

Dad's legacy lives on after 10 years

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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By Lori Pankonin

Johnson Publications, Inc.

Sunday will mark 10 years since my father took his last breath on this earth and joined the angels. Oh how vividly I recall that day. It was bitter sweet as death of someone near and dear tugs at the heart strings in a big way.

But envisioning him with restored strength in heaven made it a time of celebration. Heaven must have become a brighter place that day.

The next few days truly were invigorating as stories of how he made a difference surfaced from varied generations. He definitely reached out to let people know he cared and those acts were cherished by those he touched.

How remarkable it had to be for him to once again greet his mother after close to 40 years and his father after 25 years. How I anticipate that greeting someday.

Although Dad bravely beat cancer for more than two decades, it finally took its toll, robbing him of his ability to walk. Despite the weakness and continual hurdles that got in the way, he maintained a positive attitude and never quit working towards goals.

It's that positive attitude that I grew up with, not even realizing that it wasn't the norm in all households. "Splendid!" he would say upon delighting in our accomplishments.

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I recall joining him in the darkroom which started out in our basement at home. Only the red safelight glowed and although he was working, he was there to listen. During a challenging time in college, I found notes from Dad in my mailbox every day.

He worked many, many hours but I never felt like he didn't have time for me. In our younger years, my sister, two brothers and I would race to the end of the block, waiting for the noon whistle which signaled he'd soon be headed our way for lunch. We'd have to run to keep up with him on that return back to the house.

Skip. Skip. Skip to my Lou. Yes, sometimes we skipped, be it when we were headed home for lunch or on our way to Sunday school and it was a joyous time. He again came home for supper, too. I do recall having to be quiet while he watched the news but he'd fit in a few rounds of London Bridges or Ring Around the Rosie before heading back to the office.

Of course Mom played a big role in that quality time, always having meals prepared. I appreciate even more now what it took to maintain a house with four kids.

In later years, we all joined Dad at the newspaper office, including Mom who went to work full time when my younger brother started school. We gained a good work ethic in those early years of assembling, folding, stapling, eventually moving to some sales, production and bookkeeping.

I couldn't help but feel Dad's proud presence recently at the Colorado Press Convention where my sister reigned as president of the state association, also being Colorado's representative on the national level. Among others attending were my brother, president of the Nebraska Press Association, my husband and me, national representatives for Nebraska, and of course mom.

Never do we attend a convention on the state or national level that someone doesn't comment on what great people my parents are and what they accomplished. It makes me proud.

Dad also left his mark on the hearts of his six grandchildren, making memories at all the parks in town and letting them know they're special.

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Just recently, when we faced some communication challenges in a local group, more than one person acknowledged, "We need a Loral to step in here. Your dad would have fixed this before it was ever a problem." His legacy definitely lives on!

I often times find myself thinking, "What would Dad do?" With all the amazing strides and advancement in technology, I'm still waiting for e-mail to heaven.

I love you, Dad! Until we meet again.

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