

BUT YOU DIDN'T

A Tribute to My Earthly Father, Harold C. McKinney, Jr.

by Rick McKinney

In all my "groaning up" I shall probably treasure most your restraint and protection of my dignity despite my many mishaps and shortcomings.

My first memory at two years old was of tearing your shirt pocket in a faint of cover from my grandparents. You could have spanked me good, but you didn't.

In my childhood I was always something of a shrimp compared to other boys, but you never made fun of me, never bullied me, and never allowed others to do so.

There were times when we broke windows while playing backyard baseball. You could have read us the riot act and taken away our precious ball field, but you didn't.

Through most of my schooling my twin brother had an exemplary academic career. I was rather average. You could have easily compared our achievements, and berated my lack of intelligence or diligence, but you didn't.

One time Ron, myself, and our friend Steve Barrix started a camp fire in the woods during the dry season. We had smoke smell all over our shoes and clothes. We expected you to lay our soles to the fire, but you didn't.

Do you remember how I always seemed to fall in the brook the first day we arrived in Bay View each summer? I could have expected a good lashing with a wet towel or a wet tongue, but you didn't.

There was also that time in Bay View when Bill and I waited in the woods till dark to see if the bears would come out. We saw your car circle through the woods several times. When we came home we deserved the biggest grounding of our young lives, but you didn't, you gave us bear hugs instead.

In Bay View we would get out the cards and family board games. You would play even though you were not into that sort of thing, and you were good natured when a certain "smarty pants" would beat your pants off. You could have called it quits, and called me to task, but you didn't.

Do you remember when you dropped the watermelon or when you locked your keys in the car trunk? I was forever reminding you of it and shared these family secrets with your friend Lyle Lising. I goaded your dignity, and I could have expected it back in turn, but you didn't.

Every summer we would put on a show for your birthday. Sometimes it wasn't that spectacular, and I was usually the one with the least talent. You could have cracked jokes about my cracked voice, but you didn't...you always told me how much you enjoyed each performance.

I was not a normal teenager. I didn't date, didn't party, didn't dance, didn't do sports, I guess I was a "nerd." I could have expected some nagging, some criticism for not being "normal", but you didn't.

When I became Catholic and you were losing another child to "Romanism" I could have expected a former protestant preacher to state some objections or show some intolerance, but you didn't.

Whenever I made major decisions whether it be church, or career, or marriage, you may have had strong objections as to their advisability, but you let me make those decisions, and you supported me however they turned out.

Dad, how did you know and who taught you to be a father who didn't tear down, didn't nag, didn't insist on his way, didn't punish in anger, and didn't destroy the fragile dignity of a child. Instead, no matter the sins, no matter the mistakes, no matter the troubles, you were there to stand and be my support.

Thank you Dad! I'm proud to be your son. I would consider it the best of achievements to be able to guard the dignity of my children as well as you did yours.

Have a joyful birthday.

Love,

Your son, Rick

On Your Birthday, July 19, 1991