

A Wonderful Life **Eulogy for John H. Schultz**

Dad was born the youngest son of seven children in Teutopolis. He would have celebrated his 80th birthday in just 17 days. When Dad arrived in this world, his father had already achieved success in the seed business. Even though Dad was raised in an environment of prosperity, he was spoiled in only one way, by the loving care of his older sisters – Esther Hardiek and Alberta Schultz, who are here tonight.

Dad's union with Mom began more than 53 years ago. As Mother will tell you the true character of Dad was revealed only 18 months into the new marriage. My brother Jack had just arrived, and Jane was to be delivered soon. It was then that Mom was diagnosed with TB and confined to bed for 18 months. Our newly wed Dad cheerfully moved an easy chair into the bedroom, and together he and Mom laid the foundation for what would become their dynamic partnership.

Dad and Mom taught us about the world, its opportunities and obligations. In particular, Dad was intent that we realize the advantages we had in life, and the responsibilities that such benefits bring.

Entrepreneur

My father was an entrepreneur. His enthusiasm for creating value from opportunity was contagious. During his life, he started nearly a dozen companies, the majority of which still thrive today. Even in his last days, when he knew he would not see the full fruit of his investments, he enthusiastically supported new ventures and business projects.

Dad's spirit of entrepreneurship was carried to the home, and particularly to the family dinner table. For Dad, dinner conversations were never about people or things. In fact, my father never talked about new cars he liked, or things he wanted; instead he fostered conversations about ideas and change.

Lake Sara

For all his success in the business field, Dad always said the best investment he ever made was Lake Sara. The summer cottage that Mom and Dad built there provided the opportunity for us to work and play together as a family. Mom and Dad didn't put a phone or TV at the lake, as they wanted to teach us the importance of reading and they felt that living without TV for three months would offer us a little deprivation, if you can call that deprivation.

Holidays

To give you an idea of the environment that Mom and Dad created for us, I wanted to share a typical holiday season in our home. Each Thanksgiving, my parents hosted graduate students from area universities. These were students from overseas studying here in the U.S. Because the university dorms were closed over the Thanksgiving weekend, these students had nowhere to spend the holiday. And so Mom and Dad would host them at our house. The spirit of thanksgiving was shared with a variety of faiths and cultures from, Afghanistan, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, and India.

A most memorable weekend ensued when a mix-up resulted in students from both Pakistan and India sharing our table, while their countries were at war. We learned first hand that conflicts are of nations and not of people.

Once the Thanksgiving season ended, we started in on the Christmas holiday. Mom felt that her talented children were the next generation of von Trapp family singers, and together, Mom and Dad spotted an opportunity for yet another lesson. For the several weeks leading up to Christmas, we would practice Christmas carols each night. And on Christmas morning, rather than playing with our toys, Mom and Dad would take us out to the local nursing homes to sing to the residents.

As you picture this, keep in mind that my brothers Jack and Jim are actually tone deaf. But they make up for it by singing really loud. As we sang in those nursing homes, miracles occurred. People, who had been deaf, were seen tearing their hearing aids from their ears. Invalids could be seen crawling, walking, and even running out of the room – It was simply magical. But the lesson that Dad and Mom imparted was clear; the season of Christmas was not about receiving but giving.

The tradition of the Holidays continues today, as the Schultz Christmas Table always includes guests, who are really just part of our extended family.

Travel

Our Father loved to travel. Mom and Dad together visited five of seven continents, traveling through North and South America, Asia, Africa and Europe. Dad was a curious traveler. He loved to engage the locals in conversations about themselves and their community. When Dad was traveling overseas, he knew two languages – English and Louder English.

In Germany, through an impromptu dinner with strangers, Dad and Mom found a family that wanted to send their daughter to the states. The arrival of that girl into our lives began a succession of more than a dozen foreign students, who were introduced to America through Mom and Dad, and who in turn expanded our world. Dad gave each of us children the opportunity to travel, work and study abroad.

