

“If you can't find the money to spend on education, you shouldn't spend it on anything.”

-Obed Lindgren-

Obed Franklin Lindgren, 1910 - 2009

My father, affectionately called “Obie” by family and friends, died last Friday at the age of 98. He will be missed by the blended family that he cared for and loved as well as by relatives and friends.

Just three weeks after going into the hospital for diagnosis of the cause of back pain, he passed away in peace at home with his wife and three sons at his bedside. Bone cancer had spread “everywhere,” as the attending physician said. He must have experienced generalized pain but never complained until the back problem limited his use of a walker and sitting in a favorite chair. A month ago my brothers and I all thought Dad would match his mother's lifespan of 103 years.

When you lose a loved one there is a time for tears that come with an outpouring of memories. I've had my tear time and there will be more. But I hope what follows is a celebration; an uplifting recognition of my father's 98 years. Years that spanned the most productive scientific discoveries in the history of mankind. Every decade of my father's life embraced, not just an array of discoveries, but an acceleration of discoveries in physics, chemistry, biology and geology. Application of these discoveries transformed medicine, transportation, engineering, communications and commerce. Technology and engineering enabled my father to witness profound transformations; from newly installed electricity on his Iowa farm home to the 24 hour glitter of his grandson's home city of Las Vegas, from a hand crank telephone to a cell phone, from an adventurous Model T Ford maxed out a 30 miles per hour over unpaved Iowa roads to a routine, easy and safe 70 miles per hour on an Interstate freeway.

At Dad's birth day, biologists had recently rediscovered the work of Gregor Mendel and had yet to link genetics with the powerful evidence for evolution that Charles Darwin contributed just 50 years before. Albert Einstein published the general theory of relativity when my father was five years old and just 10 years earlier had provided solid evidence for the existence of atoms, the photoelectric effect and special relativity with its famous $E=mc^2$. Penicillin was discovered when Dad was 17 and a precious sample was hand carried to Minnesota when he was thirty six. The DNA double helix was revealed when he was just over forty. Television, jet aircraft, radar, lasers, and, of course, digital technology, nuclear energy and space travel all emerged in the span of his lifetime.

His life witnessed monumental change.

Yet he managed to retain a focus on the fundamentals; those basic elements that make meaning; honesty, generosity, commitment to family, lifelong learning, inventive solutions to life's daily challenges. An entrepreneur and an inventor, there was not a greedy or pretentious cell in his body. Every day for him was a blend of the spaces between global problems and personal perspectives. A 1933 graduate of the University of Nebraska, national and global events were studied throughout his life with no less intensity than the daily weather. With a perspective honed by the experience of the great depression, Dad worked within the security of the US Postal Service while placing a premium on securing and saving the essentials. He made educational opportunity for his sons a high priority. “Simplify, simplify” was his mantra in retirement. He was rich, not in conspicuous possessions or great accumulation of wealth, but he was rich because he simply had enough and cherished his blended family.

He was rich because he had Wilma as a wonderful wife and companion for 35 years. She helped him emerge whole from depression following the devastating experience of losing our mother, Verona, in

1970. Wilma made possible all the joy of many senior years. Together with Wilma, he enjoyed visits from children and experienced the joy of watching, encouraging and supporting grandchildren as they grew to adults. For all of us he never wavered in recognizing the transforming power of education for individual growth and community development. With failing eyesight, and a fragile body in more pain than he revealed, he even managed to take great-grandchildren for a ride on his electric scooter. Wilma made Dad a whole person and together they were richly blessed, and richly blessed us, with years of happiness.

Dad's life was a comfortable conversation with the best of humanity. He didn't rush around the world posturing with answers, but always respected those who had learned and those who raised questions. He valued relationships built on respect and trust. He sought quietly to make sense of what surrounded him and to use common sense in any response. His education through a lifetime of learning amplified his lifelong support for public education as a path for individual growth and community development.

He shared his love and his experience.

LIGHTER SIDE:

As with most jokes the original author is unknown. Whoever you are; "Thanks!" Names, when added, are intended to tease the innocent. This one was passed along to me in about 1955, by my father who attributed the source to his father, Frank Lindgren.

--Old Fashioned Psychology

A 5 year old visited a department store and climbed on a stationary hobby horse. After a long while, impatient parents tried to get the child off but were greeted with screaming and yelling. The commotion drew attention from the store manager who offered bribes of candy and toys but had less success than the parents. The store psychologist was called to the scene and with careful reason and motivational charm managed to only escalate the tantrum.

Then the store custodian went over and whispered in the child's ear.

The screaming stopped and the child got down and ran to his parents.

Asked what he said to the child, the custodian replied; "I told him that if he didn't stop screaming and get down right now, I would break every bone in his body."