

MY DADDY, My Dad

“A Father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation.” Psalm 68:5

An abandoned baby sounds pitiful and not promising, with no lineage, so to speak. But read the Promise: “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me in.” Psalm 27:10

It sounds to me like a promotion. "COME HERE, SWEETIE."

Really? ‘Adopted children are more than twice as likely as children raised by biological parents to attempt suicide.’ Now that doesn't sound good..

Nature, nurture, the debate continues but His Promises never fail. He keeps watch over His Word to do it.

Natural, *Supernatural*. Aha! Take this ‘debate’ to the Highest Level: HO!

There are oddities nearly indescribable for people who are given up at birth and then adopted. I wasn't born on Mars but I always knew...I was just a *lit-tle* bit odd. Different. I wasn't like my ‘family’.

I knew that because I was told.

And I knew because I Knew.

Adopted children don't necessarily synchronize with their new parents, we don't naturally share their traits, their features, or what comes naturally for them. For me, with wonderful parents, it was looking at family life from outside an escape-proof enclosure and not much of life could get in. I was a part, a participant, but I was a visitor with very restricted access and apparently, from their reactions, another planet.

I heard "My! Where do you get *that* from? That's so strange!" which emphasized me being the stranger in the perfect home.

Adopted children don't always harmonize well with the family song. Or maybe we sing the same tune but in a different key or to a radically different beat. Hint: if your kid, adopted or 'natural', is quirky, just go with it. Maybe your child's gifted...

Beyond our fields at the far end began a dense forest. Out of the top of the trees tiny airplanes buzzed. I asked my Dad about them, where did they come from?



“Through the forest on the other side there’s a clearing on top, it’s a private airstrip owned by Troh. Don’t ever, *ever* ride your horse through that forest! There’s cougars there and they can kill a cow or take down a horse. It’s so dark in there you’d get thrown, the branches, the undergrowth would spook Goldie.

“I thought maybe I could wash planes for a summer job” I ventured not timidly but certainly with great respect. I was 14, I was a good kid.

“Oh, you *dreamer!*” my Dad laughed. “*Troh!! Troh shoots people he finds up there, it’s his property.* Don’t go up there unless you want to come back fulla buckshot,” and he returned to his flowerbeds laughing, scoffing, throwing his hand downwards: 'dismissed!'

I *really did* listen to what Dad said. Most of the time I did *exactly* what Dad said.

The best of a country morning is hearing the birds, walking out to your horse in the field and finding she's already looking for you. *If* she's awake. And if she's laying down sleeping on the lovely new green grass in the early sun, moisture rising from her hide and sparkling upwards in fairy dust, I would creep inside her legs and lean my head on Goldie's belly or kiss her neck while I stroked her ears, and she'd nicker gently but not startle or stir. Goldie was a quarter horse from the Multnomah Racetrack put out to pasture when she broke her left hind leg. She was still very spirited and the uneven gait made it even more . . . *fun* to ride her. One day, actually our first day, she threw me seven times. *Oooooooff*. The only difficulty was finding a hay bale or fence post or a tree limb to get me up high enough to give it another go. I think I saw her smile.



But she never ran away, she just pretended she knew how to be ground tied and made snuffling noises in the grass while I grunted and groaned to flop back up on her. Some flailing, too.

Going into the forbidden woods that first time I remember it got so dark so quickly as Goldie and I transgressed from field into forest, spooky in this untrodden world. The sun never got through the dense old forest so its colors were all shades of grey. Trilliums grew there oh, so briefly and so beautifully. We passed a cow, dead, most of its skin gone. Didn’t want to study it and thankfully it appeared in grey tones because of the darkness. We heard a big cat scream and kept moving. It was a long time in there, and then

We reached a dirt road on the other side of the forest and back into the sunshine. I wondered where the airstrip was. The long, dusty trail finally broadened until we were in a field sparse in grass on top of the world.

I WILL SURROUND YOU WITH MY FAVOR AS WITH A SHIELD. Psalm 5:12

“What are you doing here?”

It was "Ol' Man Troh", Hank Troh *himself*. Oh, Father! Must be him.

