

The Memoirs of

Bernard Elden Knapp

Sketches of Bernie
by
Kathy & Joseph Knapp

The Greatest Man I Know

My father isn't the kind of person you would see posing for G. Q. or any magazine for that matter. My dad is an older gentleman. He is sixty-eight years to be exact. He has thinning silver hair, no bald spots yet and serene hazel eyes. His clothes are very unique. He always wears brown polyester pants (except to church) accompanied by a long sleeve button down shirt. He has a very wide selection of shirts. Some of his shirts have cool patterns while others have butterfly collars, but most of his shirts are solid colored or plaid. None of his clothes bother me. I appreciate his individuality and it's a good reminder not to judge a book by its cover.

To know what a book is like you have to open it up and look (deep) inside to see what it really contains. That is so true with people, especially my dad. He has many excellent qualities that can't be observed by just glancing at him. He grew up in a family that taught him high values. No one has ever needed to question what my dad believes or what his values are. He has the honest and integrity of Abe Lincoln. I have never heard my dad tell a white lie or even a half truth. He is not afraid to answer a question directly and truthfully. It is like he is always under oath on a witness stand. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

My dad also grew up in the Great Depression which showed him how to survive in hard times. This fact helps people understand why my dad is so frugal. In the early chapters of his life, my dad learned how to work hard by helping his father in the sawmill. He learned the value of hard work to not take money for granted. He knows how to be happy whether he has money or not, it just isn't important to him after growing up without it.

My dad's childhood and upbringing has affected his whole life. He was used to not having very many luxuries back then, and he doesn't have very many now. I don't remember him ever buying anything for himself. He puts things aside to buy stuff for us. He'll come home every once in a while and be excited about something he wants, but never ends up buying it. He will realize we need a new vacuum, someone's car needs a new clutch, or my brother will want new basketball shoes. Whatever the dilemma, he will selflessly take care of it and forget all about what he wants.

Many people could learn a great deal from the selflessness chapter of my father's life. Not only does he sacrifice so his children can have what they need and want, but he also is very serviceable toward other people. He cares a lot about people and always looks for ways to help them out instead of taking advantage of their misfortunes. For example, my dad takes out the widow's garbage can for her every Thursday night. He also buys extra fruit at the store and gives it to some of our struggling neighbors. He has always been like this and encourages us kids to be like him. What a peaceful world this would be if more people were like my dad.

If you looked up the word gentle in the dictionary, the definition could very easily say, "Bernard Elden Knapp," that's my father. He is very calm and gentle. For about twenty-five years of his life he was a driver's education teacher at UVSC. The majority of his students were foreigners without very much car experience. Some of his students hadn't ever ridden in cars before. They had come to the states wanting to get an education and a driver's license. He has many exciting and scary stories to tell. One girl always turned on the windshield wipers when she reached for the turn signal, one of his students was so nervous about driving that she started crying, and he has also had many near misses, but he has lived to tell about them all. If this doesn't give you a little taste of this man's great patience, nothing will.

While growing up he was always patient with us. He has never yelled at any of us, in fact I've never even heard him yell or raise his voice at anyone. We could tell when he meant business just by the harsh tone in his voice even though the volume didn't increase. He never was a harsh punisher, actually I've only been spanked by him one time in my whole life and that was after many warnings. I learned after that to listen the first time. Many lessons can be learned by anyone after spending some time with my dad and "reading" his book.

A big chunk of my dad is made up of his interests and his hobbies. These are the exciting chapters of my dad's life. He loves horses a lot and he resembles them in some small ways. He is very gentle, alert, and simple. He used to own many horses, he owned up to nine at one single time. Before I was born our family moved and he had to sell all of them except for his favorite mare and her colt. This is one chapter I wish I had been a part of.

My dad has some hobbies that he hasn't enjoyed lately. That is partly because of time and spacial reasons. My dad likes to make stuff with leather. He has made many different leather tools which I enjoy using. I enjoy leatherwork also and that seems to form a bond between us that my siblings don't share with him. A few years ago my dad took a painting class. He quite enjoyed it, so he converted ^{one} of the rooms in our home to be his art room. He had his paints in there as well as some clay we were occasionally allowed to play with. He mostly painted landscapes, but one time he painted a ^{Taipei} Chinese girl and we have the portrait hanging in our house along with his other paintings.

My dad is such a great man. I love him a lot. I think I have a very good relationship with him. When I was young, I was "daddy's little girl" and I don't think it has worn off all the way. He used to hold me and carry me around while he danced across the room. We used to play a little game a lot that he made up. It was a fun little tickle game. He spent many hours playing

games with us kids. We used to play concentration and old maid for hours on end. I like being his little girl, but it's not always fun. He is very protective of me and sometimes I am denied doing activities that my brothers get to do.

I have always admired my dad. I remember sitting in church when I was little and watching him twiddle his thumbs. I started doing the same and I even found myself unconsciously twiddling them in school. I share some interests with my dad and he has many qualities I want to develop. He has always been delicate, gentle, loving and kind. I know this by looking inside of the book rather than merely glancing at the not so flashy cover. I would advise you to do the same.

Character Sketch

By
Joseph Knapp

March 1991

He is an average 5'9" with a slender but muscular body. His face is wrinkled with the marks of life. His hair is silver with one or two brown hairs. As it thins each year you can tell the trials he has been through. His walk is slow and tired but the love for his family keeps him working hard and providing for his family. He is sixty-one years old and has nine children. The youngest is ten. He is my father and still is happily married to my 52 year old mother.

My father is like a calm summer morn with one or two light stormy days a year. He is loving and a pleasure to be around.

My father is a horse who is wise and well trained in years. He is well broke and calm, especially around kids, while still having the strength to do the work expected with full interest.