And as world travelers, Dad and Mom loved the fact that they had an international family with adopted grandsons from both Brazil and Russia.

Giving

Dad's style was not to preach to his children. Instead he chose to teach us by example and experience.

When the Mississippi flooded its banks in the 1970's, help was needed. Instead of simply writing a check, Dad loaded up the family van with food supplies and other goods, as well as several kids, so that we could witness the need as we delivered the items first hand.

He once took several of my older siblings to a small two-room house in the country. There lived a single mother who was in need of assistance, which Dad provided. His visit was to insure that the individual had a plan for success. He was willing to help people who were willing to help themselves, and in the process he wanted to teach us a little about giving.

Northwest of Phoenix, AZ is a scruffy little town of Surprise, AZ. It's a community of Mexican immigrants. If you visit there, you'll find street after street of abandoned cars, growing weeds and unpainted homes. But, amidst all this decay you'll find one entire street in which the houses are all painted, the weeds are gone, and in their place are flowers and plantings. This was a project of Dads.

15 years ago, my parents started spending their winters in Arizona. My mother spent part of her time teaching English to the Mexican immigrants of the area. After several months, she convinced Dad to try his hand at teaching English as well.

Dad was assigned a student, named Moses Griego. For Moses, the education that Dad would offer was much more than English. When Moses first met Dad, he and his wife lived in a tiny one-bedroom apartment with two sons. In short order, Dad determined that Moses rent could actually cover the cost of purchasing a dilapidated house in community of Surprise.

With Dad financing the deal, Moses purchased the house. But Dad wasn't your typical banker. He recommended improvements to the house, that he and Moses would make together. Working for a landscaping company, Moses was able to fill his yard with cast-off plantings and flowers. And per Dad's request, the cars were kept parked in the driveway. Together they created an oasis in this small town.

About two months later, a neighbor decided to cut down his weeds. A few months after that, another neighbor decided to paint his house, and others quickly followed suit. Pretty soon the street didn't contain any trash. And finally the one drug house in the neighborhood was vacated, as they didn't like the direction the neighborhood was moving. They never knew that John Schultz was the reason for their departure.

Moses and Dad's friendships flourished for more than 10 years. And as a tribute to Dad, Moses had each of his sons baptized in the Catholic Church. I'm confident in stating that Moses' youngest son is the only child in his school whose godfather was a big tall white guy from Illinois.

CROSS

When Dad decided that he wanted to build a 20 story cross in Effingham, people were surprised. For those who knew Dad realized that, like Surprise, AZ, the Cross was simply Dad's effort to impact the world around him, one person at a time. The Cross was a reflection of my father's deep faith. He firmly believed that God had been the guiding direction for his wonderful life, and he thought others deserved the same opportunity.

Optimism

When we were children, Mom and Dad wanted to instill a sense of optimism in us. And so each night, as they tucked us in, they would ask, "What's the best thing that happened to you today."

Dad took the opportunity to offer that same lesson once again recently. It was one year ago tonight that Dad lost his sight. About two weeks before his vision went, Dad was having some minor problems with his sight. He said "Oh, if it doesn't get much worse than this, it will be fine". Two weeks, after making this statement, he lost total vision in one eye and retained only partial vision in the other. The loss took away from him the many things that he enjoyed, like reading, working on the Internet, playing cards and golfing. His reaction? "Oh, if it doesn't get much worse than this it's not too bad..." He was the eternal optimist.

Grandchildren

His grandchildren defined dad's final years. He treated each grandchild as if they were his only one. In the last few years, he did projects at the lake and around the house, and he would always ask one of the grandchildren to help him. In truth, it was he who was helping them as he passed onto yet another generation his character and wisdom.

Our Dad dreamed of the possibilities involving people, businesses, and ideas. His love and devotion to God, Mom, his children and grandchildren is the gift he leaves behind. It is the rich legacy of one very special man.