He was big but he didn’t look so mean *or* old. I didn’t survey the tractor he was riding to look for the shotgun. I stared straight into his eyes, always be careful to maintain eye contact. Scared to death of this stranger on a tractor, but his eyes, even staring back at me, his eyes were *kind*.

“I’m looking for summer work. I was hoping I could wash some of your airplanes for a job.”

“Where are you *from*?” This wasn’t an easy place to get to, especially on horseback and Mr. Troh wondered just how on earth . . .

“I came through the woods.”

Mr. Troh raised his eyebrows and stared and said *nothing*. He just kinda looked me over in amazement, then motioned me to follow as he turned his tractor around.

Soon I saw some of those small airplanes parked and a wide dirt road leading to the end of the mountaintop: *air-strip*! A bit further and there were some corrugated metal buildings and a house.

Mr. Troh just kept motioning me, I complied. He was a man of few words and for just this moment, I was, too.

I tethered Goldie and Mr. Troh showed me how to wash an airplane: “Here’s the hose, here’s the plane, show me,” and he walked off. I can say it now: I love this man.



The sun was hot on top the mountain and I worked as well as I knew how. When I thought the plane might be finished, I looked around for Ol’ Troh. He had turned his back and walked away, but I guarantee that he'd never lost sight of me.

Then he showed me how to put the hose away.

“That’s where you’ll get it tomorrow, just put it back when you’re done. Come on. Wanna take a ride on the tractor while I show you around?”

Oh *yes, I did!* I sat on the front of the tractor with one foot on each of those bug-eyed lights and off we went like old friends, which we were. For the girl who'd never belonged, somehow Mr. Troh and I belonged. I give him all the credit, he took time for me, he was gracious and good to me, and Mr. Troh was just getting started.

The sun didn’t bother me a bit anymore, everything was exciting and my new friend was, well, he was my *friend*. His eyes crinkled with smiles even when his mouth didn't and we seemed to share that secret joy of creating adventures.

“Wanna fly?”

“Yes, *sir!*”

“Come on, let’s go.” And he helped me get into the passenger side of a Piper Cub. He got in the plane and did all those pilot things, lots of dials and switches, and then we were bounce-bounce-bouncing down the dirt road. Noisy, exciting and I never questioned a single moment. It was as natural as supernatural can be.

Then the noises changed and I noticed, uh ~ the *earth* was missing and we were *way* up in the air. *Oh!* We zoomed around while he showed me the countryside from a new Perspective. Oh, my goodness!! More words could only be demeaningly trite in an attempt to tell you about this Miracle.



“OK, you ready to fly this plane?”

“Oh, yes, *Sir!*”

“Great! She'll fly anywhere you want. You just say ‘right’ or ‘left’ OK? And you tell her where to go!” I took a deep breath and wondered what tone of voice to use.

“Right”. And lo and behold, she gently flew right then straightened out again. *Whoa!*

“Left!” and sure enough, she turned left and then she straightened out again and it was so easy and gentle, *WOW!*

This marvelous, great man kept up this joyous adventure in flight ~ until I heard his feet moving the pedals, moving the flaps.

He grinned.

I chagrined, and we both laughed until we nearly nosedived. Nicest man I'd ever met. Kind, *generous*, to a strange young girl with a big yellow horse.

I had a very long trip home to consider whether to fess up or not, my earnings already burning a hole in my pocket.

So, I showed Dad the money before I told him where it came from. He wasn't speechless *and* he was dumbfounded.

“I just can't believe it! You mean *you had the nerve* to get all the way over there and *back*, he let you wash a plane, he took you flying – Ol' Man Troh? Well, I just can't believe it.”

I was the quiet little girl.

"Mr. Troh, Dad, and he isn't *old* at all!"

Dad walked away shaking his head. And Mr. Troh, my *friend*, and I had a wonderful summer together. Mr. Hank Troh was and is a great man: "Your gentleness has made me great."

And I had a new love: being up in the air in a tiny plane.

