



February 14, 2013

To My Family,

I am writing my Legacy Letter to you today, Feb 14, 2013 in my 84th year. It is Valentine's Day. It would seem fitting to write to you today to let you know how important you are in my life and how much I love you. As I have grown older, and new generations have joined our family, the 17 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren, I continue to cherish what we have even more than ever. You all have given me such joy in my life.

It is my hope that this letter will be a record of some of my values, life experiences and lessons; I can pass on to you, your children and grandchildren. I hope God and perhaps a few of my insights can guide you during your lives, and help make your path as blessed as mine.

Values, Spiritual Beliefs and Life Lessons: The glue that holds our family together is the love of God. There is an unshakable belief that prayer is primary in our lives. This belief has been passed down from my grandparents, my parents, and from me to you.

Our family has expressed our religious beliefs in many different ways. God gave me a talent in dance, and I used that talent to show people how dance could be a form of worship. With the help of the Dioceses, I was one of the first in the state of Minnesota to pioneer liturgical dance. I worked within the church and used my physical education and dance background to choreograph for different groups.

It took a little finesse to make dancing happen in one particular group. The Brethren, German Anabaptist community, similar to the Amish, moved into ___ MN - our small neighborhood. The elders did not permit their members to dance. I was teaching Physical Education at the local grade school, and I wanted to teach dance. Instead of calling it dance, I called it "rhythmic movement to music." The Brethren students were allowed to participate. I believe there is always a way to make good things happen if you step back from the situation, and be a little creative.



My mother taught me that one religion is not better than another religion. She said, what is important, is that love for God is expressed through acts of charity. She believed that you should always have something in your heart to give somebody else who's not as fortunate as you.

This strong belief was expressed in many different ways, but one story my parents told me sticks out in my mind. My parents lived on a farm with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables. After church services, our family would put out a table outside with all this wonderful food for everyone to fill their bellies, especially for those who did not have enough food at home. After the meal, people would play baseball or some sort of sport outside at the ___ homestead, or do gymnastics in the grove.

Physical activity was highly valued in our family. Education is another important value that dates back to my grandparents. My maternal Grandmother ___ loved books and reading. She had the ability to read quickly and retain what she read. My grandparents on both sides, my Grandpa ___ and Grandma ___ and my Grandma ___ spoke German. I learned a little German as a young girl, but no one knew exactly how much. They would speak in German about grown-up subjects, thinking I couldn't understand. I never told them that I could understand what they were saying. Learning another language can be very handy in life.

We lived in a remote area, off a dirt road in the wilderness. There were no public schools where I lived. You had to go into city to get an education. In order to get a Catholic high school education you had to have a relative or a friend to stay with for room and board; otherwise, you couldn't afford to go because there were so few Catholic schools in our area. I stayed with a family who lived near the Catholic school – My mother found this family through her connections with the organist at the ___ Church. My parents arranged for me to be educated, and to go to college, which was unusual for women at that time. My mother was also a teacher. I learned a lot from her. She had a special gift to present information clearly. She encouraged me to teach and helped me with my presentations and lesson plans.

Before I got married, I obtained a certificate to teach, and taught in a rural one-room school house prior to getting married. After I had my nine children, I went back to college at Southwest Minnesota State College to complete my bachelors degree and I began teaching again. Three of my children were attending Southwest when I was there. We would bump into each other on campus. ___and I even took the same health class together. I remember that ___received a better grade by just one point. There are not too many mother-daughter teams in college.

I always appreciated what my parents did for me. I never took education for granted, and I admired the opportunity that a teacher had to positively influence his or her students.

Let me tell you a little about my father. He was a very sentimental man and loved his family dearly. He cried easily. He felt a little embarrassed when he cried because in those days, many believed that “men shouldn’t cry.” I however, was proud of him because it takes strength to cry, not weakness. He was in touch with his feelings decades before society became accepting that both males and females have a right to cry and that tears are healthy.

You come from a strong family of tenacious and resilient people who farmed their homesteads, and endured harsh winters.



Hard work was second nature to our family. My parental grandparents taught me the importance of finishing a job until it is truly complete. They would say to me, “If you start something, you stick with it until you finish it. You don’t just skip around.”



Now-a-days, there are so many distractions. I hope despite this reality, you can heed your ancestor's wisdom about doing a good job, not a fast job. They also taught me to never take anything for granted, and to be frugal with what you do have.

Both my parents had green thumbs and cooked what they grew. They can and freeze almost everything they harvested to make sure there was enough food to last the winter and early spring. We didn't have central heating and would go outside to get coal for the pot belly stove to heat the farm. We were careful about how much coal we would use to make sure it too lasted the winter. When we would open up a drawer in my mother's kitchen there would be rolls and rolls of string, pieces of paper and anything else she could save and reuse because we had so little back then. You had to be a bit of a pack rat to survive in those days. Now they call it being green.

Let me tell you a little bit more about my parents. My parents had a very close and respectful relationship. They loved each other dearly. My mother was a trusted advisor to my father. He felt she was very good at making decisions and problem solving. I learned from them about how to have a good marriage, and how important it is to appreciate each other's talents, rather than be jealous.

