

Remembering Chuck

Mark Hattersley's Eulogy

As the days go on and we grow older, we experience and explore different facets of life. Immediate concerns can cause us to forget formative lessons but, as we celebrate the life of my beloved father Chuck Hattersley today, we have an opportunity to reflect

On things we've learned
Things we've put aside
Maybe even things almost forgotten.

I remember when...

We would drive from Chicago to Dowagiac Michigan where the family would enjoy a week or two on the shores of Magician Lake. We'd be joined by mom and dad's friends and their children, so there were kids galore, shuffleboard and swimming, fishing and boating and general, moderately controlled mayhem. Mom and dad usually did pretty well in the shuffleboard tournament. I won a lot of fishing contests, but I think I was the only who fished except mom. She won at least once, too... remember that giant bullhead you caught?

Chicago was great, so we kids all cried when the decision to move to California was made. Dad had accepted a west-coast position with Sears; he told us we'd enjoy a better quality of life here. Look out the window folks... can anyone argue with that? I look at my wonderful wife Barby, who I met here in Palos Verdes, and can't imagine a life without her.

On a somewhat unrelated note, Dad was the only member of our family who was not bitten by Brownie, the family dog. Brownie had little respect for humanity; she even bit grandma. Despite this, my father felt our dog deserved a measure of respect. Brownie was deemed to be of the rare "Golden Schmoltzer" breed. This is spelled M U T T.

I am proud to say, Barby and I have maintained dad's breed naming tradition. Over the years, we have had a "Mottled Schpotzley," both "Brindled" and "Bearded Schnotweilers," and our own "Golden Schmoltzer" (only the second known to have existed.) Thankfully, our dogs have not followed Brownie's lead. They have bitten no one. Also, they do not steal the toothpaste and hide the tube under a pillow in someone's bed.

A few years ago we were singing "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" in the back room of my home in San Diego; dad suddenly broke into tears, catching us all by surprise. Robin, you ran to his side immediately and embraced him.

Under his sometimes rather proper exterior, my father was a sensitive, kind and sentimental man. Dad's tears were good tears, like the ones we shed today as we remember him.

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As I sat at his bedside chatting with Jane, his wonderful hospice nurse, I was bragging about Chuck's four awesome grandchildren, Michelle, Marshall, Jessica and Josh. Although dad had not been responsive for several hours, he suddenly opened his eyes, looked directly at me and gave me the A-ok sign.

He loved his grandchildren very much. He was so proud of you.

Dad passed the next day. That A-ok signal was the last communication we had from him. Knowing him my entire life, A-ok. is just what I would have expected from my father. I have met many fine men and women in my 58 years, but am hard pressed to recall a person who lived a life as consistent with the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ as did Chuck.

You all know these:

- The Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"

and

- Matthew 7:5 "First remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye."

Dad taught me

- To always consider and appreciate the perspective of others.
- Others' fears and insecurities are often expressed as anger or aloofness. Give everyone a chance to show their best side.
- Remember to reflect on and learn from experiences.
- Mutual respect is the foundation of meaningful relationships.

These lessons have served me well across my 58 years. My father planted seeds of compassion; I only hope that I have been able to successfully impart them to my own children.

Chuck had struggled with ankle issues for years, but you'd never know it judging from his active regimen of walks and hikes. He regularly trekked up and down the steep hills of Palos Verdes. And though most of his hikes were day hikes, we backpacked together when he was 75 years old.

That reminds me kids... we need to schedule a trip!

After he unceremoniously concluded his last badminton game - at about age 87 - with a slow-motion tumble that had our hearts in our throats, dad regained his feet and offered a favorite remark: "I guess I'm not quite as agile as I used to be." Agile or not, he did remarkably well over the years, including taking honors (with Ruth on his arm, of course) on the dance floor at his grandson's wedding less than four years ago. We love you Cami!

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Chuck's wife of 59 years, our mother Ruth, was always there for him and for Robin, Dave and me; her caring ways and unwavering devotion to love and family were never more clearly demonstrated than the way she nourished and cherished her beloved husband as his health declined.

Mom, you brought dad a little bit of goodness every day, and I know it was not always easy. That you and dad cared deeply for each other is undeniable. The fact that you were still in love, almost 60 years after saying, "I do" back in Chicago, remains an inspiration to everyone in our family. Thank you mom. I love you.

When dad's time among us came to an end in February, my first feelings were of relief. He was finally free from pain and could cast aside his earthly body, one that had served him well over the years but which had held him back more and more as his personal mileage approached "end of warranty" status.

With his peaceful passage at home, his loving wife by his side, dad returned to the days when he was a promising young track star at Pasadena Jr. College, clearing hurdles with ease.

* * *

Today, we each have our own memories of Chuck Hattersley

friend
advisor
parishioner
co-worker
musician
entertainer
punner emeritus
author
coach
father
inspiration

I enjoyed a relationship with my father that encompassed each of these attributes and am thankful to be his son.

With Chuck's passing, we will refocus our lives. We have started to do so, and that is good. And though we will never forget dad, we know he wants us to live each day to the fullest, because, after all, Life *is* just a Bowl of Cherries!

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I'll close with a few words I penned about dad after a hike with mom, Barby and our then-young children.

Fathers' Footsteps

On a crystal Sierra day, we climb, through sage and scattered pines, our trail crossing an ancient moraine flanked by snow-crowned iron-red and steel mountains. August ice gleams, defiant, from frigid strongholds, silently striving for September but, like your silver hair, thinning with the passage of time.

Our throats feel as dry as the alpine air until we discover cold tears of glacial surrender coursing through a crease in the rocky terrain: a tumbling stream punctuated by dappled jewel ponds. We drink deeply then, accompanied by the music of the ripples and my children's laughter, meander further up the beckoning valley.

Growing feet scamper ahead, rushing, with an occasional noisy stumble, like the restless waters beside us. Their young keepers pause, breathing deeply, until exuberance overcomes inertia and they gallop onward again.

We follow and talk of memories and dreams as our eyes take in all that surrounds us. Words, drifting on the breeze, are subtly transformed, occasionally unheard or misconstrued, reminding me of years we spent traveling other paths, more difficult paths you and I viewed from different perspectives.

With vision distorted by youth's arrogance, I often rejected your gentle wisdom. Yet, as I ran, imagining I was free, I could hear your steady, assured footsteps beside me. And though I wouldn't admit it, I understood even then: your presence eased my way, as I found my way.

Emerging into a clearing, we rest. Our backs find soft comfort on spongy earth while the world turns and the wind blows. The sun drifts toward its daily rendezvous with the horizon, its light dancing across a mid-summer meadow dressed in tousled green and gold grasses.

We lie in silence as ice relents to summer's fire, as the water flows and eternity's monument, the great Sierra Nevada, erodes into dust, soon to be washed into the embrace of patient emerald lakes where it will settle in stillness, underpin a meadow's birth, nourish fresh grasses and, someday, reveal new footsteps taken stride for stride, together, by fathers and sons.