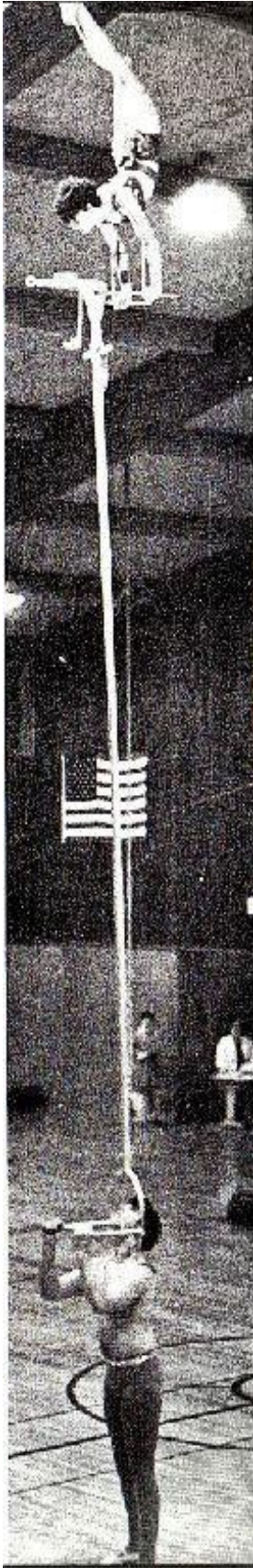
The next summer I somehow got it into my head that I wanted to work at the county courthouse. My Mama pursed her lips mockingly and said 'Suuuuuure, sounds great'. Translation: "Who do you think you are? And where *do* you get these ideas?" It's never ever been 'who do I think I am?' It's Whose I know I am.

So that summer I worked for District Attorney Roger Rook, the District Attorney for the entire county no less. He was *also* the President of the National District Attorney's Association, *wow!* He let me do all his correspondence for his NDAA position. *Wow!*

I recently attended a special event at Clackamas Community College and there's a beautiful, brand new building there: The Roger D. Rook Building. Never, ever underestimate what your DADDY can do. **YOU ARE THE HEAD AND NOT THE TAIL**

Of all the men I could've bumped into, I had bumped into an officer and a gentleman and learned from him. I learned principles, professionalism and compassion. Why on earth he ever took me on, took me into his legal practice, is beyond me. But it's not beyond my DADDY.





The next summer I quietly announced I wanted to join the circus. Of all things, Clackamas High School had a very professional circus which even toured South America. The circus held tryouts each fall. I explained to my parents (hiding behind newspapers trying not to laugh) that if I could just climb a 28-foot Spanish web, *I'd be in*.

"Oh, you dreamer! " Dad snorted, "You don't have any strength in your arms, you could never do that!" Dad felt pretty safe putting that rope up in the huge old barn – way up.

"You go right ahead and try, Sissy, you'll see, you never make it up there. You have no strength."

BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE, I WILL BE WITH YOU AND STRENGTHEN YOU. DADDY whispered.

Mama didn't object, she knew I'd never make it.

Mama was pretty terrified at my first performance and Dad, of course, was dumbfounded. "Well, Sissy, I just can't believe it."

"You certainly didn't get that from *me!*" Mama said.

She and Dad said that a lot. An innocent remark which made me feel like I came from somewhere else. Turns out, I *did*. And it must be a good place because good things were found in me and good things kept Happening. Maybe strange, but *very good*.

EVERY GOOD AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT COMES DOWN FROM ABOVE FROM THE FATHER, whispered my DADDY.

Playing the piano was my childhood claim to fame. I'd get up early before my parents to practice the piano at about 5AM. At age seven, it might have been more mischievous because the old upright player piano stood against the wall adjoining my parent's bedroom. *Gooooood* morning!

When we moved, my folks bought a new studio piano and put it between the kitchen, dining room, and family room as a room divider. Mama would turn from her cooking to conduct piano concerti with a carrot stick. There was nowhere in that A-frame house that the piano wasn't heard and I played nonstop, so they heard a lot.

Year after year. After year.

I won little student awards, set a new record by winning the Superior Award for Solo Piano Performance from the Oregon Music Teachers Association for eight consecutive years, had my name in the paper, very rewarding for my folks who had really done all the work. With my certification in Piano Pedagogy from the Sherwood Music School in hand, I joined the Oregon Music Teachers Association with six paying piano students

when I was 12. But Mama's the one who did the work, who made the investment as she drove for hours and sat for hours for my piano lessons. I repaid her by playing the piano in the bay window of Day's Music Center, which I hated. I like invisible and I love private.

