

Leo E. Johns, Jr.

It is my honor and privilege to offer the eulogy for my father. In doing so, I hope to speak not only for my family, but also for the innumerable people whose lives he touched.

We, of course, loved him as a husband, a father and grandfather, a mentor, and friend. To say that he provided well for us grossly understates the fact that in any pursuit—athletics, academics, Scouting, music, recreation—he went out of his way to see that we had what we needed and then some. Though I have personally spoken to only a few of them, those with whom he shared his knowledge and expertise in medicine surely benefited greatly.

Thousands of Scouts and Scouters, both in Troops 187 and 59 and throughout the Mohawk District had a richer Scouting experience because of Dad's service and dedication to the Boy Scouts.

Dad was an inventive man with interests that were far-reaching. The way he pursued his interests defined him as a person. For instance, as his love for camping increased, he realized the need for a vehicle that would be suitable for his purposes. After much

searching and researching, he came to the conclusion that rather than buying a vehicle outfitted by someone else, he would create his own. To that end, he purchased a very plain Chevy van and, through countless hours of hard work, transformed it into his van, a kitchen/bathroom/dining room and bedroom on wheels, complete with enough gadgets and cubbyholes to meet his and his family's needs. Like Dad, it was not ostentatious, but nevertheless complex and practical and ready to serve.

There are a couple other stories I'll share that give insight to the man Dad was and have, along with many others, given our family fond memories. In one, Dad, Mom, Chris and Ted were in Branson during the summer coming home from a session at Kanakuk Kamp. Once the decision was made to stop at one of the numerous water slides, Dad rode several times, oblivious to any societal pressure to change out of his street clothes and in spite of the comment of one of the young riders, "Look, there goes an old man!"

Another time, for Bud's 10th birthday, Dad and Mom drove the entire party to the Blue River in Minor Park. Then Dad, in a Tom Sawyer-esque manner, convinced us all that using chunks of raw liver tied to garden sticks with kite string to catch crawdads out of the river, was

fun. Dad's reward for his efforts was not just the satisfaction of introducing a new sport, if you will, to a bunch of ten year olds, but also a nice feast for himself that night of boiled crawdads. Fun for the boys-a great meal for Dad-everybody wins.

Finally, when Dad read that a bird called a purple martin could eat its weight in mosquitos every day, it initiated a set of events that further characterizes who Dad was. He thought a martin house would be a nice gift for his dad and found one advertised , complete with telescoping pole. The address for the manufacturer was in Moore, OK , a suburb of Oklahoma City which happened to be conveniently on the way to Texas where his parents lived. On our next car trip to see Dad's parents, he decided we would stop and purchase a martin house. After an exhaustive search of the warehouse district, Dad realized that the address he had was not for a retail store. He finally did locate the manufacturer and completed what may very well have been the only non-mail order transaction in that company's history. (One might liken this to driving to the Ford plant in Claycomo in order to buy a pick-up truck in that, while they make a lot of them there, they normally don't sell that many at the plant.) He could have bought two birdhouses that day, one for his dad and one

for himself, but that would have violated his creative spirit, so after the trip, he designed and built his own. Although there were never many purple martins in either house, I've seen from that experience a lot of Dad—providing the best for others in spite of any obstacles that might have gotten in the way and doing for yourself in a way that is both creative and gratifying.

It may seem to some here that I'm ignoring the fact that for the last 20 years, Dad was resigned to life without the use of his legs. He certainly didn't enjoy every day of that part of his life and at times manifested his anger and frustration very clearly. I'm confident he would not want our remembrance of him to be overshadowed by his injury—he simply enjoyed life too much before his accident for that to be the case. Dad, I'm sure, would have much preferred to enjoy his life with his grandchildren from a vantage point other than his wheelchair, but had to accept that he couldn't and move on with life. Although he missed out on the direct experience of their activities, he loved to listen to them tell him about what they were doing. Simple events, like joining Granddad at the kitchen table for some saltine crackers and a Sunny D will remain as precious memories for them and us. In his final days in the hospital, their gentle touches brought

joy to his eyes and a smile to his face. In helping our kids sort through the emotions these past 4 weeks, my wife has read to them the following passage from Ecclesiastes, Chapter 3. Upon hearing this, Scott who is seven asked if there are any wheelchairs in heaven.

Patsy told him “No” and reminded him that Granddad would be able to dance in heaven. He responded by saying, “I think Granddad will be a funny dancer.” That’s my dad—a fun-loving, pragmatic, giver, provider, and educator who loved his family, the Jayhawks, and Colorado, who enjoyed life’s simplest offerings with great gusto, and who is now a funny dancer.

As we were growing up, Dad continually used one phrase to encourage and exhort us—“Hang in there.” That phrase, as simple as it sounded at times and as frustrating as it was to hear at others, epitomized his outlook that life’s challenges were to be faced directly and completely. Even in his last days, Dad hung in there. And now, it is done. May he rest in peace with his Heavenly Father.