

DONALD G. HUNT...A Tribute from His Sons

The eulogies you have just heard are fitting tributes to our father given by those who worked closest with him. And we deeply appreciate each of you who have shared. Additionally, we appreciate each of you who have taken the time to put your thoughts on the card you were given as you entered. Every thought or story shared will help dignify dad's life and bring comfort to all of us in his family.

We wanted to close this segment of dad's memorial service with our own tribute...given from the viewpoint of those who lived with him 24/7 for more than 37 consecutive years...and look at his life from a principle he often taught us – the real measure of a man isn't how much he accomplishes professionally, but how well he lives in his home with his family, and how well he raises and trains his children.

We were given a rare gift – a father and mother who were truly partners in life. They never argued...and we mean never. They loved being married to each other. They respected each other deeply. They spoke with kindness each time they addressed each other. They fully supported decisions the other had made. They honored each other in all they did. Neither dominated the other. And that made our home a happy, safe and peaceful place.

Dad set the standard for behavior in our home, and it was very high. Throughout his entire lifetime, none of us ever heard him raise his voice for any reason. Although he was sometimes very disappointed in our behavior, he never allowed his disappointment to give birth to anger. In fact, we never saw him act out in anger toward anyone at any time for any reason.

Dad always chose his words carefully, making sure each response was Christian in every way. He looked for the positive in every person, including his children, and did everything he could to bring that out in us. He believed in us, even when we weren't behaving as we should. In fact, he always communicated an element of surprise when we had done something wrong. He would say something like, "I'm surprised that you did this...I know you could do better, and I always thought you would...that's why I'm so surprised that you made this choice today. You're a better boy than that, and I think you'll do the right thing next time...won't you?"

As good as that was, it's never where the conversation ended. Dad would continue, "I'm so glad you're going to do better next time, but we still have to take care of what you just did...so, here's what I think we should do. What you did deserves a spanking, so let's go and get that taken care of." You see, although he was probably the kindest person any of us ever knew, he was also firm and a consistent disciplinarian. Wrongdoing was never overlooked at our house...and we are grateful. The character training we received during childhood was second to none, and much of what God is doing in our lives today is the direct result of the training dad gave us as children.

Dad was the master of teachable moments. He seemed to sense when they were coming and know just what to do to capture them. For instance, when Don and Ron were very adventuresome preschoolers, they lived on a very busy street. Dad was very concerned that, in spite of their efforts to know where we were at all times, we might somehow venture off when he and mom weren't looking and run out into the street. So one day he took his two boys by the hand and took us down to the street to see a squirrel that had been run over. There were no

blood and guts that would scare us, but it was obvious to us the squirrel wasn't in very good shape. Dad asked only a couple of questions: "Does this squirrel look happy? Do you think he'll ever be able to run and play again? Will he ever be able to climb a tree again? Why can't he do that?" That teachable moment saved hours of begging and nagging us not to run out into the street. It was a lesson we never forgot.

Dad trusted us...even when we were teenagers. Rich remembers a time when he was about 14 and he approached dad to ask for a dollar...just to see if he would give it to him. Without asking a question, dad got out his wallet, took the dollar out of its appropriate paper clip (the complete "paper clip budget system" dad carried in his wallet would be a subject of its own), anyway, he took the dollar from the correct paper clip and gave it to Rich without asking any questions. Thinking he had outsmarted dad, Rich said, "Dad, you didn't even ask me why I wanted it." Dad's response wasn't exactly what Rich expected, "Rich, I trust you would have asked if you didn't need it."

We doubt God ever created a person with a more even temperament than dad had. Regardless of what happened in his professional day, Dad was always the same. If he ever had a bad day at the office, we never knew it. We never had to try to find him in a good mood so he would say yes to something we wanted. Dad tried to say yes whenever he could. And he would say no only when he knew what we wanted wasn't possible or wouldn't be good for us. His kind, gentle, under-control behavior never changed. It was a non-negotiable way of life he had chosen with God, and nothing could ever shake him to the point that it would change.

Dad was a thinker/analyzer type who wasn't loud, but was never short on opinions. He usually wasn't the first to offer, but when he did, we could be sure that dad had plenty of logic and thought behind his opinion. And that leads us to another interesting observation: Dad held very specific convictions and theological positions that many would label as legalistic. But unlike most who are given this label, dad was loving and a peacemaker to the core. Even toward those who were unkind in their treatment and description of him, dad was always kind, forgiving and rarely ever said anything that would cast them in a negative light. Every day of his life he truly loved even his enemies.