I toured Europe on concert tour at 16, 14 countries and a very special performance behind the Berlin Wall, East

Berlin. Getting in required flying low at night and I missed Mr. Troh, for sure. I went to Japan on concert tour next - and I went by ship.

There was one big problem, and it was *very big*: although I could sight read Beethoven like the flies on the barn, I could by no means what-so-ever "just sit down and play!" by ear.

Christmas time: "Sissy, why don't you just sit down and play some carols for us?"

Family reunions: "Just play 'Happy Birthday', honey."

It was painfully awkward as the 'audience' froze with smiles in place and I'd stammer and die right on the spot. I couldn't do it. Mama was always pretty mad, *ok: angry*, her smile more frozen than the others. But I just could-not-do-it! I had no idea about how to play by ear or where to start, *no-thing!*

"I just wish that for once, that you'd just sit-down-and-play!" and she'd stomp out, her rage on full display. Understandable, she had made so many sacrifices for me to play the piano.

"Oh, Gret-chen!" Dad wasn't coming to my aid - he was just tired of hearing about it. It was a long-standing family embarrassment and I felt like *dreck*: "Not good enough!"

I HAVE LOVED YOU WITH AN EVERLASTING LOVE, YOU ARE PRECIOUS IN MY SIGHT. SING UNTO THE LORD A NEW SONG. "DADDY loves you, Sweetie, you're My favorite and I just love to watch you open My gifts. HERE, SWEETIE."

Years later, Dad and Mama came to California to visit my new baby and me (my husband had left, he hadn't signed up for parenthood). I had rented a furnished home which just happened to have a piano. Just as long ago years before, my folks were sleeping in the next room. I got up early, my fingers found the keys ~ but I didn't have any sheet music and it had been more than 20 *years*.

Then my fingers began to move as DADDY began to play. New music, beautiful, heavenly music. D-flat, tangerine-hued infused with rose gold.

"Sissy, who's *out* there with you?"

"No one, Mama."

"Oh, come on, *who's playing the piano?*"

Coming around the corner, out poked mama's head with her blue curler cap. I kept playing and Mama was indeed speechless as she sat down quietly to listen.

For years she had heard me play the piano, she knew ex-act-ly what and how I played, *every single note*.

"It's the Lord, Mama, it's the Holy Spirit," I said. I could feel Him. Mama could *hear* Him. Which is why she grabbed the camera and took this picture: SomeThing *weird* was going on here.

"Well, you *didn't get it from me!*" Yes, Mama, I Know.



The next year my daughter and I visited them up in Oregon. We took off for a camping trip at Camp Meriweather, a Boy Scout camp on the coast, the south side of Cape Lookout outside of Tillamook.

How exciting for Dad to show his granddaughter around his beloved boyhood camp. Camp Meriweather was his happy place. For years, Dad had been a camp counselor for 'troubled' boys. My Dad knows just about everything and he can handle just about anything and he had a heart for those boys. Dad was a helper his whole life, his gifts brought out the best in him, too. And now he was helping his granddaughter discover the Pacific Ocean and the Great Northwest.

Give Dad a *wilderness or a crisis* - and he is *in his element*!

Dad's an expert in so many things, incredible knowledge coupled with seasons and seasons of experience. Like hiking all the way out to the end of Cape Lookout to see the wreckage of an old plane. Guiding groups out to the marine gardens nestled on the south side of the Cape Lookout teeming with weird sea life and experiences. I'm *still* impressed with how much my Dad knows!

Note that not only is Dad knowledgeable, he has the stamina of an ox crossbred with a Sherman tank, he's, hmmmm, shall we say 'peppery'? 'Spirited'? If you've ever watched "The Deadliest Catch", you've seen pretty rough and tough seamen, and these men are more pampered than my Dad ever was. Dad never had sonar and there was no coast guard to rescue him. *He's just that tough.* He was stern stuff with either a twinkle in his eyes or, *murder*, with a very short fuse in between. I love my Dad.

