

Biscuits and Trees... One of Life's Greatest Lessons

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I wish you could have known my grandfather. He married my grandmother when he was 28 and she was 29. They were married for almost 61 years and had eleven children and 29 grandchildren. I was in the middle age group of the grandchildren and loved to spend time and stay with Mom and Pap.

Pap was the type of person who just loved kids and people in general.

I still remember Pap yelling from the bottom of the stairs "tear out of there, you going to sleep all day?" I'd look at the little wind up alarm clock and realize it wasn't 6:00 yet, but the smell of Mom biscuits and wondering what Pap had planned for the day got me up and moving.

Mom believed every day should start with a big breakfast and homemade biscuits as big as a softball. Mom had a gas stove that she used a kitchen match to light. She would turn on the oven and then look for the match. You would feel the house move and the sound of woof, and you knew Mom was cooking. She had a magical little pot that no matter how many folks showed up for breakfast or dinner, that pot cooked enough oatmeal or potatoes to feed everyone.

Pap was the kind of person who let me know early in life he loved me. He never towered over me when we talked. He would bend down or set so he was at my level and talk with me. He taught so much about life. He taught me the pleasure of work and the importance to doing a good job. He taught me to work with my hands and mind. He encouraged me to learn a new word everyday and how to enjoy reading books.

I was ten years old that summer morning, you know the type, with heavy dew and fog lifting as the sun warms the earth, Pap announced our plans for the day. He said "we'll only work a half a day today," Pap's half a day of work was 12-hours.

Pap believed in planting trees. He explained he didn't plant trees for himself but for me and his grandkids. We were working on some little trees; Pap was sharpening some wood to use as stakes and asked me to go get some old towels from Mom. When I came back with towels and as we tore the towels into strips Pap began to teach me one of life's greatest lessons.

Pap said "someday you will be a father and have a family just like Mom and I have." "Children are a lot like these trees" he explained. "Take this tree, see how it's starting to curve" he said as he wrapped the strips of towels around the trunk and attached them to the wooden stakes. This little tree is just like kids, they need to be treated tenderly and braced against the winds and storms of life. He pointed to an older tree that had a trunk about 3 or 4 inches thick that was crooked and bent. Pap said that crooked tree was his fault. When that tree was young and tender he was busy and didn't pay as close attention to it as he should. He said "I could try to straighten that tree now, but I would probably break it trying to do that now." Pap told me to be there for my kids from the start, to encourage them, to wrap my arms around them and let them clearly know how much I loved them, and they would grow toward the light.

"Imagine telling a ten year old someday you will be a father. The first time I held each of our three children the memory of that summer morning and Pap's words were revisited, "someday you will be a father."

As our children grew I realized Pap had taught me one of life's greatest lessons that summer morning.