

The blessing of godly fathers

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By Pam Havir

BIG SANDY, Texas—As Father's Day approaches, I would like to pay tribute to my 84-year-old dad (Virgil Page of Lamesa, Texas) and to my 80-year-old father-in-law (Gerald Gill of Kunkletown, Pa.).

When we hear the words "the greatest generation," I think of my dad and father-in-law. These men typify the sound work ethic, honesty, wisdom and service to others that are in sharp contrast to the world we live in today.

Quiet strength

A lot of people say nice things about Daddy. (In the part of West Texas where I grew up, grown men and women generally refer to their parents as Daddy and Mother.)

If people want to learn about him, they had better listen to what people say about him because you will never hear him brag about himself.

Growing up, I felt safe and secure because of the strength and character of Daddy. He and Mother provided a stable environment for my sister and me growing up on the farm.

As a West Texas farmer, he is not afraid of hard work. He has worked long hours in the field.

Like most farmers, Daddy has to be part weatherman and part mechanic. When a person deals with farm equipment, he should be good at keeping the equipment running.

Farming is difficult in most situations, but he has the experience of dealing with the sandstorms and other weather conditions on the West Texas plains.

Man of kindness

As a tall man (6 feet 3), Daddy has shown the physical strength to tackle the physical challenges of farming. What's even more important is that he is also a man of great inner strength.

He has demonstrated great determination and reflected self-control in his life. Because of his inner strength, he set the pace for our family to have a peaceful, stable home life.

A few years ago my parents, sister and I took a car trip to Arizona because Daddy wanted to put a gravestone on the grave of one of his brothers. When we got to Kingman, Ariz., we met with his niece, Ella, whom we had not seen for several years.

She relayed the story to us about an incident that happened when she spent a summer with us when she, my sister and I were kids.

Ella said she had foolishly wrecked my sister's bicycle, bending the front fender very badly. She feared that she would be in big trouble, but she said my daddy calmly looked at the bike and quietly said, "I can fix that," and went on his way.

We didn't even remember the incident because that was the typical way Daddy handled these things.

Generous helper

While Daddy is a tall man to deal with the rigors of life, his heart is even bigger.

He has always been kind to the people who worked for him on the farm. His workers through the years have been loyal to him, because of his personal interest in them.

Daddy has spent his whole life being kind to strangers who had a need. I can't tell you the number of times I have seen Daddy help a stranded motorist on the road across from his and Mother's house.

We would hear him say (in the West Texas style of speaking): "If that ol' boy doesn't get his car running in a few minutes, I'll go over there and help him."

Then he would either help him fix the car or drive him 10 miles into town to get a part.

As the saying goes: If I had a dollar for every time I saw him do that, I would be rich.

I could tell story after story about Daddy's generosity to others, but I don't think he would like for me to do that.

Another blessing

And, if I wasn't blessed enough with my own father, I enjoyed the past 35 years of having a great relationship with my father-in-law.

Pop (as we call him) has a history of serving his family. Before I met the family, my mother-in-law's first husband (my husband's dad) died. When Pop married Camilla, he not only had a new wife but he also had four growing children (between the ages of 14 and 5).

I have heard my husband express appreciation that his stepfather assumed the responsibility of caring for the family.

In 1991 Pop retired as a manager in the meat department of a retail store, and in 1994 he began volunteering time to teach classes at the Beltzville State Park near Lehighton, Pa.

During the school year, children from school districts in the area would come to the park for education about aspects of the environment. During the summer, children would sign up to take classes for a week.

Pop taught children between the ages of 9 and 13. The subjects included fossil identification, wetlands, tree identification, astronomy, tracking animals and counting bats at night. More than teaching those subjects, I believe Pop taught many valuable life lessons. I'm sure he made a difference in many lives.

In 1996 Pop received an award for his volunteer work. He was selected from all the volunteers in the southeast corridor (23 state parks) of the Department of Conservation of the State of Pennsylvania.

Virtues of the fathers

The Bible tells us that the sins of the fathers will be visited on their children and grandchildren (Exodus 20:5). The opposite is also true. The virtues of the fathers can enrich the lives of their family and help lead them to their spiritual inheritance.

So a big "Happy Father's Day" to Daddy, Pop and all the other wonderful fathers who are appreciated by their families.