Returning now as an adult with a small child, Cape Lookout still looked far away and Dad still said "Just put one foot in front of the other, one foot in front of the other. One, two, one, two!" I was a little girl again with my own little girl in tow. But now, Dad knew better than to yell "Oh, quit your complaining! Come on, you gotta toughen up a little!" at his granddaughter. When Chloe tired, he carried her - he loved it. We made walking sticks out of beach treasures and jump ropes out of humongous seaweed.

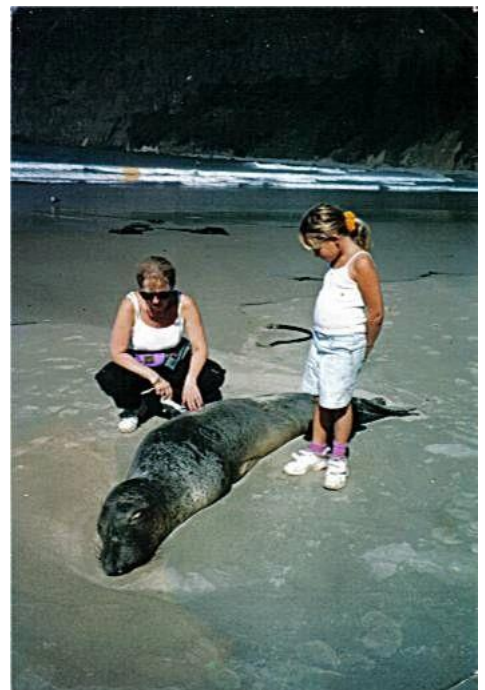
Way up ahead a pack of dogs barked and barked and danced around something in some frenzied ritual. A group of people stood watching. The dogs were yapping and would bite and tear on the thing – what in the world did they have?

THE LORD IS FAITHFUL TO ALL HIS PROMISES AND LOVING TOWARD ALL HE HAS MADE Psalm 146:15

Oh, how *awful* when I realized it was a dead seal! My daughter was beside herself watching the dogs tear at it through huge tears. The poor thing! What to do? I ran at the dogs clapping my hands and shouting "Go! Go!" *Phooey* on the dogs' owners!

I crouched next to the smelly, dead seal and put one hand on it and my Dad started screaming "Don't touch a dead animal! Sissy, it's got vermin, *it's dead*, NO-O-O-O!"

So, I prayed, thinking it might soothe my daughter, never ever thinking that what *happened* would *happen*, that *God would do what I asked*. The deflated seal first filled up with Air then began to breathe and the watching crowd gasped. The seal breathed several deep breaths, then a big sigh and he opened one eye and it blinked a few times.



The seal didn't move a bit. But he kept breathing and my dumbfounded Dad took this picture, "Sissy, *this is a miracle!* This really is a miracle! I'm gonna show this picture to people to prove it!" Then Dad's normal reasoning kicked in because, after all, he didn't believe in miracles:

"Well, it won't matter. The tide's going out and he's stranded way up here and he's not gonna survive."

Reason had returned and the vapor of faith vanished - "There's no way he'll live with the tide *going out*. Come on, it's over, let's get going."

I love my Dad.

And we continued on to the marine gardens.

When we got there we couldn't venture out onto the rocks into the oceanic treasure hunt because the tide was *coming in*, covering all the sea secrets.

We had walked all that way for nothing because my Dad had been wrong about the tides. Now *this is a miracle! Dad was wrong*. So, we trudged back looking for the torn seal carcass.

But no seal.

Only curving lines trailing in the sand where he'd made his way back home to the sea.

We had by no means made the trip for nothing.



“It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.” Daniel 4:2



*Dedicated to my Loving
Parents*

I have set the
solitary in
families. Psalm 68:6



The Beauty of Biblical Contradictions

Here's the beauty of biblical contradictions: there aren't any.

Dad moved last week.

I laid down on the sand covering Dad's coffin and grieved beyond words. It was raining hard, I was alone between mounded flowers on the new grave to his right and the hole dug for his neighbor to come on the left.

He wasn't easy to find.

His name hadn't yet been entered in the kiosk grave locator, an ATM of the deceased. There are loops and loops of roads meandering through Willamette National Cemetery up the hills and down the hills surrounded by the woods that Dad loves so much. Bulldozers huddle in several locations perpetually preparing for inevitable expansions. So, it wasn't easy to find him.

