**Things My Dad Showed Me**

Unity Church June 15, 2025

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 Proverbs 22:6 Luke 18:15-17

Today is Father’s day, in light of that, I’d like to spend a little time talking about mine. As I get older I’ve realized that this man, with whom I had a rather uncomfortable relationship for most of my life, is who I recognize most in my own strengths and weaknesses. I couldn’t deny the lineage if I wanted to.

A lot of us don’t see what we have been blessed with by another’s life, til we are faced with a body lying in the casket. Looking back over 91 years, clarifies how the various facets of a parent show themselves in us, their progeny, both good and bad. It’s funny, but we can say things when a person is dead that we didn’t say during their life. That is a shame, but it is common to all our lives.

I am not here to beatify him, he was not a saint. Dad was a lot of things, but he was very human, with all the foibles and shortcomings that the rest of us are blessed with. Like all of us, he was another sinner, saved by the blood of Christ and sanctified through the Holy Spirit. He had his own combination of strengths and weakness, some more obvious than others.

Standing in the receiving line put his life into perspective. Person after person, some I knew, some I didn’t, recounted how Bob had touched their life, in an hour of need: as their wife was dying of cancer, after they had made a fateful act in their career, as they struggled with depression or divorce. I didn’t realize how many seeds he had strewn along life’s path, seeds of love, of prayer, of reaching out, of helping, of doing, of simply being there. But I’m getting ahead of myself.

Dad was born in 1922, to Roy and Elsie Moose. Roy’s father, Milo, had broken away from the Amish church at the age of 21. Elsie’s mother was Amish, her father was Mennonite. Elsie and Roy spoke Dutch, the Amish dialect of German, between themselves until he died in 1971. Granddad was a Station Master for the P&LE in Volant, where dad was born. He was bumped from that position and transferred to Mercer for a period, where he was bumped again. He took up farming full time, at various farms in Mercer and Lawrence Counties.

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This was at the beginning of the depression. I recall my grandmother saying, that back then, we didn’t realize we were poor, because everyone was. Dad was a skinny blond haired kid, relatively shy, according to the report cards I’ve seen, a very diligent student and a spelling bee champion.

He and his brother Dick showed themselves early as good dairymen, and that’s what they did all their lives. It was their eye for good cows and their connection to reputable Jersey cattlemen, that introduced Dad to his future wife, Mary.

She would be his soul mate, mother of his 4 children and business partner for 64 years. He absolutely adored her, worshipped is not too strong of a word. They were as different as night and day, he was quiet and reserved, she was strong willed and forceful. He was soft spoken, she was outspoken, but they moved as one. They had their disagreements, but most of them were resolved away from us kids. We grew up seeing physical demonstrations of their love, a kiss after breakfast, standing over the heat register in the kitchen in an embrace or simply sitting together with a hand on the other’s leg.

I was the baby. I’m sure that my siblings would recount different memories than mine. We operated a working farm, layer hens, hogs and dairy cattle along with the field work to feed them. Some of my earliest memories are riding a tricycle in the barn while the milking was done, or playing in the cellar while mom graded eggs. Each of us grew up with various chores and learned at a relatively early age that the only constant was work and lots of it.

Church was the center of our social and faith life, it was as much of a constant as farm work. Mom and Dad were Sunday School teachers, Dad was an Elder, both of them were active in Bible study and prayer group. Sunday mornings were a blur: doing chores, milking, cleaning gutters, breakfast, baths or showers and scrambling into the car. I will never forget Mom cleaning Dad’s fingernails as he drove to church with one hand on the steering wheel.

When he was 45 years old, our entire life took a sharp turn. December 1967, Dad was picking corn. He stopped to clean off the snapping rolls of the corn picker. Although he knew better, he reached into the machine with it still running, it caught his glove and quickly took off three fingers on his right hand. It was only by the grace of God that it didn’t take more.

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This began 6 months of quiet pain, healing and for all us a re-ordering of life. It also began the re-ordering of Mom and Dad’s spiritual life and ultimately us kid’s. Mom singlehanded took over the running of the farm. If there was any doubt about her constitution, it showed itself then. We laughed later that the barn had never been as clean as it was during that time. She was like a drill sergeant and we were smart enough not to cross her.

Over this period while Dad’s fingers, or what was left of them, healed, we saw a side of him that one never thinks about with their father. He was in constant pain, virtually helpless and for the first time in our lives, he sat in the house. I need to explain here, sitting in the house was truly that, we didn’t have TV til I went in college. Whether it was the reality that there are only so many dairy magazines one can read, a close personal friendship with our pastor or the Holy Spirit, a slow, quiet change started to occur in Dad. He spent hours studying scripture, and hours in prayer.

