventually.

Yesterday we lost our brother. The oldest of our siblings. The one who could best be described as the patriarch of our generation. Our father was from a very large family, with many brothers and sisters scattered across Texas and beyond. Robert told me several times that "Childress, where it all began," was the center of our universe. He tried (and succeeded) in making sure that our family had a hometown to come back to. A few years ago, we discussed what we should do with our reunion, as we were concerned that we were placing too heavy a demand on him personally. He would have none of that!!

What did Robert Lee Mills mean to me? The difference in age between he and I resulted in my not remembering much about his school days. Of course, the stories are told of his high school football days, where he once tried to jump over a defender who "clipped" his leg and caused him to flip over and land on his feet and run for a touchdown. "It really happened" I've been told many times. He has always been the one to emulate. The one who I tried to "be more like!"

It's for others to list facts and such. To me, Robert was the responsible one, who everyone looked to for tried-and-true advice. The person who you could count on to always be there. Did he have flaws like everyone else? Of course. Was he also the epitome of the feelings associated with "Patriarch?" Absolutely, at least in my opinion.

In January, I was told words to the effect "Winter is coming!" Yesterday, my brother died. Winter has arrived.