I had almost given up looking at every tiny temporary marker until I saw a huge mound of flowers on the far side of the field. Dad! I ran through the mud towards the flowers, stooped to read the marker and it wasn't Dad at all.

There, stuffed in the margin between all the flowers and the adjacent open grave was another temporary marker: Dad. He wasn't easy to find. Road construction posts got in the way, but was there really even enough room there for a coffin?

No flowers had marked his passing. He had asked that the money for flowers to be donated to The Boy Scouts of America.

I had brought a bouquet of yellow roses, Dad's favorite roses, to add to his memorial. There aren't enough flowers in the world to honor my Dad appropriately.



The yellow roses were suddenly extravagant, being the only flowers there.



For a moment I contemplated slipping down into that empty grave site next to Dad to perhaps touch his coffin, it couldn't be more than a few inches away. Grief was doing strange things to me. Then I thought about the possibility of not being able to get back out again and it made me laugh, almost.

I stretched out again and again embracing the soil and sand as though he'd come back, like Elisha bringing back the dead boy.

I poured out the flower freshener on his grave, guaranteed for extending life, and it had no effect on Dad whatsoever. A cheerful heart doth good, and even in laughter there is grief.

Only the heart knows its own sorrow. But I laughed at the deer tracks over his new grave. Did his favorite pests visit to have the last word, or to pay homage for all the fruit he had fed them over the years?

I wish I could tell you that I embraced the Word and it gave me great comfort. I could not, no.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory . . ." The Word embraced me. The Holy Comforter, Who brings all things to our remembrance, whispered the Word around me as a blanket against the cold:

- Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of one of His saints.
- Absent from the body, present with the Lord.
- He cannot return to me, but I shall go to him.
- Why are you seeking the living among the dead?
- God is not the God of the dead, but of the living
- For we have so great a cloud of witnesses . . .

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us," From Hebrews 12, verse 1

The Word assures me, and I know, that now at this moment and forever, my dear Dad is very much alive. More alive now than he ever was here on earth in his flesh. But this is where my quandary with biblical contradictions starts.

Right before Hebrews 12, above, comes the chapter Hebrews 11, the 'Heroes of Great Faith' . "By faith, Abraham obeyed," But he didn't, he had several glaring moments when he told Sara to pretend she was only his sister and not his wife and let others take her away to save his own skin ~ oooooops. And then he had it on with Sara's slave, Hagar . . .

"By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed," But, Sara laughed at the very idea of having a baby and God called her on it . . . oooooops, great faith?

David is infamous more for his failure with Bathsheba than famous for his heroic triumphs and what he did for Israel. And God said He would have given David more wives if he'd just asked, but instead, David sinned. I think that's beyond just saying oooooops.

Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and God blessed him with more wealth and wisdom than the world has even seen. Yet Solomon, mature and wise, turned away from God to the pagan idols of his wives.

Jonah made a big wrong turn, ate the tuna packed inside without opening a can before he cried out to the Lord and decided to cooperate. Is this obedience??? Pretty sure God is the first Person to say "Let's get'er done" and He smiles when He says it.

Peter was the brutish goof of the New Testament but oh! how he was transformed into a gentle, gracious counselor of faith. How'd that Happen?



And many more of the heroes that are extolled in glowing terms - they had grossly flawed lives which God records in explicit detail.

Aren't these contradictions?

NO.

These are Divine Transformations. Ordinary people changed by an extraordinary God.

And then there's this: Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6. Just believe. You can't do it yourself, God has already done it all for you and your part is *to believe*.

All unbelief is sin. Say this again: All unbelief is sin.

God is wilder than sci fi and He is real.

All these are examples of grace, of being saved by grace and not by ourselves or what we do. It's the free gift of God: you don't work to get it and you can't work to add to it.

Grace and everlasting life are God's heart for you. "Your sins and lawless acts I will remember no more". God sees us as pure, blameless and holy through the finished work of Jesus Christ if we just believe Him. God sees the best in us through the blood of Jesus sprinkled on the mercy seat. God sees us as we will be, what He created us to be, and not as we are in this moment, because He sees what He will complete in us because Jesus has paid our debts. All of them.