I have come across jealous people in my life. Perhaps you have too. I learned that when somebody is acting jealous, you should just understand with your heart that maybe they're not feeling so good about themselves and to not take it personally.

At different points in our lives we all have to overcome challenges. I learned the best way to overcome big challenges is to break the challenge down into small steps so it is more manageable, and to stay organized. We had a large family, but the family atmosphere was not chaotic. As a family, we all watched each other's backs. We helped each other, did things together and taught one another. I hope you can continue that type of love and cooperation in your families.

My Special Memories: I had many precious memories in my life. I would like to share some of these memories with you. I hope



some of the family traditions I describe will continue from generation to generation. My mother was a very good cook. She made wonderful pies, and took particular pride in her pie crusts. She taught me how to make pies and breads and in turn, I taught my daughters how to bake beginning at age five. I attached a few of the family recipes you can share with your offspring. My mother also played the piano and taught me some little pieces she remembered.

Music was a very important element of our family – and your father’s family. ___ dad, ___ also played piano. ___ played in a band called the ___ Brother’s band. They played music and sang songs at local dances. In addition to the ___ Brother’s band, there was the ___ Orchestra, comprised of twelve brother’s and sisters. They recorded records way back in the early 1900s. Unfortunately, the records are no longer functional.

My sweetest memories are associated with your father. I met him at a dance in ___, Minnesota. Maury was trying to score with my beautiful cousin. She was the designated snow queen of our community. ___ didn’t pay any attention to me that night, but a few weeks later, my ___ and ___ were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. I didn’t want to go because I was tired from teaching school all week, but my mother insisted I go because ___ did so many things for so many people.

___ was at the anniversary party and the rest, as they say, is history. Our courtship included barn dances in ___. We loved to dance together, especially square dancing and the Lindy. One of the key things that made me interested in Maury is that he was able to dance the Lindy. Not many guys at the time could. I love to dance the Lindy! I even taught people in the nursing home how to dance the Lindy. If you ever dance the Lindy, you can be sure I will be nearby.



I was interested in ____ for other reasons than dancing. He had a wonderful personality, was funny, and easygoing. He was a hard worker and had a sensitive soul. Yet, he was not very romantic. One night we were on a double date. The other couple were kissing at the front door for what seemed like eternity. ____ and I were sitting there in the car waiting for them to finish kissing when he said, “We might as well get this thing over with.” And that’s how he asked me to marry him.

I know it sounds corny, but the happiest day of my life **was** my wedding day. My wedding bouquet was made up of White Orchids and Stephanotis. I enjoyed the new connections to ____’s family with all their homegrown music, singing and dancing. ____ and I picked armfuls of peonies to place in baskets, which we used to decorate the church for our wedding. When I smell peonies, I always think of our wedding.





People attending a wedding often pull a prank like filling up your car with junk and rice, and tying cans to the back of the car.

____ had an old 1939 Chevy and I had a newer 1946 Chevy. Since my car was nicer, ____ and I decided to hide my car in the grove, three miles away at my mother and father's farm so people couldn't mess it up. People couldn't find our car. It was a reverse prank and some good planning to boot. ____ and I were married for 52 years and, I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Last thoughts and blessings: I am so grateful for my life and for the times we shared together individually and as a family. You make me so proud. Your loving relationships with one another, how you do things together and how you really appreciate each other. I hope you all keep your Christian faith in the center of your marriage and the center of your family. You know what you're doing when you keep God in your life. Please remember that I was always there when you needed me, and I will always protect you. May God bless all of you and bless those who follow with love and peace.

P.S. Three of my favorite recipes are below. Enjoy!

RECIPES

Forgotten Kisses

2 egg whites
1 ½ tsp (scant) cream of tarter
¾ c sugar
Few grains salt
½ tsp vanilla
½ c choc chips
Food coloring

Preheat oven to 375 for at least 15 min
Beat egg until fluffy.
Add salt & cream of tarter, beating stiff.
Add sugar slowly beating all the time.
Beat until mixture is glossy-add vanilla and choc. chips
Divide into 3 parts
Tint each with food coloring
Drop by spoonful onto greased cookie sheets
Turn oven off and then place in oven for at least 5 hours. Could leave over night.

Sweet Rolls

2 cups warm water
1-2 pkg yeast
7 c. sifted flour
1/2 c. sugar
1 Tbsp salt
1/2 cup dry milk
1/2 c. shortening
2 unbeatn eggs

STEP ONE

Put warm water in small bowl.
Sprinkle over 1-2 pkg yeast
set aside - DO NOT STIR

STEP TWO

Put flour in large bowl.
Stir in sugar, salt, and dry milk.
Add shortening.

STEP THREE

Make well in center of flour mixture.
Add yeast & unbeatn eggs.
Beat stirring thoroughly from the side of the bowl
Work until soft dough.
Shape into rolls and let rise.
Bake at 375 degrees until lightly brown.