It was like an acorn had found root, and slowly started to grow. As I said earlier, Dad was a quiet man, he was not someone who said what he was going to do, he simply did it. He was as strong willed as Mom, and if he set his mind to do something, he did it. He wasn’t one to teach, he was one who showed. Hence the name of this sermon.

Dad was also a very black and white person, not known for deep intellectual discussion, things were what they were. As he got deeper into the scriptures and into his faith, he had a childlike approach to his belief and lived his life accordingly. I’ve often said that Dad didn’t have faith, he did faith, it was who he was. As instinctively as he was a dairy farmer, he was a believer. He didn’t have a relationship with God, he lived his relationship with God.

A year after Dad lost his fingers, he along with three other elders were asked to give a short talk on tithing for Stewardship Sunday. I don’t know whether they drew straws, but Dad went last. One talked about how she and her forefathers had faithfully tithed ten percent even in lean times. One looked at the various tithing commandments in both the Old and New Testament. The other one spoke about how we need to take care of the church, in spite of all the other things we spend money on.

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Dad was not comfortable as a public speaker. He would later tell my brother and I, that he’d rather take a beating than approach the pulpit every Sunday. But he stood up and in his soft spoken, quiet way, opened his big King James Bible to the first 2 verses of Psalm 34,**“**I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”

He talked about the idea that giving, tithing, was not a financial transaction with God. He laid out the idea that we are not only to give ourselves, our lives to Christ, but that we are to give Him our praise and worship, that this was as important as what we put in the offering plate. As he got to the end of his talk, he held up his right hand, with a thumb, little finger and three stubs, and as his voice broke, he said, “Yes, even then, I have to say, ‘Praise the Lord!”

Dad and Mom, in fact all of us had plenty of opportunities to say, “Praise the Lord,” through tears, pain and struggle. I spent the better part of a year in and out of Cleveland Clinic, my brother had cancer, my sister’s fiancee and 6 members of his family were killed in a car accident. On the farm, we went through a 3 year period in the early 70’s where it seemed that all we did was bury dead heifer calves.

Yet every night, as I walked past their bedroom, invariably Dad would be on his knees in prayer. Every morning before we went out to milk at 5:30, Dad had been up for an hour or so, devouring the Word. He said once that he would give up breakfast rather than miss his time alone with God. There were plenty of times when he gave up not only breakfast, but lunch and dinner, to do just that.

But it was more than a simple search for blessings, it was more than an attitude that if I do this or that, God was somehow going to make everything perfect. It was a childlike belief that drove him toward action, not loud flashy action, but simple day to day action. Blooming where he was planted, reaching out to friends and acquaintances in need, asking forgiveness from a brother he felt he had offended, visiting a distant cousin who spends his life in Mercer Regional Prison, reaching out to a nephew who was going through a divorce and had been abandoned by his own father. Demonstrating love and forgiveness to me, his prodigal son.

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Dad left a legacy that I doubt any of us kids can live up to. He didn’t do it to make himself look good in the eyes of the world, he lived his faith. If Christ had called us to salvation through the Holy Spirit, and we had surrendered our life to His Lordship, it made perfect sense that we would be doing our Savior’s work as the Holy Spirit pointed out needs, hurt and opportunities to help. His attitude was that if the Holy Spirit shows it to me, I’ll do it. Not should I do it, or can I do it, simply, I’ll do it.

As I said earlier, he was a fairly black and white person, he didn’t spend time navel gazing or wrestling with deep philosophical issues. If the Bible said it, He believed it. If what the Bible said conflicted with something he thought or assumed, he would work on his thoughts and assumptions till they agreed with the Bible.

Unlike my Dad, I am one who questions everything, probably to a fault. If I have a patron Saint, it’s either Doubting Thomas or Jude, the patron saint of lost causes. I have been told that I think too much, and that might be true, but one thing that this life, which was transformed November of 2013, proved at least to me, is that there is truth in this book. Paul says the cross to the worldly is foolishness.

Although some folks probably thought his life foolish, he embraced Malachi 3:10, “test me on this,” says the Lord, “and see if I don’t pour out such blessing that you can’t contain it,” and in testing, in doing, he has shown us further truth. He was one of those who took the teachings and ideas of Jesus Christ at face value and made them real, right here. I met and talked to plenty of folks that night in the receiving line, who could testify that that stubby fingered hand, was one of the many hands of Christ.

In closing, Dad is not, was not the only person who lived his life this way, there are thousands that came before, and hopefully thousands that will come after. He was a forgiven sinner, just like you and me. What his life should be, is an example, a prototype, a confirmation that we serve a faithful, loving God and our lives do make a difference, both in today’s world and tomorrow’s, when we start living our lives for Him.

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Deuteronomy 11:18-21 RSV

“You shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

Proverbs 22:6 RSV

Train up a child in the way he should go,
    and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Luke 18:15-17 RSV

Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”