Why on earth would anyone say 'No'?

Pride.

You want to be good enough in yourself?

"How stupid can ya get?" Dad would say.

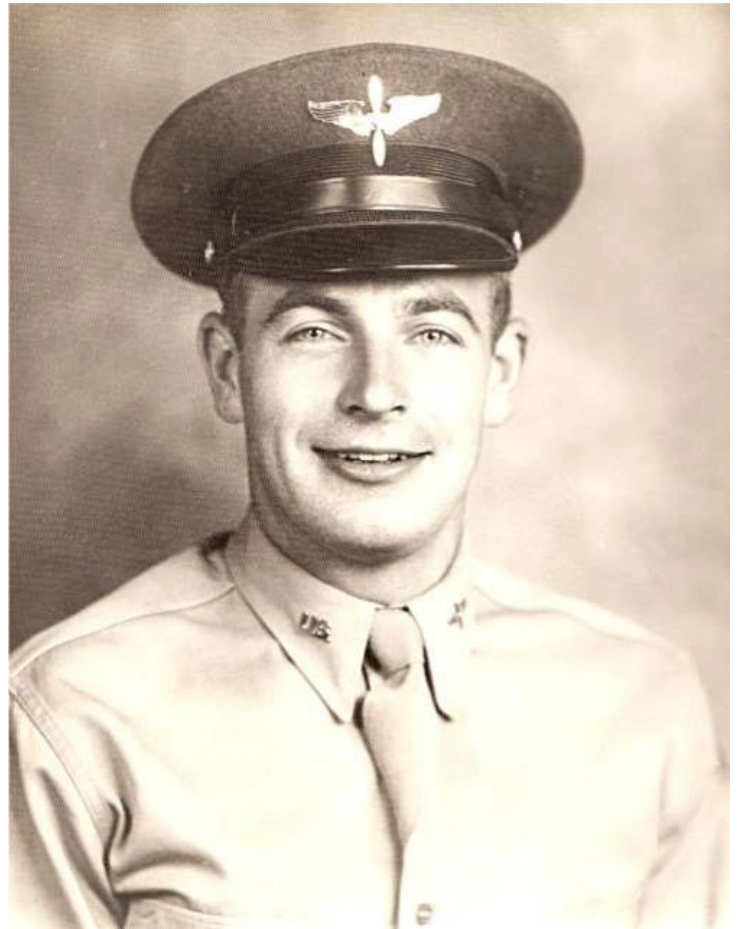
You have no idea where your strength comes from in the first place in order to do all the right that you've done. Or think you've done. And you have no idea that no matter how much you think you've accomplished, none of it can wash away your guilt, change your sin nature, or buy you In.

And my favorite contradiction at the moment is that in my grief I am thankful and filled with confident hope about seeing my Dad again. My Dad was by no means a perfect man yet Dad is finally all that God created him to be without any of the sin nature that fights all of us on earth. For "No flesh shall inherit the kingdom of God", especially mine. And yours.

Hey, kids, Dad's Home!

'Whosoever believes
in Me has everlasting
LIFE.'

John 3:16



Mama went Home to be with her Beloved Husband in August. Buried together but neither are there. She is a remarkable woman, a remarkable woman! and she's so happy to be Home, with Dad and DADDY.

"Why seek ye the dead among the living?"

Too soon and too broken to tell you more about my remarkable, beloved Mama. "Reaching forward to those things which are ahead", especially in grief, especially when you have no idea what you're reaching for ahead. There's a Purpose for you and your Plan isn't done. It's a plan to do good things for you especially when you can't.

Only Daddy knows what those things are:

EveryDayMiracles



Mama's Homegoing was more than a blip on my radar and I wasn't getting back on course. I laid down in the afternoon hoping to sleep through to the next morning, hoping to wake up my happy little self again.

And speaking of miracles, please know that whenever you get to the end of yourself, God has already provided your rescue: my phone beeped with the message "Are you ready to go flying?" (Lancair Evolution)

Here's the photo: Jesus in disguise.



We are so loved. John 3:16-17