

Good afternoon. I want to thank everyone for being here to help celebrate my dad's life and honor his memory. Dad played many roles during his life, but of course the most important of these to me was his role as my father. I won't tell you that he was perfect. He was a human being, just like all of us. In my younger years, he had a pretty short fuse. He had high standards, which were sometimes difficult if not impossible to live up to. He could be sparing in his compliments and not always very effusive in his praise. But he was a great father.

One of Dad's best qualities was that he loved our mother. During the years I was growing up, I recall hearing very few cross words between them. They must have had disagreements – all married couples do – but they handled them mostly privately. As a result, I never had a moment's insecurity about the stability of my family. The possibility that my parents might separate or divorce never crossed my mind. It was simply unthinkable. As you might imagine, this was tremendously reassuring. My parents' successful marriage – and I am sure my mother deserves as much credit as my father – served as model for me and for my sister and brother in our own marriages. I do not think it is an accident that we have all been married to our current spouses for more than 35 years.

Dad was something of a workaholic. One might say that he was the embodiment of the Protestant work ethic. But he always made time for his family. Although we might go to BGSU football or basketball games or other sporting events, Saturdays, especially during the spring, summer, and fall, were mostly reserved for chores, and mainly for gardening and yardwork, which my Dad thoroughly enjoyed. Sundays, on the other hand, were truly a day of rest. Every Sunday morning, without fail, our family would come to church right here at St. Mark's. And every Sunday afternoon was family time. We might go fishing at Grand Rapids or Otsego. We might go for a hike at Oak Openings. We might take an excursion to the Toledo Art Museum. Sunday afternoons were as sacred to my Dad as Sunday mornings. The only difference was that the mornings were spent with God, while the afternoons were spent with his family.

Dad was also available on those many evenings when he did not have a church council meeting or choir practice. When I was very young, we might watch the Ed Sullivan Show together. Dad might take us to a Falcons' basketball game, for which my parents had season tickets. On hot, humid summer evenings we would go out to the back yard, and he would hit fly balls to my brother and me until it was too dark for us to see. Sometimes, one of us would hit and he would catch. In a good way, Dad was just a big kid, and I think he might have enjoyed those evenings as much as we did. In any event, the first time I saw the movie, *Field of Dreams*, I cried because the hot, muggy Iowa evenings portrayed in the film, with the crickets chirping and the air so thick you could see it, transported me back to my youth, catching fly balls hit to me by my Dad. Of all my memories of my father, those are some of my most precious.

Because Dad was a university professor, his summer schedule was flexible. Every winter or spring, my siblings and I would sit down with bunch of *National Geographic* magazines and try to figure out where our family should go in the coming summer. Mom and Dad usually humored us, and agreed to go where we wanted. One year it was the Smokey Mountains, one the upper Peninsula of Michigan, another the Ozarks, another Maine and Nova Scotia. Twice while I was growing up we took five-week cross-country trips in our station wagon, pulling our Skamper pop-up trailer. By the time I was 18, I think I had been to almost every one of the lower 48 states. The memories of those family vacations are also among my most cherished memories of my father.

Dad had many fine qualities, and we have little time here this afternoon. I learned so much from his example, which that I have tried hard to apply to my own marriage and my own relationships with my children. Perhaps because he was a man of God, and certainly because he grew up, as my sister has remarked, the son of a mother with an extraordinarily strong sense of right and wrong, Dad was deeply principled. He had a tremendously strong moral compass, and he always

tried to do what was right. Mostly this meant living after the example of Christ and treating others as he would like to have been treated, with compassion, empathy, and love. Some of you will recall that a few years ago it became fashionable to wear a necklace or bracelet with the letters WWJD: What Would Jesus Do? In the course of my life, I have often asked myself that question, but I think I equally often asked myself WWDD: What Would Dad Do? The answer rarely, if ever, led me astray.

Once I became an adult, got married, and had my own family, my relationship with my Dad changed. Because I went into what one might almost call the family business – education – and became a college professor like my Dad, we had a great deal of fun comparing notes on our experiences with students. Once I was able to convince Dad that I wanted him to read articles and books I had written for his own enjoyment, not for the purpose of critiquing them, I enjoyed sharing my work with him. It typically elicited what I think was genuine praise, and I know that he was pleased that I followed his footsteps into higher education and was proud of my successful academic career.

I was privileged to have my Dad as a part of my life for more than 63 years. I loved him, and he loved me. I miss him, and it's hard knowing that I won't see him again this side of heaven. But I do believe that's where he is. And I believe that's where I'm going, too. So, I take comfort in the promise that we'll be together again someday. In the meantime, I'll continue to do my best to live up to the standards that he set, and I'll cherish the memories of the wonderful times that we shared. Thank you.