Dad's work ethic is unquestioned. For virtually all of his life, his day began somewhere around 5:00 a.m. and ended somewhere around 10:00 p.m. He and mom traveled well in excess of a million miles by car as they shared God's word with people in virtually every state of our great country. Dad always had a project he would work on in the car. Our cars were simple – nothing power...no radio...air conditioning...no automatic...no cruise control. Just a vehicle that would carry his family from one place to another. Consequently, dad not only had time to work on projects, but we, as a family, had countless hours to play games, memorize scripture, discuss ideas and share life together. Dad made sure that along the way we saw national parks and national monuments regularly. We were given a comprehensive education that included a perspective that was nationwide and even beyond.

Dad lived out his faith perhaps more fully than anyone we have ever known. Every minute of every day dad was "on duty" not only as a Christian, but also as a minister. Even on vacation, dad took along projects. He was plenty willing to play, sightsee, hike or visit around the campfire, but if there was ever a free moment, dad would get out his briefcase and begin writing or studying. He

lived every moment fully aware of God's presence and purpose for his life. Even those of us who knew him best saw no duplicity anywhere in his life. No matter where you saw him or how deeply you dug into his life, he was the same all the way to the core.

We'd like to conclude our tribute with a couple of stories that illustrate a number of these characteristics.

Dad had a heart that cared much deeper than most. When Ron was a little five year old, anxious for his first day in school, Dad and mom loaded him into the car and headed off for the one-room country school house just two miles from their home. Excitedly arriving with his lunchbox in hand, Ron had been looking forward to this day since the day his older brother Don had entered kindergarten one year earlier. This was a very big day! But trouble was in the offing, and no one knew. For some unknown reason, the school had decided to revise its kindergarten program, changing it from a ½ day program that went all year, to an all day program that went only the last half of the year. So with a very heavy heart, Ron went back to the car with big tears running down his cheeks. That's when Dad was at his very finest. He sat Ron down beside him on the couch and gave him a very special surprise. "Ron," he said, "you and dad are buddies, and we have a very special project we're going to work on between now and when you go to school. We're going to build a chimney on our new house. Each day after I get home from teaching, we're going to eat together, then we're going to lay down and take a nap together, and then when you wake up, we're going to work on the chimney together...just you and me...because we are buddies!" Dad had a wonderful way of making sure our disappointments were softened by his gentle, kind and caring ways.

Perhaps another story illustrates just how deeply this caring spirit went. At the age of 24 Don suffered an aneurism that left him hospitalized for 77 days. Dad was so upset internally that he began to run a fever himself. He and mom couldn't make the journey to Louisville quick enough. They just had to be at his bedside. Don can still remember dad standing over his bed, putting his hand on Don's and saying, "Don, I wish I could trade places with you." His love for all three of us boys was complete. We always knew there was no sacrifice he wouldn't make, no duty too great, no effort too demanding for him. He would gladly have given his life for us...and, in fact, by the way he lived, he did give his life for us.

So, what could possibly motivate Dad to live like this? In order to find the answer, you would have to get up early in the morning. Some of our fondest memories involve mornings when we would wake up before 6:00. Without exception, we would find dad either reading his Bible or bent over the couch in prayer. As little boys, we loved to kneel down beneath him with his big arms around us, and there with the warmth of his body covering us, he would continue to pray. It was this unwavering connection with God that transformed our father to become so much like our Heavenly Father.

All three of us have memories of reaching out our chubby little hands and taking hold of dad's index finger as he led us across the street or to some other destination. We remember being lifted by his hands to his strong shoulders where we would rest our heads in sleep after a ride home from church at the end of the day. And we remember being caressed by those same hands when we sensed danger, were hurt or were lonely. Seeing those same hands folded in death today reminds us that they have served their earthly purpose. They have comforted their last hurting

person. They have hugged their last loved one. They have written their last chapter in a book. They have turned the last page in His Bible. They have been folded their last time in prayer. As you can see, they have completed their earthly mission.

We'd like to direct your attention to the two scriptures in the center of your program. The Proverbs passage carries a message that we three boys would like everyone to know – our father is our pride and joy, and we are honored to have been raised by him and to have had the privilege of calling him father! Dad's folded hands remind us that "he has fought a good fight, he has finished his course, and he has kept the faith." And we are happy to announce that he has already received that crown of righteousness promised him. One of heaven's most dedicated servants is now at home...enjoying the company of the Lord he loved so much!